

**Examining the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on the role of SACRE and  
Ofsted, in relation to Collective Worship, using a critical realist approach**

CAROLINE KAFKA-MARKEY

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## **Abstract**

This research focuses on key questions pertaining to the roles and remits of the Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education (SACRE) and the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), Ofsted regarding Collective Worship since the introduction of the Academies Act 2010.

The use of critical realism has enabled the author to combine documentary and field research, through integrating primary and secondary source material with the opinions of SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors on the impact of the Academies Act 2010. These opinions were gained using 'guided discussions' during the period March 2014-May 2015.

The findings suggest that the lack of monitoring of, and reporting on, Collective Worship by Ofsted and the impact of the Academies Act 2010 have led to a diminished role for SACRE. Furthermore, the research concludes that an urgent review of Collective Worship is needed if it is to effectively contribute to and promote Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development (SMSC) development, community cohesion and Fundamental British Values (FBVs). Such a review, the research suggests, should also include changes to the remits and roles of Ofsted and SACRE regarding the nature and structure of their organisation, including the monitoring and inspection of Collective Worship.

This study makes contributions not found in previous research on Collective Worship to which the author has referred. It does so on several levels: through the author being a professional teacher engaged in academic research, through the author being a Christian and reflective practitioner and through the author offering perspectives on Collective Worship from those whose role and remit is to inspect, monitor and support Collective Worship. This study contributes to the body of research produced by those practitioners and academics concerned with Collective Worship by examining the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on the roles and remits of Ofsted and SACRE.

## **Author's Declaration**

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. This thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas. Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed ..... Date .....

## **Dedication**

This thesis work is dedicated to my husband, Andy, who has been a constant source of support, encouragement and love during the many challenges of the last few years.

## **Acknowledgements**

The research journey has not been easy, with many highs and lows. However, I have received excellent guidance and support from my academic supervisors, Dr. Jenny Fryman and Professor Ros Jennings, during this process. I cannot thank them enough for their encouragement and compassion. They provided me with the tools that I needed to choose the right direction and successfully complete my thesis.

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I also wish to thank all the participants; without whose cooperation, I would not have could conduct this analysis.

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## Preface

This preface serves as an introduction to my position in this thesis as a researcher, teacher and Christian.

This research project was undertaken due to my personal interest in Collective Worship as a Christian and my professional interest in the area as a teacher. My interest in Collective Worship began whilst a student in secondary school during the 1980s. When I commenced my secondary education, I expected Collective Worship to be like what I had experienced in my state-funded primary school. However, the Collective Worship I recalled from primary school, openly Christian with hymns and prayers, seemed to be non-existent in my new secondary school. At the same time, I noticed fellow students of other faiths were withdrawn from what I considered to be secular assemblies. Not far from the surface of the debate were profound questions concerning the nature of religious belief (and its ‘truth’), the philosophy of education, and how matters of faith are to be handled in public contexts (especially in state schools) within a plural, liberal society that has still not entirely lost the influence of its Christian heritage.

Collective Worship continued to interest me as a practicing Christian and a teacher of Religious Education. Throughout my teaching career, which began in 1997, I have witnessed many assemblies; however, an assembly does not constitute Collective Worship as defined by the ERA 1988 and Circular 1/94. Collective Worship can contribute to the spiritual development of a student and develop and promote community cohesion within a school. As a teacher, I believe we should be helping to prepare students to make a positive contribution to our own multi-cultural, multi-faith nation and to the wider world.

As a Christian, I have always been open about my faith with the students I teach, as I have hoped that they could learn from my own example that it is acceptable to be of one faith and yet still be open to learning about and discussing other faiths and beliefs. Although I do believe in the Great Commission, ‘Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you’ (NIV, Matthew 28:19-20), I also believe Christians should recognise Article 9 of the Human Rights Act, as mentioned in Chapter 6: ‘The right to

freedom of thought, conscience and religion'. Thus, for me as a Christian, following the Great Commission is not about proselytising my faith, but protecting Article 9 by encouraging open and honest debate and respecting differences in opinions regarding faith and religion. I do not see these two principles as contradictory, for the first requires believers to spread their faith and the second freedom of belief.

The purpose of the Great Commission is not to convert others, but to show them the way exemplified by Jesus in his teachings and in his life. The call to spread the message of faith to others is a call to make known to others, in word and deed, the way of Jesus, described by Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount. This includes such teachings as love your enemies, forgive one another, don't judge, give discretely to those who need, refrain from hostility, do not lust after possessions, let your candle shine, and repay aggression with non-aggression. Thus, the Great Commission encourages a way of life that would undo all forms of hatred and enmity, allowing 'freedom of thought, conscience and religion' to flourish. In this sense, Article 9 grows naturally from the seed that is Jesus' way of life. As a Christian, Collective Worship should embrace different religions and cultures, welcoming those of various faiths and those of none.

As a researcher, I have a professional interest in Collective Worship. Collective Worship is a unique part of the school curriculum, although the themes within Collective Worship may overlap with subjects or topics taught as part of the curriculum. Effective Collective Worship should encourage and promote elements of spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. However, for Collective Worship to be purposeful, all the issues surrounding Collective Worship must be explored fully.

As this is a Doctorate of Education, I have been interested in exploring how my threefold position as a researcher, teacher and Christian informs my contribution to the educational profession. I have engaged with a critical realist theoretical approach; such an approach allowed me the flexibility to explore and embrace my threefold position. Consequently, the use of such an approach has enabled me to embrace my personal values and faith as part of my research. It was my faith that caused me to begin my research journey. My faith has driven this research forward and has helped me in times of difficulty. I have discussed my faith with some of the participants during the guided discussions that form the main data collection method of this research. At the same time, as a teacher, I have engaged in

reflective practices to consciously analyse my decision making. Such critical analysis and evaluation has enabled me to further develop my professional understanding of the issues encountered. As part of this reflective practice, I used a research journal throughout the research process to note my thoughts and feelings. Similarly, issues and concerns were also discussed and reflected upon with my doctoral supervisors, Professor Ros Jennings and Dr Jenny Fryman.

My threefold position as a researcher, teacher and Christian acknowledges that I am not a neutral researcher; my position has impacted on my decision to use a critical realist approach and has influenced my analysis; however, my conclusions, based on my research, are as rigorous and honest as possible.

This dissertation should be of interest to teachers who are engaged in Collective Worship at schools, SACRE members, Ofsted inspectors, policy makers and governmental review boards. It should also be of interest to academics who have been, or are, engaged in research pertaining to the relevance of Collective Worship.



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## Abbreviations

AHRC – Arts and Humanities Research Council  
ATL – Association of Teachers and Lecturers  
AREIAC – Association of Religious Education Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants  
BHA – British Humanist Association  
CofE – Church of England  
CJEPC – Churches' Joint Education Policy Committee  
DfCLG – Department for Communities and Local Government  
DCSF – Department for Children, Schools and Families  
DES – Department for Education and Science  
DfE – Department for Education  
DfEE – Department for Education and Employment  
ECM – Every Child Matters  
EFA – Education Funding Agency  
EDM – Early Day Motion  
ERA 1988 – Education Reform Act 1988  
FBV – Fundamental British Values  
GMT – Greenwich Mean Time  
HCEC – House of Commons Education Committee  
HMI – Her Majesty's Inspector  
HMSO – Her Majesty's Stationary Office  
LEA – Local Education Authority  
MCB – Muslim Council of Britain  
MET – Muslim Educational Trust  
NATRE – National Association of Teachers of Religious Education  
NASACRE – National Association of SACREs.  
NASWT – National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers  
NSS – National Secular Society  
NUT – National Union of Teachers  
OFSTED – Office for Standards in Education  
QCA – Qualifications and Curriculum Authority  
RE – Religious Education

SACRE – Standing Advisory Committee on Religious Education

SMSC – Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural

TES – Times Educational Supplement

## **Introduction: Rationale for the study**

My interest in Collective Worship began whilst I was a primary school student in North London. I found the openly Christian assemblies, as they were – and still are – commonly called, comforting and embracing. These assemblies were the beginning of my personal and spiritual journey, leading me to become a Christian during my undergraduate years studying anthropology and sociology. My Master's degree in Jewish-Christian Relations was written whilst I was building my career as a Religious Education teacher.

As a practising Christian and a teacher of Religious Education, with over 18 years' teaching experience in nine secondary education institutions in England, I have witnessed various attitudes towards Collective Worship. In many schools, it has become a non-event, replaced by the more inclusive 'assembly'. On the political and religious fronts, however, Collective Worship has been widely discussed and debated. This anomaly interests me greatly, as the conclusions reached by the debate could have wide-ranging impacts on all those involved, including impacting on the roles of those whose remit is to monitor, support and inspect Collective Worship, i.e. the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) and the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted), as well as on the future of Collective Worship itself.

### **What are the issues?**

When I first began my research, I had one question in mind: 'What are the issues surrounding Collective Worship in secondary education?' As I began to explore the debates and disputes surrounding Collective Worship, including questions concerning definition and relevance, particularly within secondary education schools, I discovered some issues that concerned me greatly. I began with close readings of the relevant literature, such as the 'Swindon SACRE Annual Report 2011-2012'; the 'North Somerset SACRE 18th Annual Report 2013-2014'; 'Analysis of 2004 SACRE Annual Reports' (QCA 2005); and other documents such as 'An Evaluation of the work of SACRE' (Ofsted 2004), 'NASACRE Survey of Local Authority Support for SACREs' (2011) and 'The Policy and Guidelines for Acts of Collective Worship in Community Schools' (Northumberland County Council (2007) (see Appendix 1). In doing so, it became clear to me that many local SACREs were becoming more and more anxious about their role, as well as about falling standards of both Religious



Education and Collective Worship in schools, primarily due to the impact of the Academies Act 2010 (discussed in further detail in Chapter 4). Concurrently, the role of Ofsted in the monitoring and inspection of Collective Worship has altered over time, again due to the impact of the Academies Act 2010. However, no-one has sought to examine the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on both official government bodies, nor has any study been undertaken to examine the perceptions and opinions of individual SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors in relation to the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on Collective Worship.

## **Research objectives**

My research primarily presents an overview of the Collective Worship debate, as reflected in and evidenced by certain specific source documents. These include Hansard (the report of proceedings of both the House of Commons and the House of Lords), Church of England (CofE) diocesan material, Ofsted, SACRE and Her Majesty's Stationary Office (HMSO) sources. These documents provide a public, professional contribution to the Collective Worship debate, as an adjunct to academic and theoretical work on Collective Worship. Hansard reports, diocesan material and other sources have also shaped the development of Collective Worship and, furthermore, reflect the current situation SACRE and Ofsted must work within. The focus of the thesis is therefore not on theory but on establishing a rooted, functional and professional context for examining where and how the roles of SACRE and Ofsted, with regards to Collective Worship, fit into the current political climate. Therefore, the research objectives are as follows:

- 1) To examine the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on Ofsted and SACRE in relation to Collective Worship, including the perceptions of individual SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors.
- 2) To examine what Hansard and HMSO documentation, and Ofsted and SACRE materials, tell us about the current debate surrounding Collective Worship.
- 3) To make a professional contribution by offering insights into the interaction between the documentary research and field research.

## **Setting the legal context**

The British Education Reform Act (ERA) 1988 continued a historical tradition of requiring a daily act of Collective Worship for all pupils in all schools. This is set out in the School Standards and Frameworks Act 1998, which states that ‘each pupil in attendance at a community, foundation or voluntary school shall on each school day take part in an act of collective worship’ (Section 70 of the 1998 Act).

The law demands daily Collective Worship in schools in England and Wales. The law, however, allows for different arrangements to be made for Collective Worship. Schedule 20 of the 1998 Act states that worship must be collective but can be a single act for all pupils or multiple acts for groups of pupils, for example those in different age groups. It may take place at any time in the school day, although it should be on the school premises. It must be appropriate for the age, aptitude and family background of pupils.

The duty to offer daily Collective Worship applies to every school. The school’s policy and the arrangements for Collective Worship must be documented and publicly available (Education Regulations, 1981). Whereas for maintained schools this requirement is enshrined in legislation, for academies the requirement forms part of their funding agreement. Faith schools (both maintained and academies) must provide Collective Worship in accordance with their funding agreement and/or trust deed, in accordance with the tenets of their faith.

The debate concerning the legal requirement for Collective Worship seeks to answer two distinct but connected questions. The first is concerned with the nature of Collective Worship and asks whether such worship is relevant and appropriate for 21<sup>st</sup>-century education. The second question considers whether it’s possible to maintain Fundamental British Values (FBV) as defined in various government guidance, such as the ‘Guidance on promoting British values in schools’ (DfE, 2014c) whilst meeting the needs of modern multicultural and multi-faith Britain. Many different perceptions and views are associated with this debate, including those of religious and avowedly non-religious leaders and organisations, such as the Church of England, Muslim Council of Britain, Muslim Educational Trust, National Secular Society and British Humanist Association; those within the school community (teachers, students, governors and parents); Ofsted; SACRE; and researchers and academic theorists. These will be explored over the course of this thesis.

## **Conceptual framework**

The conceptual framework for this thesis was designed around the various perceptions and views that have already been expressed in relation to Collective Worship. These observations are often, but not necessarily, interconnected. They involve the following groups: religious and non-religious leaders and organisations; those within the school community (teachers, students, governors and parents; teaching unions; and researchers and academics. This thesis builds upon these views by offering an extra layer of understanding to the debate through an analysis of the perceptions and views of Ofsted and SACRE.

These groups, although they do not necessarily share common views on the subject, are very much interlinked, for example, members of teaching unions may also be members of the school community. SACRE affiliates may also be members and/or leaders of religious organisations and belong to the school community as teachers, governors or parents. Academic insights may stem from the perceptions of teacher/researchers such as myself. These groups may also contain sub-groups with differing views. For example, within the general heading of teaching unions, there are many unions represented, such as the ATL, NUT and NASWT. All these groups are influenced by governmental policies and legislation regarding Collective Worship. Some of the views of these groups regarding Collective Worship will be discussed later.

Debate has led to many conference papers and academic papers that, although often different in their approaches, have discussed the theoretical role of Collective Worship in a pluralistic and liberal society, including the tension between compulsory Collective Worship and the expectations and practices of other faiths (John Hull, 1975; Dilwyn Hunt, 2009; David Webster, 2000). Even before the ERA 1988, Hull (1975) in his book 'School Worship, an Obituary', argues that the tensions between the aims of education and the desire of the church for compulsory school worship had led to a situation in which school worship was not attuned to the needs and concerns of the school and the society in which it took place. Hull raises important issues regarding the place of 'school worship', as he called it, stating that as the education system had developed, the role of school worship had diminished and was no longer relevant in a multicultural society. These issues led Hull to state, as early as 1975, that 'it is not legitimate to have pupils acquire an understanding of what it feels like to be a Christian by actually converting them, getting them to pray or to take part in the sacraments'

(Hull 1975, p96). Despite Hull's misgivings, the government pursued the Collective Worship agenda through the ERA 1988, and this inclusion has led to many other theses on Collective Worship, such as those written by Richard Cheetham (1999), Jeannette Gill (2000), Kathleen Bishop (2001), Diane Smart (2001), John Amankwatia (2007), Elisabeth Rutherford (2012) and Kathryn Inglis (2012), who discuss the historical and social context of this debate. Many views on the subject have been voiced, with discussions both within and across the religious and non-religious spheres, including those involving teaching unions and SACREs. Projects and conferences relating to this discussion include the 'Religious Observance Review Group' (2004), the 'Churches Joint Education Policy Committee' (2006) and the NASUWT 'Keeping the Faith' conference (2008).

Faith and secular communities have questioned and disputed the wording of the requirement for Collective Worship in schools to be 'wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character' (DfE Circular 1/94 Section 7 (1)). Such criticism can be seen in the 'Collective Worship Reviewed' project (Culham Institute, 1999), 'The Bloxham Project' (2008), Terence Copley (2005) and the British Humanist Association (BHA) education policy (2006). Other perspectives have already been considered. For example, the perceptions and views of teachers and students, both in the primary and secondary sectors, have been heard on numerous occasions (Gill, 2000; Bishop, 2001; Rutherford, 2012; and Cheetham, 1999, to name but a few). These views will be explored further in Chapter 1. The collective views of various organisations have been considered, including religious organisations such as the Muslim Educational Trust (MET), 'Comments on the Government Education White Paper – Schools: Achieving Success' (2001) and the CofE, 'The Church School of the Future Review' (2012), as well as secular and humanist groups such as the National Secular Society (NSS) publications 'Collective Worship in Schools' (2014) and 'Evangelism in schools' (2013), and the BHA's 'Collective Worship and school assemblies: your rights' (2013).

The works in the above list offers an insight into some of the sentiments that surround the Collective Worship discussion. It is not my intention to echo previous research or views, but to build on them through an understanding of the context of the current debate. This will lay the foundations for this thesis and highlight its similarities to previous research, the dominant perceptions and views around the topic and the gap in knowledge that this thesis aims to fill.

The analysis of the literature has enabled the identification of gaps in current knowledge regarding the perspectives of individuals involved in the monitoring and inspection of Collective Worship. The identification of these gaps has assisted in the development of the focus of this research, and in presenting my conceptual framework and subsequent findings. I take the standpoint that the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on Collective Worship has not been sufficiently considered. The perceptions and views of individual members of government agencies (SACRE and Ofsted) that are commissioned to ensure Collective Worship occurs in educational establishments are also very rarely heard. This research, therefore, attempts to address this imbalance by listening to the views of SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors through a reflective practitioner approach (Bolton, 2010; MacGregor and Cartwright, 2011; Rushton and Suter, 2012; Zeichner and Liston, 2013; Impedovo and Khatoun, 2016; Bassot, 2016), as discussed in Chapter 3.

## **Discursive threads**

As I began my research, I recognised common discursive threads that started to emerge while investigating the literature. These discursive threads will be referred to throughout the thesis.

### **1. Participants' perceptions and views**

This discourse focuses on providing an opportunity to hear and learn from the observations and interpretations of those whose remit is to monitor and inspect Collective Worship. The perceptions of the individuals involved in the guided discussion, discussed further in Chapter 3, offer insights into the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on Ofsted and SACRE in relation to Collective Worship. To gain an understanding of the impact of the Academies Act 2010, guided discussions were carried out with one SACRE advisor, 13 SACRE members and six Ofsted inspectors. Participants from SW SACRE had between 2-20 years of experience of working with SACRE. Some had only worked with SW SACRE, while others had experience of SACREs elsewhere. Three were religious leaders: one with the Methodist Church, one Catholic priest and one Church of England vicar. One participant was a nurse and eight were teachers, either within the primary or secondary sector. Three members were local councillors, two being Conservative and one affiliated to the Labour party. All participants worked either part or full time. Participants from Ofsted had between 6-20 years of experience working with Ofsted. Two inspectors were retired and two used to be teachers, one of History and one of Religious Education.

For many researchers, enabling the views of those who have been oppressed or marginalised by society in some way to be heard is crucial to empowering them (Bogdan and Biklen 1998, p204). An example of such empowerment is the PhD thesis of Contractor (2010), with the main objective being ‘to give voice to young Muslim women in Britain’ (Contractor 2010, p20). She argues that ‘Muslim women are doubly marginalised: by patriarchal interpretations of their faith within Muslim communities and by pluralist society that often does not understand the faith-based values and practices of Muslim women’ (page ii). Other research includes facilitating the thoughts and feelings of those with intellectual disabilities (Bogdan and Taylor, 1994, Lindblom 2014) and listening to the sensitivities of young people in relation to sport and physical recreation (MacPhail, Kirk and Eley, 2003).

I am not suggesting that this is the case here; certainly, nothing in the current literature identifies members of SACRE or Ofsted inspectors as being marginalised or oppressed in any way. In one way, it is the opposite: both SACRE and Ofsted are recognised and acknowledged in Acts of Parliament and are funded by the government, either directly, or indirectly via Local Educational Authorities (LEAs), to continue their work. Their collective perceptions and views are heard; local SACREs are represented nationally by NASACRE, the National Association of SACREs, and the issues and concerns raised by Ofsted are discussed by various parliamentary select committees, such as the education committee. There is also nothing in the current literature that advocates listening to the perceptions and views of individual members of SACRE or Ofsted as a potential means of assistance in tackling the current issues that pertain to the Collective Worship debate. It is clear, however, that these issues could be addressed more effectively by acquiring such perspectives. Nobody is in a more relevant position to explain the day-to-day realities of Collective Worship than those whose job it is to monitor and support Collective Worship in schools, and those whose job it is to inspect and report on what they perceive to be happening in schools. I believe it is essential to focus on the views of individual members of SACRE and Ofsted, to hear their perspectives on the sort of Collective Worship undertaken in schools, and to understand what they consider to be the issues and implications of educational policies on Collective Worship. These viewpoints provide valuable insights for policy makers, both at local and national levels, as they strive to build an education system which is appropriate for 21<sup>st</sup>-century learners. The individual views of SACRE and Ofsted are an integral part of this thesis, with extracts from the guided discussions used throughout to support the various positions and

arguments detailed in Chapter 4, which reflects on the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on Ofsted and SACRE in relation to the provision of Collective Worship.

Each participant involved in this research brought a different perspective, based on their personal recollection and understanding, to the Collective Worship debate. Although their views may overlap with others in this research, or previous research mentioned in Chapter 1 and the literature review, the voice of each participant in the guided discussions is unique to him or her and cannot be generalised to other SACRE members or Ofsted inspectors.

## **2. Multi-disciplinary research**

My research takes a multi-disciplinary approach, as Collective Worship combines strands relating to education, history, politics (including legislation) and religion (including spirituality, theology and secularisation). Such an approach envisions Collective Worship as being surrounded by different perspectives, needs and contributors, as well as contextualising the perceptions and views of one SACRE advisor, 13 SACRE members and six Ofsted inspectors as being important contributors to the debate. The strands are inherently connected. The historical roots of Collective Worship are intrinsically linked to religion, education and politics; thus, the issues surrounding Collective Worship cannot be understood by looking at one strand. Throughout this research, I refer to these different strands to explore the different perceptions of Collective Worship. I also draw upon various pieces of legislation that either directly or indirectly impact on the work of SACRE and Ofsted.

## **3. Religious discourse**

In recent times, especially since the terrorist attacks on New York (11<sup>th</sup> September 2001), London (7<sup>th</sup> July 2005), Paris (9<sup>th</sup> Jan 2015/13<sup>th</sup> November 2015), Tunisia (26<sup>th</sup> July 2015) and Berlin (December 19, 2016), to name but a few, religious discourse has been at the forefront of many articles and programmes in the media and across political parties and social groups around the world.

Research performed by the Pew Research Centre (2014) claims over 83% of the world's population is religious, with 31.5% being Christian. Based on this, one of the underlying assumptions in my thesis is that religion matters to a great number of people. It matters to those who have a religious faith, regardless of their religion or denomination. Religion also matters to those who have no faith and to those who question the role of religion in our

society, such as humanists. Religion is a significant feature of contemporary society, playing an important role in politics and economics too, as highlighted by Clarke and Woodhead (2015): “Religion is an inescapable important aspect of the modern world. The most cursory examination of political and economic affairs today demonstrates the visibility and importance of religion and belief in the affairs of the world.” (p6). Religious discourse is part of British society. There has not been a separation of the church from the state; therefore, it is important to note how religion has influenced and continues to influence many areas of our lives, including, as already noted, education and politics.

The idea of Britishness is often mentioned in the context of our Christian historical roots, as summarised by Cruse (2008) in a library note for the House of Lords debate on Britishness on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2008, which discussed the idea of British identity as having historical, social and cultural constructs, and suggests a link to Protestant culture. The state church in England is the Church of England, formed by the decision of Henry VIII to separate from the Roman Catholic church and declare himself the supreme head of the newly established Church of England. This historical link between the state and the church is still clearly present today, with Church of England bishops sitting in the House of Lords. These bishops, together with the other lords in the House of Lords, vote on the various political bills that influence our lives, for example who we may or may not marry, and where. Within the educational realm, legislation since the 19<sup>th</sup> century has impacted directly on the position and status of Religious Education and Collective Worship (1870 Education Act; 1902 Education Bill; 1917 and 1918 Education Acts; 1944 Education Act; ERA 1988). The status of faith schools also remains a contentious issue, as recent political and media debates on the role of such schools demonstrates (for example, Gardner, 2005; Jackson, 2006; Wright, 2006; Dwyer and Parutis, 2013; Long and Bolton, 2017). All this background information must be discussed to place the perceptions and views of SACRE and Ofsted in context.

#### **4. The teacher as reflective practitioner**

Kenneth Zeichner and Daniel Liston (2013) explore John Dewey’s (1933) contribution to reflective teaching. Zeichner and Liston argue that Dewey’s three attitudes to reflective practice, open-mindedness, responsibility and wholeheartedness, are still very relevant to the modern teacher. Zeichner and Liston (2013) describe open-mindedness as the willingness to consider different perspectives and to agree to change to improve conditions, policies, outcomes, etc. Responsibility engages with three types of consequence: personal, academic



and social/political. For Dewey (1933), wholeheartedness combines the attitudes of open-mindedness and responsibility. These three elements also resonate with me as a researcher, teacher as reflective practitioner and Christian.

Throughout this thesis, I hold the view that I am a teacher who is both a researcher and a reflective practitioner. As a teacher, I have written Collective Worship policies and guided teachers in the aims and objectives for such assemblies. However, at the same time, I have witnessed the decline of Collective Worship. As a researcher, I am deeply interested in exploring whether the activity of Collective Worship should be a compulsory element of the curriculum for all pupils, the types of worship that would be appropriate in the schools of a society whose government seeks to maintain its traditional Christian heritage (Mantin, 1999; Blewett, 2008; Singleton, 2014) whilst at the same time supporting its plurality of cultures, and whether Collective Worship should be abolished due to being incompatible with the educational aims of a liberal Western state. As a reflective practitioner, I can offer my perception of the Collective Worship debate, based on grounded, functional, professional experience and context, leading to a representative understanding of where and how Collective Worship is situated in the current political climate. As a reflective practitioner, I also see this as an opportunity to ensure the relevancy and appropriateness of Collective Worship in secondary schools. I perceive this research as a contribution to existing knowledge by recognising the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on the work of SACRE and Ofsted, offering an opportunity to present the views of individual members of both agencies and reveal the reality of their situations through their perceptions.

On a personal level, my view of Collective Worship has been influenced by my faith. As well as being a teacher, researcher and reflective practitioner, I am also a Christian. As a Christian, I cannot deny that for me personally, Collective Worship is an important issue. As a professional teacher, my view of Collective Worship has been heavily influenced by my experiences throughout my teaching career. I am mindful of the fact that the act of Collective Worship is controversial, although at the same time, as a teacher I believe Collective Worship is an integral part of the development of a child through its social, moral, spiritual and cultural (SMSC) elements. My perception Collective Worship are based on me being a Christian, teacher and researcher. As an Anglican Christian, I see this research as an opportunity to clarify the Church of England's perspective on Collective Worship.

In summary, I am a professional teacher engaged in academic research. My research focuses on the important issue of the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on the roles of SACRE and Ofsted with regards to Collective Worship. My research follows four discursive threads above, 1) participants' perceptions and views, 2) multi-disciplinary research, 3) religious discourse and 4) the teacher as reflective practitioner; these will be referred to throughout the thesis. These threads overlap with one another, although they are also independent of one another and help to define the context in which Collective Worship is situated, the different perceptions and views of it, and why listening to the perceptions and views of members of SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors matters.

### **Structure: Implementing the plan**

The thesis is divided into the following chapters. This Introductory chapter maps the boundaries and clarifies the objectives of the research. Chapters 1 and 2 help to identify the literature that is relevant to this research, and enable the identification of gaps in current knowledge, which is where this study is focussed. Chapter 1 traces the history of the inclusion of Collective Worship in schools and examines what Hansard and HMSO documentary material tells us about the current debate surrounding Collective Worship legislation. Chapter 2 examines various parties' perceptions and views concerning the relevant legislation and uses a combination of unpublished theses and academic writing, as well as journals and articles that include reports from religious and non-religious organisations, to examine the various approaches to the provision of Collective Worship and the proposed alternatives, which reflect the needs and wants of those involved in the debate. I further draw on the literature to define the gaps in the current literature, which will be developed through my own research. Chapter 3 sets out the research methodology that is used in this research and describes the theoretical reasoning for the epistemological and methodological choices that underpin this research. Chapter 4 offer insights into the interface between the documentary research and field research, through a discussion of the research findings with members of SACRE and Ofsted. Their perceptions and views are juxtaposed with relevant literature to present a more rounded discussion of the debate regarding Collective Worship than currently exists. Chapter 5 consists of the afterword and recommendations, which highlight the outcomes of the research and set the direction for further research or implementation.

## **Chapter 1: Collective Worship: the historical background**

In the Introduction, I briefly outlined the legal requirements regarding Collective Worship in schools in England and Wales, based on the ERA 1988. I also introduced my discursive threads, including discussing how my personal beliefs as a Christian impact on my ontological stance as a teacher and researcher. I highlighted how the discursive threads correspond to and interrelate with one another and help to define the context in which Collective Worship is situated; explored the different perceptions and views within that context; and explained why listening to the perceptions and views of members of SACRE and Ofsted inspectors matters as an integral element of the debate.

The next three chapters set the groundwork for my field research and locates the study within the historical context of an established body of knowledge. The context sets the scene for questioning the roles of SACRE and Ofsted, as well as listening to individuals' perceptions and views about Collective Worship. In this chapter, I examine what Hansard and HMSO documentary materials tell us about the current debate surrounding Collective Worship legislation. This chapter also defines the roles and remits of SACRE and Ofsted. Following this, the academies programme begun by the Labour government in 1997 and culminating in the Academies Act 2010 is explored. The impact of these legislative reforms on Collective Worship is also examined Chapter 2 then offers a critical analysis of the literature surrounding Collective Worship, examining some of the dominant perceptions and views of Collective Worship.

### **Background to the debate: historical and social context**

Although the focus of this study is examining the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on Ofsted and SACRE in relation to Collective Worship, it is first essential to examine the historical background to the present situation, to understand the context of the legal framework as it stands today. There is already a well-documented connection between the Christian Church and all levels of the English education system, dating from the introduction of Christianity to Britain (Macculloch, 2010; Hylson-Smith, 2011; Lawson and Silver, 2013; Strhan, Parker and Ridgely, 2017), therefore, this brief background is designed to offer only a snapshot, rather than trace the complete historical and social context.

For the purposes of the present discussion, the focus will be on the ERA 1988 onwards. However, before examining the ERA 1988, it is important to briefly draw attention to the Education Act of 1870 due to the ‘conscience clause’ that it introduced and which remains part of Collective Worship legislation. The 1870 Act laid the foundations of English elementary education; however, it also marginalised religious instruction and religious observance through requirements that dictated it take place at the beginning or end of a time-tabled and structured day, in order not to interrupt children’s schooling. When such teaching was provided, it was required to be completely impartial and non-denominational. However, the State had a duty to protect freedom of belief, and therefore made provisions for this in the law. The Cowper-Temple Clause stated that ‘no religious catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination’ (1870 Act, Section 14) should be used; therefore, after much debate, the ‘conscience clause’ was agreed upon, which stated that all Religious Education teaching was to be totally impartial and non-denominational. A provision within the clause enabled parents, for the first time, to withdraw their children from worship. The so-called ‘conscience clause’ indicated an awareness of the difficulty of providing worship and Religious Education in state schools.

As the education system spread throughout England and Wales, and the state took over the funding of education, controversy continued regarding the purpose and place of Religious Education and worship in schools. However, at the time, ‘the Christian values underpinning the education process were not the subject of the controversy’ (Copley, 2000, p20). In other words, the appropriateness of teaching Christianity was not questioned. However, there is plenty of evidence to show that views were, and have remained, divided throughout the last 100 years or so, both within Parliament and amongst church leaders, concerning the compulsory provision of Collective Worship. This includes debates concerning the 1902 Education Bill, which triggered debates over whether children should be expected to attend Sunday school as a condition of day school membership. The bill removed the requirement to perform denominational worship in boarding schools; this led to ‘a problem that was to haunt education for decades to come, namely that in the absence of denominational worship all that seemed possible was a lowest common denominator, i.e. a hymn, a Bible reading and a brief prayer’ (Copley, 2000, p64). Education Acts since 1902 continued to debate the relevance of both denominational and non-denominational worship. The 1917 and 1918 Education Acts demonstrated an evolving view of religion in schools and an emphasis on spiritual and moral education. These spiritual and moral sentiments, reflecting the values of Thomas Arnold,

were deemed to be significant in wider education rather than just as a timetabled religious instruction lesson or an assembly. Thus, these two Acts opened the possibility that teachers could consider the idea of developing spirituality within their students.

As already noted, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century education in schools was dominated by the church. Due to the historical link between education and the church and the Church of England's potent political influence, the Church position on Collective Worship could not be ignored (Finch, 1984). This Christian domination of schools went almost unchallenged; therefore, it was natural for schools to provide acts of worship.

World War Two led to the 1944 Education Act being passed, partly as a proposal for the moral and spiritual reconstruction of society (see Bell, 1985; Wright, 2000a; Parker, Freathy & Francis, 2012; Parker, Freathy, & Doney 2016; Lawson, 2016). The Act explicitly required that education contribute to SMSC development (HMSO, 1944, Pt.2, section 7). The 1944 Act's incorporation of 'spiritual development' as a statutory requirement in the education of children remains to this day (Education Act 2002, sections 78 and 99). The 1944 Education Act made religious instruction and daily worship compulsory, rather than a common practice as before. However, the 1870 'conscience clause' remained and appeared, albeit in amended forms, throughout all subsequent Education Acts. Parents still have the right to withdraw their children from acts of Collective Worship and Religious Education lessons and are under no legal obligation to give any reason for their withdrawal.

The legal requirements of the 1944 Education Act were due to the settlement negotiated between R. A. Butler, then Minister of Education, and William Temple, then Archbishop of Canterbury. Collective Worship was implicitly expected to be Christian, but non-denominational. It had to take place at the start of the day in an assembly of the whole school. Both Butler and Temple recognised that this new legal requirement was controversial; however, they also regarded Collective Worship as a legal requirement for pupils.

By making Collective Worship and Religious Education a legal requirement, the 1944 Act opened a debate on 'religion' versus 'spiritual and moral awareness' and ensured that daily worship in schools would continue to divide opinion (Hirst 1972; Webster, 1974; Hull, 1975; Ballard, 1996; Parker, Freathy and Doney, 2016). For example, Ballard (1966) reflected on the Act as being 'possibly one of the last great Acts of English Christendom' (Ballard, 1966,

p17). However, Hirst (1972) argued that in the private arena of religion, the state has no right to intervene or to display preference regarding religion: 'The function of the state in religious matters should not, I think, be one of taking any side on issues of so controversial a nature' (Hirst, 1972, p.10). Hirst also argued that Collective Worship be replaced with teachings on the role of religion and beliefs in historical and modern societies, with moral education confined to the experiences of shared values and principles. Thus, Parker, Freathy and Doney (2016) contend that although some considered the legislation 'a missed opportunity because it failed to acknowledge the values of wider English society', others saw the Act as 'a significant triumph for Christian educationists' (p28).

Certainly, the political leanings of the Act were comprehensively debated in Parliament. For example, the Right Honourable William Gallacher, Member of Parliament, demanded a reasoned explanation of what the act of worship was for and what it represented, as 'It does not represent the Catholic, it does not represent the Evangelical Christian, it does not represent those who believe that education should be kept apart from religion altogether and that the State should not interfere in religion at all.' (Hansard 397 HC Deb 2406). Butler disagreed with Gallacher's point and argued that many 'representatives of the Free Churches, the Established Church and other denominations' agreed with the act of compulsory worship (Hansard 397 HC Deb 2408). During the debate, Butler agreed that 'The great part of the responsibility for this religious worship or instruction must fall on the denomination, or on the parents themselves in the family circle'; however, he also emphasised that the introduction of the Butler-Temple clause would enable parents to decide what was best for their children and opt out as appropriate (Hansard 397, HC Deb 2402). Cove agreed with Gallacher, and raised concerns 'that religion is being used, or hoped to be used, as a sanction for reactionary social policy' (Hansard 397, HC Deb. 2403). He also argued for the voluntary nature of Collective Worship: 'Let religion flourish on the basis of the voluntary attitude towards it' (Hansard 397, HC Deb 2404). Mr. Driberg, MP for Barking, also argued for voluntary attendance at Collective Worship, emphasising that the clause in its present form only permitted parents to withdraw their children from worship. He argued that older students should be allowed to decide for their selves: 'But it seems to me [...] that an intelligent, forward boy or girl of 15 or 16 has begun to think for himself about religion, and might take a different point of view from that taken by his parents, and I think that he should be allowed to do so' (Hansard 397, HC Deb 2413). In contrast, Mr. Thomas, MP Keighley, associated the 'conscience clause' and the un-denominational Collective Worship with the low church

attendance for those of school leaving age (Hansard 397, HC Deb 2433). Differing views on the ‘conscience clause’ will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

Despite the view that the 1944 Education Act failed to encapsulate any denomination, perhaps this was a positive rather than negative outcome, as it raised issues between the devotional and theological sides of worship (Hansard 397, HC Deb 350-351). In short, Collective Worship allows devotional worship to occur, through prayers and hymns to God, which are not reliant on any rites or rituals. Such worship is important for three core reasons: the first is that it allows the child to worship in his or her own way, thus perhaps encouraging him or her to continue at home or a place of worship. Secondly, it allows the child to come to a realisation of what unites us in faith, rather than what divides us from our brothers or sisters. Thirdly, there is the sense of spirituality the child may develop through such worship. Some of the spiritual elements of Collective Worship will be considered in Chapter 3.

The 1944 Act required Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to contribute towards the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community. This provision was considered so significant that it was further addressed and strengthened in subsequent legislation, such as the Education Reform Act (ERA) 1988, the Department of Health’s ‘Every Child Matters’ (ECM) report (2003) and the Children’s Act of 2004. This legislation set education within the context of the spiritual, moral, social, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils and of society. Providing for pupils’ SMSC development began to become an essential part of contemporary education. In fact, it has become so important that in the revised Ofsted framework, in place from January 2012, there was renewed emphasis on the inspection of SMSC development, which impacts on many of the other judgements including a school’s capacity to improve, as discussed in Chapter 3.

The ERA 1988 is seen by many as the most important Education Act since 1944 (Gilliard, 2011; Shaw, 2011) as it introduced a ‘basic curriculum’ to be taught in all maintained schools, consisting of Religious Education and the National Curriculum (Section 2(1)). The National Curriculum was the key reform of the ERA and consisted of four key stages (1-4), with ‘attainment targets’ linked to the knowledge, skills and understanding that students were expected to have by the end of each key stage; the ‘programmes of study’ to be taught at each key stage; and the arrangements for assessing pupils at the end of each key stage. The National Curriculum consisted of three ‘core subjects’ (mathematics, English and science),

six foundation subjects (history, geography, technology, music, art and physical education) plus a modern foreign language at key stages 3 and 4.

The National Curriculum was influenced by concerns about falling standards in schools and the lack of economic growth. There were “growing public concerns that the UK was not being well served by its schools” with government reports condemning “primary and secondary schools for the lack of balance in their curriculum and for their failure to develop sufficiently planned curricula that took account of the changing needs of industry and society” (Children, Schools and Families Committee, 2009, p10). After several consultation processes, the National Curriculum was developed with two main aims. The first aim reiterated the 1944 Act: to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils. The second aim was to prepare students for adult working life.

The ERA is sometimes referred to as ‘The Baker Act’ after then Secretary of State, Kenneth Baker. Baker wanted to reinforce Religious Education and daily worship, as occurred with the previous two education bills; however, the secular agenda was also plainly visible. Religious Education and worship were not to be found within the new National Curriculum, but the ERA and its aftermath brought these issues to the surface. The debate in both Houses of Parliament reflected growing concern that daily worship in schools had become insipid, secular and had no place in our modern multicultural society. This debate, which occurred in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, included arguments over whether schools should embrace the multi-faith population in their catchment areas and whether the wording of the bill should be amended to reflect a more explicitly Christian form of worship, despite opposition from those who felt that this would imply that other religions were not as significant. The wording of the ERA was defended by Lord McNair, speaking on behalf of the Bishop of London, who attested that:

The package provides a new basis for Religious Education in our schools. It both secures the centrality of Christianity in Religious Education and does so in a way which is appropriate to our education system. It acknowledges and provides for the valid concerns of other religious communities in Britain as part of our nation and does so within that system and not by requiring them to meet their concerns by withdrawing or opting out. (Hansard 498 HL Deb 638)



Baroness Cox highlighted several ongoing issues, speaking at length about the ‘violation of the 1944 Act in that in too many schools now there is no act of worship’, the content of both Religious Education and worship, described as ‘either excessively secularised and politicised or where the multi-faith approach has been adopted to the extent that all faiths are trivialised’ and finally the ‘related concern over the need to protect the integrity of Christianity and of other world religions’ (Hansard 498, HL Deb 641). In other words, by 1988 compulsory Collective Worship as described in the 1944 Education Act was acknowledged in Parliament as often being ignored. Cheetham (1999) argues that societal issues, including immigration and secularisation, as well as debate concerning the relevance of Collective Worship, had a profound impact on the implementation of Collective Worship in schools. Such issues led to Hull writing ‘School Worship, an Obituary’ (1975), as mentioned in the Introduction.

Another major reason for the lack of implementation of Collective Worship in schools was the absence of regulated and centralised inspections. Prior to 1992, schools were inspected by LEA-employed inspectors. The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) was formed under the Education (Schools) Act 1992, as part of the major overhaul and centralisation of the school system begun by the ERA 1988. In April 2007, the remit was altered and the Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (the present Ofsted) was formed through the amalgamation of four separate inspectorates, including the children’s social care remit of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), the inspection work of the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI), and the inspection remit of the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) from Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Court Administration (HMICA). This expansion made Ofsted one of the largest regulatory and inspection bodies in England. Ofsted was set up to regulate and improve standards within educational establishments and to ensure consistency and transparency in the inspection process (Elliot, 2012).

Regarding the above legislation concerning the inspection of Collective Worship, Wright comments:

Legislation is one thing, but the effective implementation of legislation is entirely different. This is a reality religious educators have long been aware of: for years, the legal requirement for a daily act of Collective Worship demanded by the 1944 Education Act was simply brushed aside and ignored

by countless schools. The new factor in the 1988 legislation was that of accountability. (Wright, 1999, p7)

In other words, schools now had to demonstrate to Ofsted that they were indeed conforming to the legislation and could produce documents and policies to demonstrate it. The role and remit of Ofsted will be discussed later in this chapter.

The ERA 1988 reinforced the legal position of Collective Worship but also introduced various new factors such as the qualifying phrase of Collective Worship being ‘wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character’ (ERA 1988, Section 7,1). Baroness Cox questioned this phrase in the ERA:

If it is to be interpreted as the expectation that worship shall be Christian except for the provision for other faiths as specified elsewhere in the Bill, that seems to me acceptable. However, if it is to be a mandate for some confusing multi-faith assembly, I believe that that would be unacceptable not only to Christians but also to those of other faiths. Worship implies worship of a god not gods. Many people would not be able to accept that wording which left open the opportunity for the destruction of the purity of worship according to the integrity of their faith. Therefore, I believe that many people need to be very strongly reassured about the legal meaning of the wording “in the main” in Amendment No. 69. (Hansard 498, HL Deb 641)

Cheetham (1999) in his doctoral thesis ‘The nature and status of religious belief in contemporary Britain (with particular reference to the concept of “truth”) as reflected by acts of Collective Worship in a sample of Luton schools since the 1988 Education Reform Act’ argued that the ERA 1988 legislation, with its emphasis on Collective Worship being ‘wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character’, was not appropriate for multicultural and multi-faith Britain. Cheetham (1999) suggested that the more politicians attempted to appease all faiths, the more negotiated Collective Worship became until the ‘final wording of the Act was very much a political compromise between what might be termed the “Christian heritage” and the “multicultural” lobbies’ (p54). Jackson (2004) also agrees that despite a steady decline in membership of Christian churches, paralleled with an increase in secularism and active membership of other faiths and traditions during the 1960s and 1970s, the

authority and impact of Christianity was evident during the debate in Parliament. Jackson claims that, despite the debate in Parliament, there was a lack of attention paid by politicians to research concerning Religious Education since the early 1960s. He described the debate itself as ‘a crude wrangling’, with the outcome being a spate of statements from certain politicians supporting a form of religio-cultural exclusiveness, demanding the teaching of confessional Christianity to preserve ‘British culture’ and ordering society on a moral basis (Jackson 2004, p225).

On the other hand, Freathy and Parker (2012/2013) discuss the impact of humanist and secularist groups during the period following the introduction of the 1944 legislation, and the growing discontent with the significantly Christian content in Collective Worship as part of Religious Education. This dissatisfaction led to ‘a moment of great transformation’ where, according to Doney (2015), ‘Christian Confessionalism was swept aside and replaced by a phenomenological, liberal study of World Religions’ (p16). Notwithstanding these cultural shifts, the role of Christianity with RE and Collective Worship continued to be debated with the introduction of the ERA 1988 (see, Watson, 1993; Wright, 1993; Cheeatham, 1999; Felderhof, 1999/2000; Webster, 2000; Jackson, 2004; Meredith, 2006; Felderhof, Torevell & Thompson, 2000; Felderhof and Thompson, 2015), with Cox (1988) arguing that the teaching of Christianity had become merely an exercise in multi-faith relativism or secular discussions.

Certainly, during the parliamentary debate, varying views on the importance of Christianity were given. For example, Lord Home of the Hirsell, (Prime Minister 1963-1964, Foreign Secretary 1960-1963 and 1970-1974) confessed that his concern ‘has been that the story of Christianity should be told to the children, because I do not believe that one can understand the nature of our country unless that story is told and unless it is known’, adding that ignorance of such values ‘has made it very difficult for our boys and girls to tell the difference between right and wrong’ (Hansard 498 HL Deb 647). This view presumes morality can only be taught through Christianity. This is clearly not the case, as other religions also have their own moral codes, as do those who hold no religious beliefs. However, this view was echoed by Lord St. John of Fawsley, who stated ‘One cannot teach morality effectively to the ordinary child unless there is some higher sanction behind it’ (Hansard 498 HL Deb 649), and also expressed by Lord Houghton of Sowerby, who suggested that perhaps the reasoning behind such religious indoctrination was actually

behaviour management: 'When the Secretary of State says that our children should be exposed to spiritual experience and belief, I wonder whether religious indoctrination is the only way to get our children to behave better' (Hansard 498 HL Deb 645).

The debate was instrumental in moving educationalists towards a wider consideration of the spiritual and moral development that was possible within a relevant curriculum which was not dependent on school worship. Meredith (2006) in his paper 'Religious Education and Collective Worship in state schools: England and Wales' questioned the value and purpose of Religious Education and Collective Worship in schools. He agreed with the aims of education stated in the ERA, especially the emphasis placed upon the spiritual dimension being infused into the entire school programme; however, he also claimed that such aims were 'arguably expressed at too high a level of generality to be of direct practical effect' (Meredith, 2006, p161). Meredith recognised the historical links and traditions regarding the teaching of Religious Education and Collective Worship; however, he concluded that these links could be broken. He argued that Collective Worship and Religious Education could be excluded from the curriculum, leaving responsibility for the spiritual development of the child to the parents and religious groups (p168).

As can be seen by the debate within Parliament, the ERA 1988 'had to cope with the tension between those who wished to maintain the heritage and influence of the Christian faith and those who wanted a more open, inclusive, even handed and multi-faith approach' (Cheetham, 2000, p71). Flexibilities in practice were introduced, including allowing the timing of Collective Worship being made more accommodating; no longer was it necessary to hold it at the beginning of the school day. The compromise also permitted a significant element of flexibility in the content of acts of Collective Worship. The cultural and religious background of students, therefore, can and should influence the style and content of the act of Collective Worship, with the possibility of a deviation from the requirement that Collective Worship be of a broadly Christian character if it is deemed necessary to meet the needs of the students (Meredith, 2006, p155). Other changes also included permitting a form of Collective Worship more geared towards the school setting, with the ERA 1988 stating that 'where a school finds that it would be inappropriate for Collective Worship to be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character, an appeal for a determination may be made to the local SACRE.' (ERA 1988, para 12).

### **Definition of SACRE and legal requirements**

During the ERA debate in Parliament, the role of SACRE was highlighted by Lord McNair, speaking on behalf of Right Reverend Prelate the Bishop of London, who said ‘It will be apparent that the standing advisory councils will have a very important role to play in ensuring the effective implementation of the new provisions’ (Hansard 498 HL Deb 639). The ERA 1988 ensured the compulsory nature of Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs) and made it a legal responsibility for individual LEAs to set up local SACREs. The composition of SACRE is defined by law. It is made up of four committees (see Appendix 2). Each committee within SACRE makes a distinctive contribution. Members of each committee are unpaid volunteers, although expenses may be paid. There are no requirements to meet a certain number of times per year, but meetings are usually held once a term. Decisions cannot be made unless there is at least one person present from each committee to cast that committee’s single vote. However, many members a committee may have, each committee is only allowed one vote.

The LEA has a duty to fund SACREs. However, funding for SACREs varies between counties. The implications for this and its impact on Collective Worship will be examined further in Chapter 4.

### **The role and duties of SACRE**

Through the ERA (1988), SACREs were granted specific powers to support schools and inspect the nature of the religious teaching, both in the classroom and during Collective Worship. With regards to Collective Worship, their remit includes responsibility for advising the LEA on Collective Worship matters in community schools and other schools; overseeing Collective Worship within the authority; advising on methods of teaching, choice of materials and provision of teacher training for Collective Worship; monitoring Collective Worship; and considering complaints about the provision and delivery of Collective Worship. Their remit also covers other activities, such as producing Collective Worship guidelines for schools, SMSC development, and the recording of and reporting on Collective Worship in annual reports. SACREs also consider applications for a ‘determination’, where head teachers may request that their school is released from the statutory requirement to provide Collective Worship that is wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character, if it is deemed inappropriate for some or all school pupils.

SACREs may also visit schools to experience an act of worship, address schools' non-compliance with legal requirements, organise SACRE training days and lectures, ensure that SACRE is represented on national bodies and at national courses/conferences and write development plans to ensure SACRE 'moves forward' and is effective in carrying out its duties and tasks. A report by Ofsted entitled 'An evaluation of the work of Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education November 2004' (2004a) noted that the functions SACRE perform differ from SACRE to SACRE, with some SACREs retaining their original remit, whilst 'Others have developed the role, becoming actively involved in the provision of support for RE and Collective Worship' (Ofsted, 2004a, p7). The report also highlighted the differences between how each individual SACRE comprehends their remit and the decline in the amount of time SACREs devote to Collective Worship. It observed that 'Collective Worship generally occupies less of the time and interest of SACREs than does RE' (Ofsted, 2004, p8), although it did not explain why this is.

A clear role of all SACRE committees is to foster the importance of social and community cohesion through encouraging and developing links between the LEA, schools and faith communities. SACREs are seen to have an important role to play in promoting community cohesion, as emphasised in the Department for Communities and Local Government (DfCLG) (2008) guidelines entitled 'Face to face and side by side: A framework for partnership in our multi-faith society', which state that 'SACREs, where properly supported by the LEA, can act as powerful vehicles for building, appreciating and managing differences in beliefs and values in schools, education more widely and the local community. They are a partnership between faith communities in each local area and with the LEA and schools. SACREs are predominantly focused on education but are also a statutory group that can be consulted on interfaith issues, act as sounding boards or work in partnership on broader initiatives' (DfCLG, 2008, p96). The implication for SACRE with regards to the support and promotion of Collective Worship, SMSC development and community cohesion will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

### **The National Association of SACREs**

The collective views of local SACREs are represented nationally by NASACRE (The National Association of SACREs). In 1993, representatives of local SACREs met to set up and formally constitute a National Association of SACREs. This followed the implementation of the ERA 1988 and the statutory powers and responsibilities now entrusted

to SACREs. NASACRE is a non-profit organisation which is financed by affiliation fees from SACREs and subscriptions to public meetings. NASACRE supports local SACREs through Annual General Meetings, forums, newsletters and a password-protected website for SACRE members. NASACRE also represents the interests of its members at a national level through the executive committee. The executive committee represents the interests of SACREs at meetings of the DfE and the Religious Education Council of England and Wales. The executive committee attends national conferences, seminars and discussion groups; contributes to national initiatives such as the NATRE (National Association of Teachers of Religious Education) review of Religious Education (2013); and plays a key role in debates about the place of RE and Collective Worship in schools.

### **Definition of Ofsted and legal requirements**

As mentioned earlier, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) was formed under the Education (Schools) Act 1992, as part of the major overhaul and centralisation of the school system begun by the ERA 1988.

The role of Ofsted is to inspect schools, colleges, initial teacher education, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. Following Ofsted's expansion in 2007, an 'over-arching framework' was devised to provide greater consistency and coherence and reduce the duplication of inspections. 'Ofsted inspects: A framework for all Ofsted inspection and regulation' (2009) set out the basis for developing more flexible frameworks, better tailored to the needs of each educational provider, including academies.

With regards to Collective Worship, Ofsted offered inspection guidance, which, together with advice in the DfE Circular 1/94, was intended to help schools. What follows is an extract from the 'Ofsted Handbook for Inspecting Secondary Schools', hereafter referred to as the 'Ofsted Handbook 1999)

Evaluation (of collective worship) should focus on whether acts of worship are well planned and encourage pupils to explore questions about meaning and purpose, values and beliefs. The law requires schools other than Pupil Referral Units to provide a daily act of collective worship. Taken over a

term, the majority of such acts of worship should be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character. (p67)

The guidance above echoed the legal requirement regarding Collective Worship found in the ERA 1988. An Ofsted report following a school inspection was also to include evidence of what worship has occurred, and is planned, over a term. On balance, if the inspectors judged that what the school provided with regards to Collective Worship was not in keeping with the spirit of the law, then this would be recorded and explained: ‘Worship may be judged not to fulfil statutory requirements but could still be observed to make a powerful contribution to pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. That should be made clear in the report.’ (p67).

The Ofsted Handbook (1999) also offers advice on how to form a judgement about the character and quality of worship in schools, suggesting definitions of key terms. It defines ‘worship’, for example, by saying ‘Worship is generally understood to imply the recognition of a supreme being. It should be clear that the words used and/or the activities observed in worship recognize the existence of a deity’ (p67). The Handbook also states that Collective Worship should not be judged by the presence or absence of any specific ingredient. The Handbook informs inspectors that Collective Worship encompasses many aspects, for example the sharing of values of a Christian nature; opportunities for prayer or meditation; opportunities to reflect upon readings from holy texts or other writings that bring out religious themes; and the performance of music, drama and/or dance. The issues surrounding the inspection of and reporting on Collective Worship are discussed throughout this thesis, including the next chapter, which explore the perceptions of those whose remit it is to monitor and report on Collective Worship.

### **Circular 1/94**

Further guidance regarding Collective Worship was given in Circular 1/94. Circular 1/94, published in 1994, was intended to supplement the ERA 1988 with clear directions concerning the meaning of ‘worship’, something which was not clarified in the ERA 1988. The aims of Collective Worship were also defined clearly, ‘Collective worship in schools should aim to provide the opportunity for pupils to worship God’ (Circular 1/94: paragraph 50). Circular 1/94 also reinforced the idea that exceptional emphasis was expected to be



placed upon the Christian faith, and stated that pupils should have a ‘thorough knowledge of Christianity reflecting the Christian heritage of this country’ (Paragraph 7). The actual content of Collective Worship was also defined: ‘It (an act of worship that is) must, however, contain some elements which relate specifically to the traditions of Christian belief and which accord a special status to Jesus Christ’ (Paragraph 63). However, those who were not of the Christian faith ‘should be able to join in the daily act of collective worship, even though this would, in the main, reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief’ (paragraph 65). Circular 1/94 also stated that there was a difference between Collective Worship and an assembly, with the two being ‘distinct activities. Although they may take place as part of the same gathering, the difference between the two should be clear’ (Paragraph 58). However, the difference between the two is not as clear cut as Circular 1/94 deemed it to be, and varying definitions of both will be discussed in Chapter 2.

The emphasis on Christian heritage in Circular 1/94 is also reflected in the way the academic year revolves around Christmas and Easter holidays, while in the more traditional universities the terms are religious too. Oxford University, for example, has Michaelmas, Hilary and Trinity, marking the feast days of the Archangel Michael, St Hilary of Poitiers and the metaphysical constitution of God. St Andrews University has two semesters, Martinmas and Candlemas. Durham has Michaelmas, Epiphany and Easter. In fact, most annual celebrations are religious in their origins, although less obviously so. For example, Halloween is a last hurrah of the powers of evil before their routine expulsion on All Hallows’ Day, and Bonfire Night marks the burning in effigy of a Catholic threat to national security. The shape of our week is also religious: the seven-day cycle, including a day of rest, is a Judeo-Christian contribution to our society. Although days and months are largely named after pagan gods, our years are numbered from the birth of Christ. The very notion of ‘holidays’ perpetuates the age-old observation of ‘holy days’.

Circular 1/94 focuses on Christian heritage and reaffirmed that Collective Worship is to be ‘wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character’. However, it should be noted that this means that most worship in schools should reflect Christian beliefs, not necessarily Christian worship practices. Certainly, the broad traditions include those unique to Christianity: Jesus as Son of God and God as Redeemer, plus the major festivals of the Church. Nevertheless, Collective Worship can and should also reflect the broad traditions of Christian belief that are shared by other faiths, for example, God as creator and humankind as stewards of the earth

and its resources. Thus, an act of Collective Worship focusing on the Jewish festival of Tu B'Shevat (the New Year for Trees) would enable all those with a concern for ecology and the environment to participate in the act and for the Collective Worship act to be broadly Christian too. According to Circular 1/94, acts of Collective Worship that are broadly Christian need not contain only Christian material. Some universal concepts such as justice and respect for life are part of the broad traditions of Christian belief, and much can be made of those in Collective Worship.

### **Educational reform under Labour, 1997 onwards**

Despite numerous educational reforms, policies and changes of government, Collective Worship remained a compulsory feature of education in maintained schools, as stated in the 1944 Education Act and the ERA 1988. However, the 'New' Labour government, elected in 1997 and led by Tony Blair, unequivocally changed the status of education in England, impacting on the national work of SACREs and Ofsted, as well as the practice of Collective Worship. During a party conference speech in 1996, and repeated in 2001, Blair claimed his priorities for government were 'education, education, education'. 'New' Labour began by overhauling the comprehensive school system in numerous ways, including continuing the concept of specialist schools established by the Conservative government under John Major. The 'New' Labour government was determined to further this idea of 'specialist schools', where schools could achieve specialist status in the arts, music, humanities, sciences etc., through introducing financial incentives. This process involved raising £50,000 in business sponsorship, setting improvement targets and involving the local community. In return, schools would receive a £100,000 capital grant, £120 extra per pupil per year for at least four years, and would also be allowed to select up to 10% of their intake based on aptitude. It is not surprising that, with such attractive financial incentives, comprehensive schools rushed to become specialist schools. Under successive Conservative governments (1975-1997), only 200 schools applied for specialist status; under the 'New' Labour government, by 2005 nearly all comprehensive schools could define themselves as specialising in an area (Adonis, 2012, p47).

The introduction of specialist schools, described in some quarters as the 'creeping privatisation of education' (Gillard 2011), was quickly followed in March 2000 by Labour announcing its intention to create a network of 'city academies'. City academies were

effectively private schools paid for by the state. Lord Adonis, Minister for Schools between 1998 and 2008, with responsibility for overhauling and reforming the education system in England, claimed that the programme epitomised the beginning of a new era for the education system in England. The main intention of this ‘fourth phase of national state school development’ was to overcome what he saw as the many failings of the comprehensive system (Adonis, 2012). Academies were to be independently funded state schools, and thus outside the remit of both the LEA and SACRE.

### **Educational reform under the coalition, 2010 onwards**

Support for the academy programme continued when the Conservatives formed a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats in 2010, with commitments to the academy programme written into ‘The Coalition: our programme for government’ (Cameron and Clegg, 2010). As part of this commitment to raising standards in schools, the coalition government introduced The Academies Act of 2010. The Academies Act 2010 paved the way for the ‘new style’ Academies announced by the coalition Government.

As the academies programme developed under the Academies Act of 2010, the implications for Collective Worship became more noticeable. This can be seen in Swindon SACRE’s guidance, ‘Time to Breathe, New Guidance on Collective Worship’ (2012). This document is referred to throughout this thesis, as it concerns the geographical area that is the focus of this snapshot study. ‘Time to Breathe’ cites the law regarding Collective Worship on page 1, and later again on page 4: ‘All maintained schools and Academies, whether or not they have a religious character, are required to have daily acts of Collective Worship and to teach Religious Education as part of their curriculum’ (p4). Also on page 4, academies were reminded again of the legislation: ‘All Academies, in accordance with their funding agreements, must have an act of daily worship and will be inspected under Ofsted criteria which look to make judgements about SMSC development and so Collective Worship may play a part of their decisions’ (p4). The mention of ‘funding agreements’ is significant, as it crucially highlighted a change of direction from the original uniformity of the law. It seems that the law regarding Collective Worship was made responsive to the individual influence of academy sponsorships. The model funding agreements for such schools did require such a provision, but did not require schools to use a locally agreed syllabus. New guidance was also offered to head teachers and governors on the new Ofsted criteria for SMSC development,

RE and Collective Worship, entitled ‘Guidance for Head teachers and Governors’ (Ofsted 2014a). All schools and academies were reminded of their obligation to ‘provide CW [sic] that is wholly or mainly broadly of a Christian character’ (Ofsted, 2014, p5) and academies were asked to consult the conditions of their funding agreements. The significance of funding agreements will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

The Academies Act 2010 made it easier for all schools (including primary and special schools) to gain academy status. In August 2010, all primary, secondary and special schools with an Ofsted status of outstanding became eligible to apply to become academies. In November 2010, the government announced it was inviting all good schools with outstanding features to convert, and it was also providing an opportunity for any school to convert, irrespective of Ofsted grade, if it joined an academy trust with an excellent school (outstanding, or good with outstanding features) or had an education partner with a strong record of improvement. In January 2011, the government announced it was inviting applications from outstanding special schools, with pupil referral units (PRUs) invited to apply from September 2012. As detailed in the ‘Academies Annual report 2011-2012’ (DfE, 2013a), the number of academies in England rose from 203 at the beginning of the coalition government in May 2010 to 2,924 by May 2013. In the same report, Michael Gove, then Secretary of State for Education, offered his reasoning for the legislation:

There is clear evidence to show greater school autonomy leads to improved outcomes for pupils, and that quality sponsorship is tackling entrenched underperformance. It is for that reason that this Government took urgent and decisive action to expand the Academies programme to tackle underperformance and to free schools from bureaucratic constraints to do what is best for their pupils.’ (DfE, 2013, p6)

The government asserts that academies, just like any other educational establishment for primary and secondary education, must adhere to the current Collective Worship legislation; the ‘Religious Education and Collective Worship in Academies and Free Schools Q&A’ document maintains that ‘Free Schools are Academies in law and have the same requirement to provide RE and Collective Worship’ (National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE), 2013, p1). DfE legislation also echoes this: ‘All academies are expected to teach Religious Education and have daily Collective Worship according to the conditions

of their funding agreement' (DfE, 2014e, p23). An academy with a religious designation will arrange Religious Education and Collective Worship in line with the faith of the academy. An academy without a religious designation must provide Religious Education in accordance with the requirements of the agreed local syllabus for Religious Education, written by the local SACRE. The document continues by clarifying that 'An Academy's Funding Agreement is drafted to mirror the requirements for acts of Collective Worship in maintained schools. Each pupil must take part in a daily act of Collective Worship unless they have been withdrawn by their parents [...] this applies to Academies with or without a religious designation' (DfE, 2014e, p4).

In January 2012, a new Ofsted framework emphasised four key areas for school inspections: i) the achievement of pupils; ii) the quality of teaching and learning; iii) the effectiveness of leadership and management; and iv) the standards of behaviour and safety in schools. Inspectors were to focus more closely on aspects of schools' work that have the greatest impact on raising achievement; this included inspectors considering the SMSC development of pupils at the school. Following the Ofsted Framework introduced in 2012, new Ofsted criteria for SMSC development, Religious Education and Collective Worship were also published, entitled 'Guidance for Headteachers and Governors on Ofsted September 2014 criteria for SMSC, RE and Collective Worship' (2014a). The guidance reminds schools that they will be held accountable by Ofsted during inspections. The guidance reaffirms the accountability of schools 'this advice is primarily for head teachers and other staff of maintained schools who are responsible for curriculum matters, and governing bodies' (Ofsted, 2014a, p3). In the final section, under the heading 'Accountability', it is emphasised that 'as part of a Section 5 inspection, Ofsted inspectors must consider pupils' SMSC development when forming a judgement of a school' (Ofsted, 2014a, p7). A concise message is given to schools and inspectors: 'A school is judged to require significant improvement where it has serious weaknesses because one or more of the key areas is 'inadequate' (grade 4) and/or there are important weaknesses in the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development' (Ofsted, 2014a, p21). A judgement of 'inadequate' or 'requires improvement' can have, from my personal experience of working in three such schools, a detrimental impact on a school. This can involve, for example, negative local media reports; parents withdrawing their children, leading to reduced funding for the school (as funding is per student); and a heavier workload placed on teachers, as lesson observations and administrative paperwork increase. The worst-case scenario for such a school would be the

forced closure of the school, leading to students having to settle into new schools and teachers find new positions. Through the ‘Ofsted Framework’ (2012) and ‘Ofsted guidance for SMSC’ (2014a), as part of a school inspection, emphasis is placed upon the inspection of SMSC development, with Collective Worship being one of the areas that inspectors are advised to inspect for evidence of SMSC development. Thus, the new Ofsted framework and criteria for SMSC development, in theory, should have had a direct impact on the significance placed on Collective Worship by schools. However, as Chapter 4 will highlight through the perspectives of SACRE member and Ofsted inspectors, this has not been the case.

The ‘Ofsted Handbook on SMSC, R.E and Collective Worship’ (2014b) emphasises the duty head teachers and governors have towards ‘protecting students from possible extremism’ (Ofsted, 2014b, p4) by actively promoting British values. Head teachers are reminded that they must offer a broad and balanced curriculum that prepares pupils for life in modern Britain, and that ‘inspectors should verify that good teaching within a broad and balanced curriculum, accompanied by effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is helping to prepare children and young people for life in modern Britain’ (Ofsted, 2014b, p42). This preparation for ‘life in modern Britain’ occurs both within and outside of the classroom environment. Therefore, the handbook guidelines also state, under ‘Other observations’, that ‘Inspectors must ensure that they observe pupils in a range of situations outside normal lessons to evaluate aspects of behaviour and safety, for example [...] during assemblies’ (Ofsted, 2014b, p15). The ‘Ofsted Framework’ (2012), the ‘Ofsted guidance for SMSC’ (2014a) and the ‘Ofsted Inspection Handbook’ (2014b) highlight the significance of Collective Worship, not just for SMSC development but also for the promotion of British values. The Handbook (2014) was followed by the Ofsted inspection framework entitled ‘The common inspection framework: education, skills and early years’ (2015), which also highlighted how Ofsted should make judgements with regards to how leadership and management ‘actively promote British values’ and ‘prevent radicalisation and extremism’ (Ofsted, 2015, p13). These ideas will be examined further in Chapter 7.

### **Educational reform under the Conservative Government, 2015 onwards**

After the Conservatives won the general election in May 2015, the conversion of state schools to academies continued. In a speech to commemorate the first 100 days of

Conservative leadership, David Cameron, the Prime Minister, stated that educational reforms would continue, affirming the Conservative policy that required ‘every school in the country to have the opportunity to become an academy and to benefit from the freedoms this brings’, with the priority being for his government to ‘recruit more academy sponsors and support more great headteachers in coming together in academy chains’ (Cameron, *The Guardian*, 15<sup>th</sup> August 2015). It is worth repeating that schools that convert to academies are no longer under the control of the LEA.

Despite beginning the academies programme under Tony Blair in 1997, Labour were now opposed to the Conservative government’s policies. In September 2014, eight Regional School Commissioners (RSC) were appointed by the government with a remit to hold academies to account. However, the Local Government Association (LGA), which represents over 370 councils across England and Wales, raised concerns regarding the ability of the RSC to help failing academies. The LGA (2017) argued that the number and variety of academies under the RSC’s remit has led to a situation in which the RSC still lacks local awareness and the competence to investigate the various issues that occur at deficient academies. A report, ‘Council Maintained Schools & Academies, 2017’, commissioned by the LGA and carried out by Angel Solutions (the authors of the inspection report database Watchsted), found that 86% of local authority schools were rated good or outstanding by Ofsted, compared with 82% of academies and 79% of free schools. The then Chair of the LGA, Cllr Richard Watts, reasoned that local councils should be allowed to be part of the process of school improvement due to their local knowledge. Watts contended that ‘Councils want to be regarded as improvement partners, not obstructionists to school improvement’ and added that ‘many schools have improved due to council intervention, including a local council’s ability to support strong leadership, outstanding classroom teaching and appoint effective support for staff and governors.’ (Watts, 2017).

## **Summary**

This chapter has briefly examined issues such as the connection between the Church of England and education in England and Wales, the continued existence of the 1870 ‘conscience clause’ and the requirement that schools contribute to SMSC development, using various Hansard and HMSO documents, as well as academic sources. The chapter has outlined the law regarding Collective Worship, and covered the debates on the topic in both

Houses of Parliament. The discussion has shown that the current debate surrounding Collective Worship legislation has historical roots with the church going back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including the ‘conscience clause’ introduced through the Education Act of 1870. The 1944 legislation, which introduced compulsory Collective Worship and Religious Education as a legal requirement, continued to generate debate surrounding the ‘conscience clause’ and the rights of students to choose whether to attend Collective Worship. The ERA 1988 sustained SMSC development and continued the tradition of compulsory Collective Worship, despite debate in Parliament. Collective Worship was to be supported and monitored by the implementation of the newly-legislated agencies of SACRE and Ofsted. More recent debates in parliament have also suggested that the conflict regarding daily Collective Worship has not been resolved. This chapter also briefly explained the roles and remits of SACRE and Ofsted, followed by an examination of the development of the academies programme and its impact on SACRE and Ofsted.

The introduction of academies led to a decline in the authority of SACREs, as academies are regarded as independent schools and thus outside the remit of the LEA and SACRE. This has led to a paradoxical situation where SACRE has a duty to define and develop good practices in Collective Worship, and to encourage and promote community cohesion, yet has little government support.

The emphasis Ofsted has placed on Collective Worship has changed since the organisation’s inception in 1992. It has shifted from inspecting Collective Worship as an act to inspecting assemblies for elements of SMSC development. Collective Worship in academies is dictated by their funding agreements, which Ofsted inspectors need to be aware of when inspecting individual academies. Ofsted inspectors also need to make judgements on the promotion of British values and be aware of elements of extremism within the whole curriculum, not just within Collective Worship, including an assessment of the role of leadership and management in their judgement.

The next chapter builds upon articles on Collective Worship and related issues from key journals and the work of unpublished theses (Cheetham, 1999; Gill, 2000; Bishop, 2001; Smart, 2001; Amankwatia, 2007; Hemming, 2009; Rawle, 2009; Rutherford 2012; Inglis, 2012; Lumb, 2014) to gain an understanding of where and how the roles of SACRE and Ofsted, with regards to Collective Worship, fit into the current political climate.



## **Chapter 2: Literature Review – Part 1**

The previous chapter briefly identified the main issues underpinning the practice of Collective Worship, focusing on the historical and political elements through an analysis of relevant Hansard and HMSO documentation, as well as academic sources. Chapter 1 also defined the roles and remits of SACRE and Ofsted and the Academies programme was explored.

The next two chapters serve as both a literature review and an introduction to some of the leading positions on the ERA 1988 and Circular 1/94 with regards to Collective Worship. This chapter maps the literature and identifies my focus followed by exploring the appropriateness of Collective Worship in 21<sup>st</sup> century schools, including examining the definition of Collective Worship. Following on from this, Chapter 3 offers considers the contribution Collective Worship makes to community cohesion and SMSC development and the role Collective Worship plays as a countermeasure to extremism.

The chapters cover the perceptions and views of relevant religious and non-religious leaders and organisations, including the Church of England, the Muslim Educational Trust, the National Secular Society and the British Humanist Association; those within the school community (teachers, students, governors and parents); Ofsted; and SACRE. It also covers the work of researchers and academic writers, including Bishop, 2001; Cheetham, 1999; Davies, 2000, Gill, 2000; Dunman, 2001; Smart, 2001; Wright, 2000/2006 etc; Smith and Smith, 2013 and Mogra, 2016. The perceptions and views of the above groups are often, but not necessarily, overlapping as will be demonstrated in this chapter. Some of these opinions are ‘dominant perceptions and views’, that is, views that have weight in official pronouncements concerning the debate. These can be found in Parliamentary records, hearings and debates (as already seen in Chapter 1), as well as academic writing, published papers and official documents.

As a Christian, my faith guides how I see the world and how I act within it. As a critical realist, I see God as the ultimate reality, who exists independently of any human discernment of Him. This means my understanding of God may differ from others, however, I am open to further my understanding of God through critical reflection (Cooling, 2005; Easton, 2010;

Wright, 2013b; Lindsey et al. 2015). For example, Lindsey et al. 2015 describe critical reflection as a ‘conversation with ourselves that leads to even deeper understanding of our own values and beliefs’ (Lindsey et al. 2015: 13). Consequently, the positioning of myself as a both a Christian and a critical realist has impacted on how I have engaged with the literature. As a Christian, I am concerned that Collective Worship is purposeful and meaningful for students and teachers alike, thus using a critical realist approach, I also considered the nature of religion and its place in modern society, including the role of religion within education (Davies, 2004; Wright, 2013a; Mogra, 2016). I explored this, along with examining various approaches to the provision of Collective Worship and suggestions for alternatives that reflect the needs and desires of those involved in the debate.

The overall critical realist considerations for the literature review were influenced by Chitu Okoli (2015a) suggested that a literature review should define the purpose of the review, specify the general objectives and research questions, and decide on which kinds of literature to use. From a critical research perspective, Okoli contended that the literature used in a review should reflect ‘empirical observations that give testimony to actual events that have supposedly happened’ (2015b, p13). A critical realist approach to the literature review, offered me a ‘a lens through which contributions of genuine theoretical value can be discerned’ (Okoli, 2015b, p4). Okoli argues that the critical realism values research which is ‘multiparadigmatic, multiple-level...interdisciplinary research’ (Okoli, 2015b, p6). Using a critical research approach for a literature review, Okoli (2015) argues also places an emphasis on the use of empirical evidence of actual events which have been instigated by real processes or issues. Therefore, for the purposes of this review, this includes relevant Hansard documentation, as discussed in Chapter 1. Other literature used within this review includes HMSO regulations and guidelines as well as religious, secular and academic views on Collective Worship, as these offer the foundation for the various positions within the Collective Worship debate. The material chosen also includes ‘grey literature’, which Okoli argues is ‘scholarly studies such as that are not officially published (that is, not published in a source traceable with an ISBN or ISSN) and thus not easily located by traditional literature search means’ (2015b, p14).

Thus, this literature review begins by mapping the literature, identifying my focus and the framework I used to analyse the literature, including unpublished material. The literature review is then divided into two chapters, offering an insight into the various views regarding

1) the appropriateness of Collective Worship in 21<sup>st</sup>-century schools (in this chapter), 2) the contribution Collective Worship makes to community cohesion and SMSC development, and 3) the role Collective Worship plays as a countermeasure to extremism, especially considering the Trojan Horse letter received by Birmingham City Council (BCC) in 2013, in Chapter 3. Inherent in these sections is the critical realism approach to structure and agency. Structure is defined as the legislation, such as the ERA 1988 and the Academies Act 2010, that has impacted on Collective Worship, either in a constructive or non-constructive way. Using critical realism, the impact of the structure and implementation of the Academies Act 2010 on the agencies of SACRE and Ofsted in relation to Collective Worship is also explored. This literature review serves as a foundation for my contribution to the Collective Worship debate, which can be found in the final chapter of the thesis.

### **Mapping the literature and identifying my focus**

A critical realist approach to research permits the perusal of existing knowledge, whilst also permitting diverse aspects of social reality to be understood in their own terms (Walker, 2004). Social reality is viewed by critical realism as multifaceted and this is reflected within the field of Collective Worship with different views and perceptions on the debate. At the same time, there are a limited number of academic books available on the themes of Collective Worship debate, with fewer being contemporary (see Hull, 1975; Slee, 1990; Khan, 1995; Copley, 2000). However, up-to-date material such as reports from religious and non-religious organisations; governing and political bodies; and current articles on Collective Worship and related issues from key journals such as the *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, *British Journal of Religious Education* and the *International Journal of Christianity and Education* were utilised. This chapter uses a combination of all these resources to understand Collective Worship, and to focus on the two major contentions that result from the compulsory provision of Collective Worship in all maintained schools in England and Wales. The first traces the historical issue of the inclusion of Collective Worship in schools, as discussed in the previous chapters. The second strand, intrinsically connected to the first, can be understood principally as responses to the ERA 1988.

To fulfil the research objectives set out in the Introduction chapter, I examined SACRE reports and policy documents, as well as Ofsted school inspection reports, annual and special reports, handbooks and framework documents. I also examined government-issued guidelines

and legislation, as well as Hansard documents on and surrounding the theme of Collective Worship. I read various academic books and papers on the changes to education since the ERA 1988 and studied the various debates concerning my research theme. Okoli (2015b) maintained that within critical realism, interdisciplinary research is essential; therefore, I used the bibliographies of relevant literature to gain further access to a depth of material on interdisciplinary areas in education, history, politics (including legislation) and religion (including spirituality, theology and secularisation). Forward citation searches using Google Scholar were also invaluable in helping me to broaden my search strategy and track down current secondary literature that otherwise would have been difficult to find. Due to the relative lack of published material, I decided to use 'grey literature' (Okoli, 2015b, p14) and searched through the British Library e-theses online service (EThOS), giving me access to the full text of many UK doctoral theses. The framework I placed on the literature considered relevant was from the introduction of the ERA 1988 onwards, with an emphasis on academic sources since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This framework was chosen as I wished to focus on literature relevant to the current political climate. A search on EThOS using the key words 'Collective Worship', 'school worship' and 'spirituality' within the period from the publication of the ERA 1988 to 2017 produced 38 theses on Collective Worship, including on the perceptions of pupils (Gill, 2000; Rawle, 2009), pupils with special needs (Dunman, 2001), teachers (Cheetham, 1999; Gill, 2000; Inglis, 2012; Rawle, 2009; Smart, 2001; Dunman, 2001), members of senior leadership/management teams (Davies, 2000a; Inglis, 2012; Smart, 2001; Bishop, 2001), politicians (Bishop, 2001) and spirituality (Hemming, 2009; Lumb 2014). Layder's (1998b) methodology of identifying key themes to recognise their significance was utilised. His view of the social world consisting of individual but connected themes constituted a useful framework within which I explored the complex dynamics of the literature surrounding the Collective Worship debate. Thus, the reports were read and further filtered based on their relevance to the key themes of this thesis: the relevance of Collective Worship, the development and promotion of SMSC development and the improvement of community cohesion through the act of Collective Worship. From these, six were directly linked to the topic of my research (Bishop, 2001; Cheetham, 1999; Gill, 2000; Smart, 2001; Hemming, 2009; Lumb, 2014). A similar search through the online thesis repositories of UK universities produced four more relevant theses, at both doctoral and masters level, directly applicable to my key themes (Rutherford 2012; Inglis, 2012; Rawle, 2009; Amankwatia, 2007).

I also examined work sponsored by the Farmington Institute. The Institute was founded in the 1960s to support, encourage and improve Religious Education in schools, colleges and universities. The Institute funds teachers to research specific topics relevant to Religious Education. Such research can take many forms, including investigating subjects related to the Bible, Christian doctrine, ethical issues and theology. My search again began with the key words 'Collective Worship' and 'school worship'. This produced 13 reports concerning this theme. Since 2000, there have been five relevant reports: Fearn (2015), Southward, (2015), Aanonson (2008), Spencer (2007), Dunman (2001).

The ten unpublished theses and the five reports published by the Farmington Institute were chosen as part of the research process to examine what had already been written about Collective Worship.

The documentary material was read to gain a deeper understanding of the key issues that have arisen from the Collective Worship debate. During the reading stage, I colour-coded different viewpoints; underlined key words, phrases, or sentences; wrote comments in the margins of books, articles and journals; placed brackets around important sections of text; used arrows to show links; and numbered lines or related points in sequence. To enhance my reading of the literature, I used my research journal to make relevant notes and brief summaries, including interesting pieces of information, quotes and citations, which helped me identify and track key words, points and concepts. As a reflective practitioner, I also used my research journal to comment on what I had learnt and to reflect on what I had read.

This research builds upon the work of the unpublished theses and reports by establishing a professional context for investigating where and how the roles of SACRE and Ofsted, with regards to Collective Worship, fit into the current political climate.

## **The appropriateness of Collective Worship in 21<sup>st</sup> century schools**

For Ofsted and SACRE to effectively inspect and monitor Collective Worship, it is essential that the members of each body have a clear understanding of what they are supposed to be inspecting or monitoring. Therefore, this section begins by offering a brief explanation of the terms 'Collective Worship' and 'assembly' to differentiate between the two, followed by exploring the term 'worship'.

### **‘Assembly’ or ‘Collective Worship’? Is there a difference?**

The ERA 1988 refers to the term ‘Collective Worship’, as do Ofsted Section 5 school reports. However, throughout the country, school pupils and teachers still refer to ‘going to assembly’ (Smith & Smith, 2013; Mogra, 2017) even though ‘assembly’ and ‘Collective Worship’ are two different and distinct activities; the term ‘act of Collective Worship’ also carries implications for practice that the term ‘assembly’ does not.

Therefore, the question arises of what constitutes Collective Worship and how is this different from an assembly? Kingston SACRE’s ‘Collective Worship Guide’ (2008) stated that ‘an assembly is a gathering together for the purpose of giving information, notices, reiterating school rules etc. Collective Worship is the part of that gathering together where an act of worship takes place’ (p2). This view is echoed by Lambeth SACRE (2009), who stated that ‘assembly may be taken to mean the time which members of the school are gathered together to pass on information and move forward matters of secular business such as notices’ (p3). There are many elements that worship and assembly have in common, such as helping children to develop common standards and values, or to develop an awareness of, and a concern for, the needs of others. However, the presence of these common elements alone does not turn an assembly into an act of Collective Worship. ‘Collective Worship’ is differentiated from ‘assembly’ in Circular 1/94 with the clarification that Collective Worship should ‘encourage participation and response, whether through active involvement in the presentation of worship or through listening to and joining in the worship offered; and to develop community spirit, promote a common ethos and shared values, and reinforce positive attitudes’ (Circular 1/94, para 50), with paragraph 58 explaining that Collective Worship and assembly are ‘distinct activities. Although they may take place as part of the same gathering, the difference between the two should be clear.’ Therefore, as the CofE Ely Diocese (2012) succinctly put it, ‘An Assembly may include Collective Worship. Not every Assembly is Collective Worship’ (p16).

Smith and Smith (2013) maintain that the guidance offered to differentiate between an assembly and Collective Worship is insignificant and they refer to assembly throughout their research as for them this refers more accurately to the actual proceedings. They also raise the issue of how some assemblies are like lessons, however, differentiated between the two due to the emphasis on ethical virtues rather than values and the use of appropriate cultural and religious resources during assemblies. For Smith and Smith (2013), if an assembly

constituted only one of these elements, then the overall experience could be confusing as the experience may not fall into the category of a lesson or an assembly, thus leading to students and staff questioning the appropriateness of the whole activity.

As assemblies and Collective Worship are often held together for logistical reasons, Kingston SACRE (2008) recommended ‘a pause, or to introduce something like a picture or candle for children to use as a focus, so that it is clear when assembly finishes and Collective Worship begins’ (p2). For Irvine (2011), the use of symbols such as oil, water, light and incense used in Christian liturgy are more than just aids to worship, but are ‘suggestive and evocative’. Irvine also suggested that ‘such symbols belong to a whole matrix of imagery in scripture and prayer texts which accompany the ritual acts of worship’ (2011, page viii). Not all religions, however, accept the use of certain symbols; for example, some sects of Islam prohibit the use of naturalistic images of living beings. The introduction of a picture, as suggested by Kingston SACRE (2008) above, therefore, needs to consider the religious needs and beliefs of those present. It is at the point of the introduction of these symbols or aids to worship, Kingston SACRE proposes that those who are withdrawn from Collective Worship due to the ‘conscience clause’ can be dismissed. This is a crucial piece of legislation that defines the two. Collective Worship is not the same as an assembly, as staff and pupils do not have the right to withdraw from an assembly.

The ‘conscience clause’, as discussed in Chapter 1, gives parents the right to withdraw their children from R.E and Collective Worship. However, the clause also raises serious concerns about students’ own rights and views on studying religion (Louden 2004). Even with the ‘conscience clause’, some CofE dioceses remain unconvinced whether the current legal requirement governing Collective Worship best meets the requirements of modern Britain: ‘There are many, including committed Christians, who would argue that requiring pupils in schools to worship at all is an infringement of personal religious freedom (despite the withdrawal clauses) and educationally unsound’ (CofE, Diocese of Manchester, 2007). This view has also been concluded by Richardson et al (2013) who argued that the provision of a legal option for parents to withdraw their children was not enough as it did not offer students the right to the freedom of thought, conscience and belief. While the specific context for Richardson’s study relates to the provision of Religious Education in Northern Ireland, its implications have wider application to Collective Worship throughout the UK.

## **Circular 1/94**

Exploring the term ‘worship’ in relation to Collective Worship is not easy, especially when the ERA 1988 never clearly defined the term. The purpose of Circular 1/94 was to clarify the ERA with regards to RE and Collective Worship. Circular 1/94 refused to define the term ‘worship’, stating that “‘Worship’ is not defined in the legislation, and in the absence of any such definition it should be taken to have its natural and ordinary meaning’.

Circular 1/94 reminded schools that an act of Collective Worship is required for all registered pupils in maintained schools on a daily basis, stating, ‘Collective Worship in schools should aim to provide the opportunity for pupils to worship God, to consider spiritual and moral issues and to explore their own beliefs, to encourage participation and response, whether through active involvement in the presentation of worship or through listening to and joining in the worship offered; and to develop community spirit, promote a common ethos and shared values, and reinforce positive attitudes’ (para 50). Although Circular 1/94 insisted that pupils are not compelled by law to pray, the Circular also argued that attendance during Collective Worship is insufficient without active participation: ‘Taking part in Collective Worship implies more than passive attendance’ (para 59). Thus, unless a parent requests their child to be withdrawn from Collective Worship, pupils are expected to participate and contribute.

Dilwyn Hunt (2009), objected to Circular 1/94’s guidance on Collective Worship and argues that it should not be part of any school’s nature to encourage students to participate in the worship offered. He reasoned that the term ‘taking part’ (paragraph 59) should be omitted completely as students should be offered a choice rather than ordered through legislation to actively engage in Collective Worship. At the same time, for Hunt (2009), the right to withdraw is a contentious issue. He argued that if parents do not exercise these rights ‘it leaves young people in the invidious position of having to affirm beliefs about Jesus which they do not have’ (Hunt, 2009, p9). At the same time, he reasoned that if parents do exercise their right to withdraw, then the idea of community cohesion is lost.

Within the structure of the ERA 1988 and Circular 1/94, there is no distinct definition of the term ‘worship’, thus leading to different interpretations. With no clear guidelines, it is difficult for the agencies of Ofsted and SACRE to make the judgements that they are being asked to make on Collective Worship; these judgements must involve personal interpretations too. Cooling (2010) called the legislation, ‘complex’, ‘bewildering’ and ‘impossible either to



understand or to implement’, and claims that an underlying Christian agenda also led to the animosity of some seeking a more inclusive approach to Collective Worship. Alternatives to Circular 1/94 were rejected in 1997 by the government, due to the idea that any ‘new “inclusive” way forward would be a “Trojan Horse”, effectively promoting the secularization of school assembly’ (Cooling, 2010, p52). The use of the term ‘Trojan Horse’ is interesting for, as this thesis will detail, it was the Academies Act 2010 that triggered what is known as the ‘Trojan Horse’ incident in Birmingham, discussed further in this chapter, where a fundamentalist Muslim group attempted to promote Islamic fundamentalism through the entire school curriculum, including through Collective Worship.

Many describe that the appropriateness of Collective Worship as ‘an irreconcilable tension or paradox within the notion of “school worship”’ (London Borough of Redbridge, Advisory Team Education Services, 2004, p4). This might best be expressed as a question: how can a community that is not by nature religious (i.e. a school) meaningfully provide an activity called ‘worship’? Ofsted guidance, together with advice in Circular 1/94 and from various SACREs, was intended to be helpful to schools to help clarify the situation. The advice suggested that Collective Worship could include the sharing of values of a Christian nature; opportunities for prayer or meditation; opportunities to reflect upon readings from holy texts or other writings on religious themes; and performances of music, drama and/or dance. Such activities, however, must ‘imply the recognition of a supreme being. It should be clear that the words used and/or the activities observed in worship recognize the existence of a deity’ (Ofsted, 1999, p67). The role of Ofsted in supporting and reporting on Collective Worship will be examined further in Chapter 4.

Circular 1/94 defines the purpose of Collective Worship as to ‘in some sense reflect something special or separate from ordinary school activities and it should be concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power’ (Paragraph 57). The MCB, in 2004, agree with the idea that Collective Worship should include reference to a deity. In a written response to the DfES discussion paper on Collective Worship in 2004, the MCB clearly stated that the term ‘worship’ is not one that presents a major issue for them personally; however, they did agree that Collective Worship must be a religious occasion, with spiritual elements and clear reference to a ‘Supreme Being’: ‘If an act of collective worship consistently avoided reference to a “Supreme Being” i.e. God, then that would not constitute worship’. At the same time, according to the MCB, worship must have educational value: ‘It

is also understood by faith communities that schools are educational institutions. Therefore, the act of Collective Worship within a school, must have educational worth' (MCB, 2004, p1). In other words, Collective Worship must include teaching elements, such as moral or religious lessons, whereas worship within a religious building such as a church may or may not include such lessons. The MCB also suggested that if references to God or supreme beings are omitted, then it can no longer be classified as worship.

Without a doubt, the use of the term 'worship' can be linked to 'reverence for a divine being'; however, the association of 'worship' with a 'deity' is not as clear cut as the MCB presumes. There are different types of worship, which do not necessarily include reverence. When someone worships a god, they may praise him or her, make offerings and ask for favours, believing that the god will hear their praise, receive their offerings and answer their prayers. The second form of worship concerns showing respect to someone or something we admire. When a teacher walks into a room, students may stand up; when we meet a dignitary, we may shake hands or bow; when the national anthem is played, we may salute or put our hand to our heart. These are all gestures of respect and worship and can indicate our admiration for persons and things. Buddhists, for example, do not indulge in the first form of worship; they hold no such belief in God and deny the existence of a Creator God (Keown, 2000). They instead practice the second form of worship. It is a common misconception that Buddhists worship the Buddha; the Buddha did not claim to be God and did not presume to be worshipped as one (Ganeri, 2009). When Buddhists bow, they express devotion and gratitude to the Buddha for what his teachings have given them. Thus, the emphasis on Collective Worship in Circular 1/94 being 'concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power' creates more ambiguity, rather than lessening it. Davies (2000b) claims that such a definition may isolate some members of the school community; his research into the views of head teachers' attitudes in rural west Wales found that 44% of those questioned felt worship should be concerned with 'reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power' and 'showing commitment to certain religious beliefs' (p27). He spent some time analysing the small percentage (6.4%) of respondents who were either against or unsure about worship. Davies maintains that these views reflect the idea that to revere or venerate to a divine being is 'indoctrinatory and ill-fitting' (2000b, p27) for modern education. Slee (1990) supports the idea of 'worth-ship', exploring what we consider to be of definitive value and celebrating achievements. This view is also supported by the BHA, who state that "'Worship" [...] implies reverence for a divine being and thus excludes most Buddhists and Jains and certainly

excludes humanists and other non-religious pupils and teachers' (BHA, 2013). Sanderson (2017), President of NSS, describes secularism as a political philosophy that addresses the relationship between religions and state, desiring a separation of the two. Such an approach holds that everyone should be free to worship and practice their own faith, whilst also promoting social cohesion through educating young people together, regardless of religious background or culture. Thus, the NSS argues for changes to the law that reflect both the demise of Christianity and the increasing religious diversity to be found in England (Sanderson, 2017). The MCB also suggests that there should be significantly different expectations of worship within schools than in mosques or churches. This differentiation is essential as worship within schools is a compulsory element of the curriculum, with students and teachers of various faiths, and of no faith, gathering together. Worship within a religious building, rather than a school, is often referred to as 'corporate worship', as it involves those of one faith gathering together. The impact and implications of this differentiation will be explored further in the next section.

### **Corporate or Collective Worship?**

The fact that the legislation regarding Collective Worship is riddled with reservations and qualifications (see Slee, 1990; Webster, 1991; Khan, 1995; Hamilton & Watt, 1996; Watson & Thompson, 2006; Jackson & O'Grady, 2007 etc) bears witness to the difficulty of trying to make such arrangements within schools in a situation that has become so very pluralistic and secular. The term 'Collective Worship' replaced 'corporate worship' (1944 Education Act, section 25) and was introduced to differentiate between what was to take place in schools from the corporate worship of churches. In other words, worship in schools was not to be thought of as the worship of a body of believers, as if the school had become a church, but as a collective, an assembly of pupils whose unanimity could not be assumed but who could be gathered together for worship, if nothing sectarian or denominational was offered. Even in church schools, the worship should still be distinct from corporate worship, 'The organisation and language of collective worship, should allow for different levels of response. It should invite not coerce.' (Oxford Diocesan Board of Education, 2017, p22). Consequently, the distinction is generally regarded as indicating that the people gathered together for worship, both pupils and staff, do not represent a unified body of religious believers, but a collective of various points of view.

Prior to the ERA 1988, Baroness Hooper, in the House of Lords, emphasised the difference between collective and community or corporate worship:

First we wish as far as possible to ensure that the act of collective worship provided for in statute is indeed collective. It is because such an act of worship can perform an important function in binding together members of a school and helping to develop their sense of community that we in this country make collective worship in schools a statutory requirement [...] This educational value of worship must be clearly distinguished from confessional acts of worship which are properly pursued by practising Christians and members of other faiths. (Hansard 499, HL Deb 441)

Baroness Hooper clearly viewed the notion of Collective Worship as being pivotal in helping to build a school's sense of identity and community cohesion, with students developing a sense of belonging. The differences between the two different types of worship is important, as the term 'collective' should acknowledge that a school is a collection of different individuals and beliefs, and implies inclusiveness and no commitment to any faith.

Kingston SACRE (2008), in their 'Royal Borough Kingston (RBK) Scheme of Determination: Collective Worship' further illustrated this view, stating that Collective Worship is not the same as community or corporate worship because:

a community school is not a faith community; a community school contains pupils and staff from many different faith backgrounds as well as those who have no religious beliefs or no faith background; and a school community contains a wide range of people with different views on what 'worship' might mean and what or whom may be worthy of worship. (Kingston SACRE, 2008, p2)

The BHA, however, debates the distinction between corporate and Collective Worship. The BHA argues that the differentiation between the two does not go far enough to embrace the diverse nature of a school community. The BHA also argues that the term 'Collective Worship' is contradictory, as despite schools being a collective of individuals, those individuals are expected to come together and worship at the same time:

“Collective worship” is supposed to be different from “corporate worship” where everyone is committed to a particular faith, as in a church, synagogue, mosque, temple or other religious setting, but it appears to be a contradiction in terms. “Collective” is supposed to acknowledge that a school is a collection of different individuals and beliefs, and implies inclusiveness and no commitment to any particular faith. (BHA, 2013)

Smith and Smith (2013) also raise the issue that though Collective Worship is distinguished from corporate worship, at the core of both is the term ‘worship’, which they argue is an ‘alien practice’ (p12). They claim such practice could harm the delicate balance in our plural society. However, the political agenda, with its continued emphasis on community cohesion disagrees with this view. Government publications as ‘Guidance on the duty to promote community cohesion’ (Department for Children, Schools and Families - DCSF, 2007), ‘Our shared future’ (Commission on Integration and Cohesion, 2007) and ‘Community Cohesion Education Standards for Schools’ (Communities and Local Government, 2004) rather than the worship of God, however, does also continue to sustain the confusion of the rather ambiguous nature of Collective Worship. By emphasising community cohesion over spiritual development, it seemed there was little difference between Collective Worship and assembly. However, Circular 1/94 illuminated the situation a little by demanding that ‘all pupils in attendance at a maintained school shall on each school day take part in an act of Collective Worship. This act of Collective Worship must be mainly of a Christian nature, reflecting the broad traditions of the Christian faith.’ Guidelines offered by Circular 1/94 insist that ‘worship in schools will necessarily be of a different character from worship amongst a group with beliefs in common. The legislation reflects this difference in referring to “collective worship” rather than “corporate worship”’ (Para 57).

An examination of the implications of this differentiation between ‘corporate’ and ‘collective’ are essential for understanding some of the issues surrounding the Collective Worship debate. Collective Worship is not the same as corporate or community worship, as Collective Worship may contain pupils and staff from many different faiths and religious backgrounds, as well as those with no faith. Collective Worship daily should embrace these differences in religious views, as well as being mainly Christian in nature, together with promoting SMSC development and community cohesion. However, Smith (2005) observed that for many primary school students Collective Worship was one of the times (lunch break being the other

time) where religious differences were often reinforced through withdrawal or separate worship, despite rhetoric to the contrary. Similarly, Hemming's (2009) doctoral research examining religion and spirituality within primary schools highlights how in many school's students from minority religions were only included in secular rituals and singing. He argues that one of the schools in his research were 'restrictive' in their approach to Collective Worship, sticking 'rigidly to a Christian confessional model, meaning that religious minorities were required to abstain from taking part in sections of them' (Hemming, 2009, p103). Given these measures, it is not surprising that various religious and non-religious groups, as well as academics, as already noted in Chapter 1, criticise the current legislation. However, the withdrawal of Circular 1/94 by NASCRE and the Association of Religious Education Inspectors, Advisers and Consultants (AREIAC), as examined next, only aided the confusion.

### **Withdrawal of Circular 1/94**

In 2012, NASACRE and AREIAC expressed a new position on Circular 1/94. The statement advises schools and academies that they no longer had to adhere to Circular 1/94, due to problems arising from the wording within the Circular. However, NASACRE and AREIAC, also reminded schools and academies of the continual legal obligation to provide Collective Worship and suggest that provision for Collective Worship should be guided by the ERA 1988:

All schools and academies should be meeting the legal requirements for Collective Worship. However, we are aware that in attempting to do so many institutions experience difficulties which stem from statements which appear in Circular 1/94. The Circular is thus often a barrier to good collective worship. For this reason, NASACRE and AREIAC advise that schools and academies should not use Circular 1/94 but that their provision for Collective Worship should be guided by the legal requirements as set out in the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) and confirmed in the 1996 Education Act. (NASACRE/AREIAC, 2012)

This change led to much confusion regarding the status of Collective Worship. In other words, despite the advice from the NASACRE and AREIAC, schools and academies were hesitant over how to define their compliance with the legislation surrounding Collective Worship, without referring to Circular 1/94. A report sponsored by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), 'Collective Worship and Religious Observance in Schools: An

Evaluation of Law and Policy in the UK' (Cumper and Mawhinney, 2015), argued that the statement by NASACRE/AREIAC led schools and academies to feel uncertain about the extent to which they should refer to the Circular in their policies and funding agreements to comply with their legal obligation to provide acts of Collective Worship. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that some academies chose not to refer to Collective Worship at all in their funding agreements.

Cumper and Mawhinney (2015) also questioned the rationale for Collective Worship in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Regarding Collective Worship in England, they reported three major issues: i) the uncertainty regarding adherence to Circular 1/94; ii) the lack of compliance by schools, mentioning the remarks by David Bell, Chief Inspector of Schools, in 2004 and finally iii) the lack of reporting on Collective Worship by Ofsted. In their final recommendations, Cumper and Mawhinney (2015), argued for a review of Circular 1/94 'to assess its proper status and role in relation to Collective Worship' (p13). The report also suggests 'that Ofsted should provide more information in their inspection reports about the policies and practices of schools in regard to Collective Worship' (Cumper and Mawhinney, 2015, p13).

The BHA, which had long opposed Circular 1/94 as being divisive and outdated, welcomed the withdrawal of Circular 1/94 by NASACRE and AREIAC. The BHA, however, also argued that further work was needed to persuade the government to either produce more inclusive guidance or withdraw the guidance entirely. The BHA also suggested that the existing legislation should be replaced 'with a requirement for inspiring assemblies which are inclusive to all, regardless of religion or belief.' Such reform, the BHA argued, 'grows ever more urgent in the increasingly diverse society we live in' (Thompson, 2012).

Minor amendments have been made to the ERA 1988 due to pressure from the National Secular Society (NSS). For example, sixth-form pupils at mainstream schools and maintained special schools are able to withdraw themselves from collective worship, without the need for a parent's permission. Section 55 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 amended section 71 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 to ensure the right of sixth-form pupils to be excused from attendance at religious worship if they request. However, the NSS (2016), in their report 'Rethinking religion and belief in public life: a manifesto for change', also argued that the right to withdraw is problematic. They argued that such exclusion 'can be

both confusing and upsetting’ and claimed that withdrawal from assemblies can lead to pupils being ‘ostracized by classmates and even victimised by staff’ (p27). When Wales also introduced optional Collective Worship for sixth-formers in 2009, then Archbishop of Wales Dr. Barry Morgan criticised the school curriculum. Morgan maintained that schools were at risk of becoming ‘narrowly focused on personal attainment’ by playing down their spiritual side (Times Educational Supplement, 2009). Despite Morgan’s reservations, the NSS welcomed the SMSC development of students. The NSS held the view that ‘it is widely recognised that the collective worship requirement is an anachronism; the legacy of a society unrecognisable from the diverse and pluralistic Britain of today where citizens hold a wide variety of religious beliefs, and increasingly, no religious beliefs whatsoever’ (p26), and recommended a complete overhaul of the existing legislation, with Collective Worship being replaced with inclusive assemblies that promote the SMSC development of students.

Riess (2016) agreed that Britain is becoming more religiously diverse; he also stressed the view that religion in Britain has become increasingly important due to two main factors: the increase in immigration and the inclination of some religious believers to be drawn to fundamentalism, with religious issues such as the right to wear religious symbols or dress becoming increasingly common in the public domain, particularly in the media. Schools should value diversity; therefore, schools should encourage students of faith and those of no faith to ‘live and work together’ (Riess, 2016, p56) within and outside the school community. At the same time, Riess reiterated that this does not mean schools should embrace and accept all views about religion. He argued that due to the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter (discussed later in this chapter), schools have a duty and an obligation to tackle extremist and fundamentalist views.

As already noted in October 2012, NASACRE and AREIAC announced that they no longer viewed Circular 1/94 as their official advice on the matter. However, further amendments to the law regarding Collective Worship were supported by Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain, chair of the Accord coalition. Accord is a wide coalition of individuals and organisations from religious and non-religious groups. It includes teachers, civil rights activists and trade unionists, and campaigns for the reform of current Collective Worship laws in schools. Rabbi Romain said that dispensing with Circular 1/94 was an ‘important moment’ but urged the government to go further: ‘The continuing legal requirement that schools provide daily worship’, he argued, ‘still prevents schools from providing an inspiring programme of



assemblies that are truly respectful and genuinely inclusive of all staff and children' (Romain, 2012). Following the publication of the slimmed down National Curriculum in 2012, Accord also called for a complete governmental review of Religious Education and Collective Worship. Romain claimed that 'the Government has so far sidestepped the challenge of revisiting the burning question of school assemblies, which need urgent reform given that Collective Worship is ignored by so many schools' (Accord coalition, 2013). Accord argued for a review for two main reasons: first due to the increasingly diverse nature of life in the UK, and second due to the non-compliance by schools with Collective Worship legislation and the non-inspection of Collective Worship by Ofsted, which has been discussed in Chapter 1. However, Smith and Smith (2013) maintain that such a review would not occur due to many politicians be unwilling to confront a contentious issue which may transform into debates about Christian heritage (Mantin, 1999; Jackson, 2004; Blewett, 2008; Singleton, 2014).

### **Academic views on Collective Worship**

McCreery (1993b) argues that for many students and teachers, Collective Worship Pre-ERA 1988 was an irrelevant practice and they were merely a 'passive audience' (p10). Further to this, McCreery hoped the ERA 1988 would rejuvenate Collective Worship, enabling the act to become a meaningful experience for all. McCreery (1993b) argued that Collective Worship was a form of worship distinctive to schools; worship offered was to be educational and inclusive, embracing the varied beliefs held by individual school communities.

The definition of worship was generally interpreted to mean 'worth-ship': valuing things which were of ultimate worth rather than narrowly directed towards a god (Cheetham 2004). For Webster (1995), worship can be both a communal and individual experience (p15) combined with elements of 'discernment', 'questioning', 'valuing and questioning' and like Cheetham (1999) and Rutherford (2012) in Chapter 1, Webster also advocates the premise of freedom of choice. Given this view, he observes the compulsory nature of obligatory Collective Worship, notwithstanding the 'conscience clause', as rather 'curious' (Webster, 1995, p15) though he does differentiate between collective and corporate worship, arguing that 'Collective Worship suggests an accommodating and flexible worship which can countenance width in belief, diversity in practice and individuality in approach' (Webster, 2010, p23). The eradication of Collective Worship, therefore, for Webster (1990) would deny students '... the opportunity to experience in school what is regarded as the living centre of

religion' (p157). However, Hull (1995) advocated for the abolishment of faith-specific Collective Worship and argued such worship could be replaced with collective spirituality which would draw on the spiritual elements of a community. Such an approach to Collective Worship, Hull believed, would ease some of the conflict by members of other faiths other than Christianity towards Collective Worship. As early as 1975, John Hull argued that the tensions between the aims of education and the desires of the church for compulsory school worship has led to a situation where school worship is ill-related to the needs and concerns of the school and the society in which it is situated. He raised important issues regarding the place of school worship, as he calls it, stating that as the education system has developed, the role of school worship has diminished and is no longer relevant for a multi-cultural society, 'it is not legitimate to have pupils acquire an understanding of what it feels like to be a Christian by actually converting them, getting them to pray or to take part in the sacraments' (Hull, 1975, p96).

Felderhof (1999/2000), however, criticises Hull's argument within, 'School Worship, an obituary' (Hull, 1975) for the abolishment of Collective Worship. Felderhof (1999) argues that the best way to appreciate and understand religious life is through practice of religious worship. This view is reflected in his later work, where he argues that religious education should be correlated with Collective Worship as a means for students to experience worship (Felderhof and Thompson, 2015). At the same time, Felderhof (1999) also counters indoctrination allegations by reasoning that the introduction of worship which fosters understanding and possible commitment to religion is the foundation of opportunities, rather than the deprivation of freedom. For Felderhof (2000) the primary focus of religious education, albeit in the classroom or through Collective Worship, should be on educating students on the core principles of what it is to be religious and moral. Within this, Felderhof argues that the focus should be on students' SMSC development, with the academic study of religion being irrelevant until later in their educational journey. Watson (2007) also debates the concept of indoctrination through the teaching of religion. She argues that a curriculum which retains student's ignorance through the lack of 'knowledge, attentiveness and civilised debate' (p9) does not offer a sound educational basis for choice and is, for Watson, equivalent of indoctrination through the lack of choice and 'over-influencing in one direction' (2007, p9). This view is also reflected in the research of Faas, Darmody & Sokolowsk (2016) into religious diversity in primary schools within the Republic of Ireland. They conclude that the teaching of Religious Education should not be seen as a indoctrination but viewed as a

medium to encourage students ‘to understand and respect the increasingly diverse world and communities around them without compromising their own sense of self and their identity’ (p.96).

Cheetham (1999), in his doctoral thesis, argued that the tension between, ‘a genuinely plural, multicultural and postmodern society on the one hand and, on the other hand, the desire of many to reinforce British national identity by giving the Christian faith a privileged position (a tension which is reflected in the 1988 Education Reform Act)’ (Cheetham, 1999, p132). Using a grounded theory approach, Cheetham discovered that his data, based on interviews with teachers, could be categorised into four major themes. These themes were inclusivity; freedom of choice and personal integrity; what lies at the heart of Collective Worship and finally, the influence of the teacher. Cheetham’s four themes and his thesis overall, significantly highlighted the daily struggle of some teachers to maintain the spirit of the law in a plural, multi-faith and multi-cultural society, whilst being also heavily influenced by other factors, including, among others, their own beliefs; their own interpretation of the law; the ethos and context of the school; lack of knowledge and expertise and the influence of other teachers such as the Senior Management Team. The data gained from my field research utilises Cheetham’s four themes above in Chapter 5 and extends Cheetham’s research into the arena of those who work directly and indirectly with teachers.

Many academic works and unpublished theses continued to examine the appropriateness of Collective Worship in 21<sup>st</sup>-century schools, and it is to some of these views that I turn now.

Gill (2000) examined the justifications of Collective Worship from a philosophical perspective. She observed acts of Collective Worship in a variety of schools, and interviewed teachers and pupils to collect their insights into the ‘contribution of Collective Worship to the development of community cohesion, attainment success and the ethos of the school. Gill viewed the public debate surrounding the Collective Worship legislation as being far removed from those it impacts upon daily, and concluded that one of the most important features of Collective Worship, as perceived by those interviewed, was the sense of community that Collective Worship helps to foster. The significance of community cohesion is a theme that is repeated in Bishop’s (2001) thesis.

Bishop (2001), like Gill (2000), also chose to perform interviews to collect data for her doctoral thesis. She interviewed politicians who were instrumental in the construction of the ERA 1988, namely Baroness Cox, Dr Leonard (Bishop of London) and Lord Baker. The data gathered from these interviews were then compared to the data from her interviews with 11 head teachers; nine were primary school heads, one was head of a church school and the final head teacher was the head of a single-sex comprehensive school. All schools were in the Preston area, near the city centre and with a high Muslim population, as Bishop sought to gain an insight into the 'themes of common concern in the statutory requirements or Collective Worship, especially in a multi-faith area' (2001, p147).

Bishop's findings suggested a 'lack of consensus over the nature and purpose of Collective Worship' (2001, page iii), with head teachers expressing views on Collective Worship that had little in common with the original 1988 legislation, and with all head teachers interviewed viewing Collective Worship as important for community cohesion. Prayer, on the other hand, was not seen as an essential part of any assembly or gathering, although emphasis was placed on the idea of personal self-reflection. Most head teachers interviewed considered the current legislation for Collective Worship to be inappropriate for their schools, due to the multi-faith nature of the schools in question. The head teachers also felt that the flexibility of timing granted to them via the legislation was not that helpful, due to the pupil's needs, administration requirements of the timetable etc. Most of those interviewed also agreed that spiritual development did not necessarily have to occur through Collective Worship, but could be developed in other curriculum areas.

The politicians interviewed by Bishop (2001) held differing views, with Baroness Cox keen to preserve the idea of 'Christian heritage' (p165) with Christ being at the centre of British schools. Dr Leonard argued that religious freedom, the right to choose to worship or not to worship, was essential as well as being Biblical. Lord Baker, in agreement with Baroness Cox, supported the current legislation, although he also suggested that perhaps those with faith belonged to the older generation, i.e. his generation, suggesting that the younger generation has become more secular. While Lord Baker wholeheartedly supported the current legislation, he also contended that there were 'people who were incapable of taking any sort of Collective Worship' (Bishop, 2001, p179).

Bishop's findings illustrate how contentious Collective Worship has become, with head teachers arguing that the current Collective Worship legislation is inappropriate. This discord is also reflected in the views of the politicians, who did not agree on the significance of Collective Worship. Bishop's research also suggested that training is needed for effective Collective Worship to be delivered. Such training is often provided for schools and academies by local SACREs; however, the provision is reliant on the financial situation of individual SACREs. The issue of funding the work of SACREs will be explored further in Chapter 4. Dr Leonard also criticised SACREs for their lack of strong leadership and what he considered to be a 'failure of SACREs' to use the powers that they had been granted to investigate and question the application of determinations, to ensure Collective Worship was occurring in those schools that had applied for a determination (Bishop, 2001, p175). Bishop's research was limited to 11 head teachers and 3 politicians; however, although her research can be considered a small case study with results that do not reflect the wider school and political community, her findings have been supported by similar research with teachers, such as Cheetham (1999/2001), Gill (2000), Smart (2001), and, Rawle (2009) whose studies are discussed later in Chapter 3.

In 2004, David Bell, the then Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools and head of Ofsted (2002 – 2006), gave a speech in celebration of the 1944 Education Act. He focused on three areas in which the Act had set out to cater to the needs of the 'whole child': the curriculum; spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; and personalised learning. During his speech, Bell also included a number of detailed comments on school worship, including asking how many people, other than children, attended daily worship. He publicly questioned whether it was acceptable to ask children to attend daily worship when the majority of Christians did not. Bell also suggested ways forward regarding Collective Worship, proposing the idea that assemblies should meet the needs of the students and allow opportunities for debate and discussion, as well as worship. Following on from this, Parker, Freathy and Francis (2014) conducted an interview with Bell, where he reiterated his views on Collective Worship, arguing that politicians simply do not have the political will to amend the current legislation.

Shillitoe (2017), a doctoral student who studied children's perspectives on Collective Worship in schools, considered how childhood and religion are constructed within the media, in particularly through the BBC podcast series 'Together', which is designed predominantly

for use in Collective Worship. Shillitoe's research suggested that although the podcasts are 'predominantly Christian', as Collective Worship legislation demands, the producers have also produced programmes that do not presume the listener will have knowledge of, or affiliation to, any faith. References to Christianity, such as Biblical stories, are used to address common themes, such as personal development. Shillitoe used Hjarvard's (2013) work on the 'mediatization of religion' to analyse the podcasts. She argued that a single podcast can often display various mediaizations of religion and concluded that the 'diversity and banality' of the use of both religious and non-religious sources 'allows the podcast series to be accessible to all children, irrespective of their religion or non-religious beliefs' (p293). Thus, the podcasts offer an alternative way for schools to adhere to their Collective Worship obligations.

Hepp, Hjarvard and Lundby (2015) expanded on Hjarvard's idea of 'mediatization of religion' and argued that the media has become the main source of information and ideas regarding religion, for both religious followers and those of no faith. They developed the theme of 'banal religion' to describe the common use of vague 'religious imagery and practices in modern society' (2015, p5). Hepp, Hjarvard and Lundby explained 'banal religion' as being the 'use of contemporary ideas about what religion is or may be used for [which] are informed by a bricolage of representations and practices without any necessary or close connection to specific, organized forms of religion' (p5-6). Hepp, Hjarvard and Lundby (2015) concludes that the religion is manipulated by 'processes of mediatization' (p8) with media outlets challenging 'existing forms of religious authority at the same time as they allow new forms of authority to emerge' (p8). An example of mediatisation is the presence and practice of religion on the Internet, where individual experiences and views of religion can be exchanged. Churches and institutions within the CofE, for example, have a presence on many social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter. However, the media can also act as agents of change in religion, as illustrated by the negative media portrayal of Muslims after 9/11 (see Kellner, 2004; Altheide, 2009; Morgan and Poynting, 2012; Rawnsley, 2016), the London bombings in July 2005 (see, Rehman, 2007; Brighton, 2007; Kelsey, 2015;) and the 'Trojan Horse' letter (see Cannizzaro and Gholami, 2016; Awan, 2014). In relation to this thesis, the mediatization of religion emphasises the continued questions regarding the relevance of Collective Worship in developing community cohesion, promoting spiritual development and protecting pupils from extremism in context of these events. The 'Trojan Horse' letter is also essential to examine, because of the various reactions towards the events

involved and the impact the ‘Trojan Horse’ enquiry has had on the future of Collective Worship, as discussed in Chapter 3.

### **Summary**

This chapter examined some of the leading arguments surrounding the appropriateness of Collective Worship in 21st-century schools.

This chapter has highlighted the following key issues in the Collective Worship debate:

- The complexities of the rights of parents and students raised by the ‘conscience clause’.
- The implications of the differentiation between ‘corporate’ and ‘collective’ worship.
- The difficulties of defining ‘worship’ in schools caused by the ambiguous nature of Circular 1/94.
- The differences of opinion between religious and non-religious views.
- The academic views that raise issues regarding the roles of SACRE and Ofsted.

These key issues aid in understanding the overall Collective Worship debate by highlighting the difficulties of interpretation and defining the meaning of the term ‘worship’, with direct consequences for how SACRE and Ofsted perceive their remit and conduct their work. The legal difference between an ‘assembly’ and ‘Collective Worship’ are defined. However, the terms are used interchangeably by many including by academics such as Smith and Smith, 2013; Mogra, 2017 and within SACRE and Ofsted guidelines and reports. The distinction between ‘corporate’ and ‘collective’ emphasises the importance of Collective Worship reflecting and representing the school community, however, for some researchers, Collective Worship isolates students from minority communities (Smith, 2005; Hemming, 2009). The ‘conscience clause’ has also raised complex issues regarding the rights of parents to withdraw their children from R.E and Collective Worship set against the rights of students to choose for themselves whether they wish to participate or not (Louden, 2004; Richardson, 2013; Hunt, 2009).

For SACRE, a balance must be reached in developing guidelines for all schools in their area, whilst recognising the differing cultural, social and religious needs of each individual school. For Ofsted inspectors, an inspection must also reflect the same awareness of each school,

ensuring that genuinely collective, rather than corporate, worship is being offered. The difficulties in developing guidelines and inspecting Collective Worship are intrinsically linked with the lack of a clear definition of worship in the ERA 1988 and Circular 1/94, as the term is open to individual interpretation and meaning.

The next chapter continues examining the key issues surrounding the Collective Worship debate through reflecting on the contribution Collective Worship makes to community cohesion, SMSC development and as a countermeasure to extremism. An overall conclusion to the literature review will be offered at the end of Chapter 3.



## **Chapter 3: Literature Review – Part 2**

The previous chapter explored the appropriateness of Collective Worship in 21st century schools, including examining a definition of Collective Worship, the issues surrounding the withdrawal of Circular 1/94 and academic views on Collective Worship. This chapter begins by considering the contribution Collective Worship makes to community cohesion and SMSC development, including the definition of community cohesion and SMSC development, and the roles of SACRE and Ofsted. The role Collective Worship plays as a countermeasure to extremism is considered, including the impact of the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter.

### **1) The contribution Collective Worship makes to community cohesion and SMSC development**

#### **Definition of community cohesion**

Alan Johnson, then Secretary of State for Education and Skills, stated in 2006 that the government’s definition of ‘community cohesion’ was as follows:

By community cohesion, we mean working towards a society in which there is a common vision and sense of belonging by all communities; a society in which the diversity of people’s backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued; a society in which similar life opportunities are available to all; and a society in which strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in the workplace, in schools and in the wider community (Johnson, 2006).

The above view has also been stressed by various papers; for example, the Commission on Integration and Cohesion’s report ‘Our shared future’ (2007) defined community cohesion as being slightly different from integration, saying that:

Integration and cohesion are sometimes seen as meaning the same thing. We do not agree. Both are processes and both share much in common, but cohesion is principally the process that must happen in all communities to ensure different groups of people get on well together; while integration is principally the process that ensures new residents and existing residents adapt to one another

(Commission on Integration and Cohesion report, 'Our shared future', 2007, p38).

The Commission on Integration and Cohesion took this definition further and suggested a more detailed approach, where community cohesion involves a 'clearly defined and widely shared sense of the contribution of different individuals and different communities to a future vision for a neighbourhood, city, region or country' (2007, p10). Community cohesion, therefore, is seen to be more than just the integration of races or faiths. Instead, community cohesion is linked to a shared community vision of a collaborative future, as defined by the DCSF's 'Guidance on the duty to promote community cohesion':

By community cohesion, we mean working towards a society in which there is a common vision and sense of belonging by all communities; a society in which the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and valued; a society in which similar life opportunities are available to all; and a society in which strong and positive relationships exist and continue to be developed in the workplace, in schools and in the wider community (DCSF, 2007, p3).

Paul Thomas, Senior Lecturer in Youth and Community Work at the School of Education and Professional Development, University of Huddersfield, supported the principles of community cohesion. His research with young people from areas of 'profound ethnic segregation, and separate, oppositional and potentially dangerous ethnic and religious identities' (2011, p5) enabled him to offer 'grounded evidence around the implementation of community cohesion [...] and the reality of ethnic tension' (p5). Thomas (2011) concluded that community cohesion has the 'potential to offer positive and holistic ways forward around diversity and equality' (p12). However, the current concept of community cohesion has also been criticised. Harris Beider, Professor in Community Cohesion and Head of Social Relations at Coventry University, reviewed the concept of community cohesion and its application to the voices of white working-class people. He called for the need to 'reconfigure community cohesion' as 'community cohesion had not succeeded in creating shared values and tolerance' (2011, p57) as those who were involved in his research did not all share the same values. Beider suggested that local authorities work with community organisations and institutions, such as schools, to engage with the idea of diversity; he also recommended 'informal and routine interactions' (p58) in everyday, ordinary places such as

shops, schools and streets, to be used as opportunities to build community cohesion, although at the same time, Beider recognised that financial cuts have a direct impact on investment in local community cohesion by local councils. Schools, through ‘routine interaction’, are therefore seen as a vital tool in the development and promotion of community cohesion.

### **Collective Worship and community cohesion**

Modern Britain is facing ‘an immensely powerful cultural and religious change’ (Forrester, 2002 p 14) with church attendance falling, with many other faiths thriving. The educational sphere has been recognised as a fundamental area in which community cohesion, including tolerance and respect towards cultural and religious differences, can be developed (see Forrester, 2002; Amankwatia, 2007; Flint, 2007; Freathy and Parker, 2010; Faas, Darmody & Sokolowska, 2016). The DCSF publication ‘Guidance on the duty to promote community cohesion’ (2007) states ‘Every school – whatever its intake and wherever it is located – is responsible for educating children and young people who will live and work in a country which is diverse in terms of cultures, religions or beliefs, ethnicities and social backgrounds’ (p1). This subtly differs from Circular 1/94’s aim for Collective Worship: ‘To develop community spirit, promote a common ethos and shared values, and reinforce positive attitudes’ (Paragraph 50). Accordingly, Collective Worship, together with Religious Education, has an essential role in promoting community cohesion by strengthening the school community whilst enabling pupils to gain insight into local, national and international communities. Professor Ducal Forrester considers the place and content of Religious Education in this changing climate. He believes that faith communities should not feel that they have nothing to offer, huddling ‘together for warmth, like sheep in a snowdrift’ (Forrester, 2002 p16). Instead, they can serve as reminders to the broader community of different ideas and values, such as communal and equal fellowship. Religious Education, he feels, has responsibilities as the ‘steward and custodian of insights and attitudes and convictions that are absolutely central’ to the education system (Forrester, 2002 p16). RE, together with Collective Worship, can deliver context to develop young people’s understanding and appreciation of diversity, to promote shared values and to challenge racism and discrimination. Within this is the role religious schools, including church schools, can play in enhancing such community cohesion.

Amankwatia (2007) began his doctoral research by exploring the premise that the mission and role of church schools contributes to intolerance in society. Such criticism argues for the

removal of church schools, with the implication being that their very role and nature is a threat to social and community cohesion. However, Amankwata contested the view that church schools promote intolerance. His secondary research, based on the close reading of 80 CofE and RC secondary schools' prospectuses from 23 LEAs in inner and outer London, found that Collective Worship promotes both individual beliefs and an understanding and respect of the world beyond the school community. He argued that 'An act of worship provides an opportunity for accepting and confirming individual uniqueness and its place in the school community. Such an individual identification of difference broadens pupils' horizon of the world outside school and their ability to learn to live within it.' (p99). Critics of church schools also consider the application process to contribute to intolerance in society due to the 'selective and divisive' (p132) prerequisite for parents to corroborate their commitment to the faith of the prospective school for their children. However, Amankwata rejects the 'claim that church schools contributed to intolerance in society unless, of course, one accepts the extreme view that simply by being different church schools undermined social cohesion' (p280). He maintained that many church schools embraced students from varying academic, social, religious and cultural backgrounds due to their admissions policies, which were not defined by the school's geographical catchment areas, unlike many LEA schools. Thus, such admissions policies help to encourage and promote social cohesion, rather than undermine it.

The above perceptions of Collective Worship were also reflected in Rutherford's (2012) research, which examined 'Pupils' Perspectives of the Purpose and Value of Collective Worship'. She concluded that although the importance and relevance of prayer and/or a time for reflection was commonly acknowledged by pupils as necessary for Collective Worship, the extent to which they valued prayer and how prayer impacted on their spiritual development was uncertain. Rutherford offered the following examples to support her findings: one girl who was interviewed claimed prayer was more important than lessons, whilst another discussed the idea of prayer being about coming together to help one another. For Rutherford (2012), these responses established 'an awareness of the need to pray collectively and support each other as a community', but at the same time also demonstrated a relationship between each other, rather than being 'necessarily seen as a relationship with a transcendent being'. Thus, for Rutherford, 'prayer may not have fully supported pupils' spiritual development in terms of contemplating more than the present, material world.'

(p76). From this, it can be concluded that although the collective nature of prayer may not enhance spiritual development, it can help to promote a sense of social cohesion.

Denning (2014) questioned the significance and purpose of Christian worship in her article for RS Review. She categorised worship into three groups: worship for the benefit of those who are worshipping, worship as symbolic of the relationship between humans and God, and worship that focuses on God (Denning 2014, p30). She argued that in modern society, 'worship is arguably playing a decreasing role in the everyday lives of Christians' (p30). From this, she claimed it can be inferred that 'worship is no longer relevant to people's lives' (p31), although she also stated this may not necessarily be the case as 'just because people do not worship as much as in previous centuries does not mean that true worship has no purpose in today's society' (p31). Although Denning's view of the declining significance of religion has been disputed (Woodhead and Catto, 2012; Davies, 2015; Yip, 2016; Reiss, 2017), Denning also claimed that the purpose and role of worship lies with the meaning placed on the Eucharist, prayers and liturgy; all three combined, or individually, can be means to 'build a relationship between God and humanity' (p32). Thus, she contended that there are 'communal benefits to humanity of worship' (p33) through the maintenance of 'a community by stimulating a sense of care and belonging' (p33).

The NSS, in their briefing 'Collective Worship in schools' (revised October 2013) also recognised the opportunities assemblies offer 'to bring members of a school together, creating a sense of community; we recognise that assemblies with an ethical framework can make a vital contribution to school life' (p6). However, they also argued that Collective Worship does not contribute to a sense of community, but in fact can be:

counter-cohesive, particularly in multicultural areas, where community cohesion is needed most. Rather than emphasise that which most divides us, we would prefer to see secular school assemblies where pupils of all faiths and none can participate and be valued equally. (NSS, 2013, p6)

However, many academics question the role of faith schools as hindering community cohesion (see Burtonwood, 2003; Short, 2002; Berkeley, 2008; MacMullen, 2009; Tinker, 2009; King, 2010; Hemming, 2011). For example, Berkeley (2008) described the issue as a 'fierce public debate [...] around the existence and expansion of faith schools in a modern,

progressively secular and diverse society – in particular post-2001, when faith became seen by many as a greater cause of division in society.’ (p18). Such debate focuses on four key areas: the intensification of segregation of young people along class, faith and ethnic lines; prejudicial admissions protocols; a disregard for the rights of children through indulging parental choice; and religious indoctrination. Berkeley (2008) used statistics to further this claim, pointing out that ‘A poll of nearly 6000 people [...] in 2001 [...] found that only 11% of respondents were in favour of more faith schools. By 2005 [...] 64% of respondents agreed that “the government should not be funding faith schools of any kind”’ (p18). These polls were taken after the terrorist attacks on America in 2001 and London in 2005, so I remain sceptical of their overall reliability; however, the polls as they are highlight a general feeling regarding the value of faith schools, suggesting that perhaps such schools promote more harm than good.

Certainly, when Berkeley (2008) examined the issue of children’s rights, he found evidence of indoctrination, using the example of a Seventh Day Adventist school in Tottenham, North London, which was promoting creationism as fact. Another example of a school being at the centre of media attention was Derby’s Al-Madinah Muslim free school. In October 2013, Ofsted carried out an emergency inspection after concerns were raised that female staff were being forced to wear head coverings, and girls and boys were being segregated in classrooms. It also emerged that lessons were routinely being scrapped to make way for prayers, and that singing was banned (Berkeley 2008). Richard Dawkins (2012), in a Westminster Faith Debate on the place of faith in schools, maintained his view that faith schools are ‘divisive, discriminatory’. He also accused faith schools of teaching ‘scientific falsehoods’, such as the teaching of creationism as fact. Poole, then Visiting Research Fellow in Science and Religion in the *Department of Education and Professional Studies at King’s College London*, agreed that ‘science is often cited as the main reason for rejection of faith schools’ (2014, p241). Poole, however, also criticised Dawkins viewpoint on ‘scientific falsehoods’. He argued that ‘despite Dawkins’ claim to the contrary, religion is not “scientific theory”’ (p245), thus for Poole, this ‘misrepresentation of ‘faith’ is one of the many reasons secularists disapprove of religion appearing in the educational arena. Poole concluded that in all schools, regardless of whether they are faith schools or not, there needs to be a clear understanding that ‘there is no necessary connection between science and atheism’ (p258); in other words, it is possible to believe in God and be a scientist.

Various groups, including teachers' unions and members of parliament, have voiced their concerns regarding the increase in number of faith schools and the educational practices within such schools (see Judge, 2001; Passmore and Barnard, 2001; Clancy, 2003; Jackson, 2003; Crabtree, 2010; Cross, Campbell-Evans & Gray, 2017). For example, faith schools, regardless of their faith, are heavily criticised by Crabtree (2010) who argues that such schools are too selective, to the disadvantage of students with special needs and those from poorer backgrounds, leading to better-than-average results, and that therefore a system of such schools only serve to divide communities. Crabtree claims that the reports on the race riots of 2001, beginning in Tottenham before spreading to other areas of the UK, criticise faith schools for creating a system of segregation that amplified the prevailing racial and religious tensions. He also added that the abolishment of such faith schools would 'decrease social tension between ethnic and religious groups [...] and reduce the scope for religious extremism and indoctrination' (Crabtree, 2010). However, religious extremism and indoctrination can occur in non-faith schools and academies, as illustrated by the Trojan Horse affair, which will be examined further in Chapter 4.

The CofE's report 'The Church School of the Future Review' (2012) dismissed criticism of faith schools. The report mentioned continued misunderstandings and conflict within the secular community of the role of CofE faith schools and argued that 'there continues to be a concerted attack on the core elements of the Church school identity. Most of the challenges and claims made are without foundation or are matters of principle on which disagreement is always possible' (p14). In 2016, the Revd Nigel Genders, Chief Education Officer for the CofE, in his foreword to the report 'Church of England Vision for Education Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good', claimed that the vision of education offered by CofE schools is 'one that is generous and that seeks to allow the riches of Christian life to overflow to those of other faiths or no faith' (p1). The CofE hoped that their approach to education will resonate 'with other Christians, those of other faiths, and many who identify with no particular religion.' (p6). The report continued by offering 'hospitable space [...] for healthily diverse debate, agreement and disagreement', which would lead to 'deeper mutual understanding and to peaceful, negotiated settlements' (p9). Although the NSS did not comment directly on the report, their 2016 annual report demanded government action to stop the CofE increasing its religious influence through the appropriation of mixed and non-faith-based Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) and community schools. The NSS stated that they are determined to continue their fight for a secular and inclusive education system. Chapter 4

further examined the idea of schools being used by evangelical and fundamentalist Christians and Muslims to spread their faiths.

### **SACREs and community cohesion**

Undoubtedly, education is an effective way to promote community cohesion (see, Cantle, 2001, 2013; Thomas and Cantle, 2014; Statham, Harris and Glenn, 2010) and within the educational domain, SACREs are seen to have an important role to play in promoting community cohesion. This has been emphasised in the Department for Communities and Local Government (DfCLG) guidelines 'Face to face and side by side: A framework for partnership in our multi-faith society' (2008), which states:

SACREs, where properly supported by the LA, can act as powerful vehicles for building, appreciating and managing differences in beliefs and values in schools, education more widely and the local community. They are a partnership between faith communities in each local area and with the LA and schools. SACREs are predominantly focused on education but are also a statutory group that can be consulted on interfaith issues, act as sounding boards or work in partnership on broader initiatives. (DfCLG, 2008, p96)

The RE Council of England and Wales (2009) also agreed that local SACREs can play a significant role in promoting and developing community cohesion. The RE Council, however, also stressed that for a local SACRE to be effective in modelling intercommunity and interfaith dialogue, it is essential that members of other faiths within and outside their communities must be included on their committees. Community cohesion must also feature on the agenda of local SACREs. However, an Ofsted report 'Transforming Religious Education' (2010), based on evidence from 94 primary and 89 secondary schools in England between 2006 and 2009, raised the issue that even in the best examples of community cohesion seen in schools, SACREs are only involved on 'rare occasions' (p47). This is despite previous recommendations in Ofsted's report on RE (2007) and the above report by the DfCLG report (2008), which suggested to the DfES ways in which SACREs could play a stronger role in promoting the priorities of community cohesion and educating about diversity. The lack of SACRE involvement is explored further in Chapter 4.



Community cohesion was discussed in the guidance offered by Swindon SACRE entitled 'A Time to Breathe' (2012), which states how a school community, through Collective Worship, can be united; a community that comes together encourages students to 'know and celebrate who they are and understand what the school community stands for and hopes they will aspire to be.' (p1). This point was emphasised by the statement that 'Acts of Collective Worship should be used to encourage pupils to come together and allow them to reflect upon their shared human experience and feelings of joy and sadness, thankfulness and need, their reflections on shared values and concerns and the exploration of the spiritual area of experience.' (p3). The guidance continued this central theme later: 'The unifying element for each act of Collective Worship will be a central theme focusing the attention of all those taking part on a single idea and the school should endeavour to involve as many staff and students as possible' (p14). 'A Time to Breathe' (Swindon SACRE, 2012) also offered numerous examples of inclusivity, with various terms being used, such as 'school community' (p1), 'spirit of community' (p2), 'come together' (p3 and p7), 'sense of belonging', 'coming together' (p11), 'part of caring community' and 'share in [...] community life' (p12). This view was also echoed by the Welsh Association of SACREs, which endorsed community cohesion through its 'Guidance of Collective Worship' (2012), in which it was stated that

school acts of Collective Worship are educationally meaningful when they provide opportunities to engage with the needs of all learners, whatever their faith or belief background. Good Collective Worship promotes spiritual development, contributes to personal development, benefits the whole school community, links the school community and the wider local community, and enhances awareness of global citizenship. (Welsh Association of SACREs, 2012, p1).

### **Definition of SMSC development**

As a Christian, I believe God is the Trinity and the Trinity is God. Sheldrake's (2000) definition of Christian spirituality as being 'a conscious relationship with God, in Jesus Christ, through the indwelling of the Spirit and in the context of community of believers' (Sheldrake, 2000, p40) combined these elements eloquently and succinctly. As a critical realist, however, I am also aware that my reality and beliefs are not shared by all. I am concerned with the role of religion within society, and specifically within education;

therefore, the question arises as to what sort of spirituality children should be exposed to in schools, especially during Collective Worship.

The ERA 1988 asserted that the school curriculum should offer a balanced and holistic curriculum for students. Within this holistic approach to education, there was an emphasis on SMSC development. The ERA 1988 required the teaching profession to attend to the 'spiritual dimension of education' for registered pupils in schools, to promote pupils' broader social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. The ERA 1988 attempted to clarify the complex meanings 'regarding spiritual education and development. This included providing a curriculum for all registered pupils in schools to promote pupils' broader SMSC development, not just through Collective Worship or Religious Education, but throughout the whole curriculum and daily life of the school, including extracurricular and out-of-school activities. The educational menu may be a coherent programme, with SMSC development being a common thread linking the conventional, legislative and cultural expectations for school performance and values. These vital dimensions of life and growth were to be present across the entire curriculum, especially to meet the required Ofsted standards. In government policies, the development of aspects of spirituality has become increasingly important with the continued implementation of such guidelines and publications as 'Every Child Matters' (2003), 'SMSC requirements for independent schools' (2013c) and 'Promoting Fundamental British Values through SMSC' (2014). Three broad areas of school life are seen to contribute to the spiritual development of pupils: the general ethos of the school, Collective Worship and the whole curriculum. Therefore, the content of spiritual education within the framework of the British secondary school curriculum is vital for ensuring the development of healthy and well-balanced students.

The idea of spiritual development has been much explored and documented, both before and after the ERA 1988 (see Moberg, 1984; Heller, 1986; Nye, 1996; Hay, Nye and Murphy, 1996; Davies, 1997; Rican, 2004; Mountain, 2007; Allen, 2008; Ebstyn, Clardy and Ramos, 2014, amongst others). It is outside the remit of this thesis to undertake a comprehensive study of the spiritual nature of the Collective Worship debate, however, as the spiritual element of a child's development has been part of the education agenda for many decades, some of the academic views on spirituality will be explored in this section, including McCreery, 1996/2001; Wright, 2000a; Davies, 2000b; Nesbitt, 1993/2000; Hemming, 2009; and Mogra, 2016.

Since the introduction of SMSC development many resources have claimed to be able to enhance children's spirituality, including the bestselling National Curriculum Council publication 'Spiritual and Moral Development' (1993), which offered clear guidance on how 'the promotion of spirituality [...] requires the nurturing of curiosity, imagination, insight and intuition through the ethos, collective worship and explicit curriculum of the school' (Wright, 1999, p8). However, according to Thatcher (1999), the teaching of spirituality in schools has jeopardised its own position by attempting to be relevant to all, regardless of culture, ethnicity, religion, morals or ethical beliefs. This view is also echoed by Best who argues that 'the word "spiritual" will refer to anything which might be regarded as a source of inspiration to a person's life' (Best, 1996, p77). Similarly, the BHA (1993) describes spirituality as 'appreciation and wonder at the natural world, intellectual achievement and physical activity, surmounting suffering and persecution, selfless love, the quest for meaning and for values by which to live' (cited in Thatcher, 1999, p165). More succinctly, Wright's (2000a) working definition of spirituality is 'our concern for the ultimate meaning and purpose of life' (p7). It is important to note that spiritual development or spirituality is not the same as being religious, but it is about the process of developing learners' appreciation of the spiritual dimensions of life and the wider issues of meaning, purpose and fulfilment. Collective Worship perhaps then should not be an end, as part of a child's daily routine or just as an obligation, but one way of developing a sense of spirituality, as a way of 'opening children's minds to the possibility of an authentic spiritual existence' (Wright 1996, p36). Wright emphasises that the world's faiths 'must be understood in terms of their own inner integrity' (Wright, 1996, p86), rather than viewed as expressions of universal religious experiences. In contrast, Erricker and Erricker (2000) rejects a view of spirituality that he considers merges the 'meta-narratives' of religions (p62), as such a definition is constructed by those in power, such as politicians and religious leaders. Erricker contends that students should be allowed to construct their own spiritual narrative and their own sense of spirituality, from their own personal experiences and through the experiences of others.

McCreery (1996) researched the spirituality of children aged between four and five years. Her results concluded that young children are more aware of spirituality than had been previously considered. From her research, McCreery emphasises the importance of listening to children's narratives, including the questions they ask as they explore the world around them, as the foundation for spiritual development. Nesbitt's (2001) various ethnographic studies explore the perspectives and experiences of religion and spiritual experiences among

students from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds in primary and secondary school. She maintains that RE has a vital role in nurturing faith in students; however, she also recognises that the extent of this contribution depends on the importance placed on the quality and diversity of the teaching offered. Hemming (2009), however, contends that although Nesbitt's research (2004) emphasises the complexity of teaching about religion and faith through RE, the narrowness of the research means it does not contribute to the 'wider academic and political debates' (p24) regarding the role of religion. Nesbitt's further research (2011) details how the number of people whose personal spirituality draws upon several religious traditions is growing – these she calls 'spiritually plural' and 'existentially interfaith' (2011, p232), thus highlighting the complexity of defining the term 'spirituality'. Claxton (2002) and Piechowski (2003) both avoided defining spirituality. Instead, they recognised the difficulties inherent in the vast array of interpretations, and examined the essence of spiritual experiences. Claxton categorised the shared qualities of spiritual experiences. Such qualities include aliveness (a heightened sense of vitality), belonging (a sense of being at ease with the world), an affinity with mystery (being content with not knowing) and peace of mind (Claxton, 2002, p3-4). Similarly, Piechowski (2003) acknowledged mutual occurrences in childhood experiences of spirituality, including 'ecstasy, timelessness, oneness with nature, pulsating energy and life force, God in everything, sense of self beyond physical reality and beyond one lifetime, and techniques of achieving heightened states of consciousness' (p409). These experiences can occur throughout a child's development, both within and outside of the educational environment.

The NASACRE publication 'Collective Worship Revisited' (2012) also argued that the term 'spiritual' has been 'misunderstood, it conjures up many images of a variety of religions giving the impression the word "spirituality" is synonymous with religion. It is not. Religious faith is an expression of spirituality' (NASACRE, 2012, p6). Lynch (2015) defined *spirituality* as a sense of connection to phenomena beyond their typical physical and lucid existence; spirituality is something that allows students to envisage their sense of place and purpose. SMSC development within students is part of a life-long journey of exploration and discovery (Hodder, 2007; Goodliff, 2013). Thus, from a critical realist perspective, notable questions arise: if spirituality cannot be defined exclusively by the six world religions taught in schools, with the major emphasis being on Christianity, and has a broader meaning than is suggested by the term 'religion', how do we define the deepest truth and ultimate meaning? And as such realities of truth and meaning will invariably differ, how does a teacher begin to

cater for children's spiritual development? Due to the uncertainties surrounding the term, the hurdles to developing a practical assessment framework are monumental. How can we measure such development, particularly pupils' spiritual development? Can it be measured by results? Is there any point in attempting to measure or inspect spiritual development? The next section explores some of the issues surrounding the inspecting of and reporting on spiritual development.

### **SMSC development and Ofsted**

Ofsted's own guidance discussed the idea of evaluating, rather than measuring, the contribution Collective Worship has made to the SMSC development of pupils. The guidance recommended that the 'Evaluation (of Collective Worship) should focus on whether acts of worship are well planned and encourage pupils to explore questions about meaning and purpose, values and beliefs' (Ofsted, 1999, p67).

Watson's (2001) study of Ofsted reports reveals that many schools are unsuccessful at promoting SMSC development because they fail to offer enough time for personal and spiritual reflection, even though this time is often highly valued by students. However, Wintersgill (2012), an ex-Ofsted inspector for Religious Education, raised issues regarding Ofsted's ability to inspect the SMSC development elements appropriately, despite the guidelines. She questioned the value of Ofsted reporting on SMSC development in her paper for Devon SACRE entitled 'The Inspection of School Provision for Pupils' SMSC development' (Wintersgill, 2012). She contested that in the reports she studied, there was a lack of consistency with regards to assessing the quality of SMSC and what could contribute to SMSC (pp2-3). Wintersgill also questioned the clarity of the examples of SMSC development offered and emphasised that the examples of SMSC development in the various reports 'do not substantially reflect' Ofsted's own definitions of SMSC as written in their guidelines (2012, p7), suggesting a lack of training and insufficient understanding of their own documentation. Wintersgill's report to Devon SACRE also stated that 'inspectors may (but do not have to) write about SMSC in three sections of the school report: teaching, behaviour and safety, and leadership and management' (p2). Her report concluded that 'it is important to remember that inspectors are not obliged to include in their reports on schools any reference to RE, collective worship or SMSC' (p6). However, there have been recent changes to Ofsted inspections from 2012, and since 2015 in response to the 'Trojan Horse' enquiry. Now, Ofsted inspectors must refer to SMSC development in their reports. Under the

new guidance, an Ofsted school inspection report may mention both positive and negative observations on SMSC development, which may lead to a school being labelled 'inadequate'.

Wintersgill (2012) echoed previous research that had also demonstrated concerns regarding the observation of and reporting on SMSC development. For example, Smart (2001) questioned the ethics of evaluating spiritual development in her research into 'Primary school assembly perspectives and practices: implications for pupils' spiritual development'. Smart suggested that instead of Ofsted assessing spiritual development, they should assess the provision for spiritual development, as 'inspection might be more usefully directed towards checking the inputs rather than attempting to assess intangible outputs' (Smart, 2001, p18). She noted how one school (School B) disagreed with their Ofsted report following an inspection: 'One criticism had been that no prayers had been observed, the inspector having failed to notice the singing of the Prayer of St. Francis. The staff clearly felt that their assembly practices were at odds with the expectations of the inspection team, who seemed to associate opportunities for spiritual development with traditional Christian, religious ritual observance' (Smart, 2001, p84). Smart also commented on the difficulty of measuring spirituality, as 'the respondent at School B felt that because spirituality couldn't be measured, perhaps all that Ofsted could realistically report was whether opportunities were being provided within the assembly experience for spiritual development to take place' (p110). Smart concluded that 'there appears nevertheless to be a need for clarity amongst Ofsted inspectors as to their criteria for inspection of the spiritual in order to avoid the kind of misunderstanding that arose at School B.' She also suggested that 'In the interests of fairness and professional integrity there ought to be an agreed language pertaining to the spiritual in the curriculum (and by implication its inspection)' (p126). Similarly, Watson (2001) completed an analytical audit of Ofsted reports on Norfolk state secondary schools. Watson contended that the disparity between the guidance provided by Ofsted on the inspection of spiritual development, and the written reports by inspectors on spiritual development, means that the procedures and structures for the assessment of spiritual development were not clear. Watson argued that the advice offered to schools to help them improve in this area was often 'inconsistent and even, at times, contradictory' (2001, p213) often having a detrimental impact on standards. The doctoral research of Jennings (2003) examined 'The impact of different approaches to Religious Education on the spiritual and moral attitudes of year nine and year ten pupils'. She reported that, despite the various pieces of Ofsted guidance, 'it

became clear that the area of spiritual development was proving particularly difficult to inspect' (Jennings, 2003, p48).

Ofsted admitted the term 'spirituality' was difficult to define, although it also argued that spiritual development is 'about the development of a sense of identity, self-worth, personal insight, meaning and purpose' (2004, p12). However, Ofsted also maintained that SMSC development is essential for the development of individual pupils and is of benefit to society, and claimed that many teachers would agree that SMSC development is at the core of education. Ofsted argued that the importance of SMSC development has 'repeatedly been recognised by legislators; schools are required by law to promote pupils' SMSC development and inspectors are required to inspect it' (Ofsted 2004). However, Rawle's (2009) doctoral thesis revealed that the importance placed upon SMSC development by individual Ofsted inspectors varies. Rawle offered the following as evidence: 'A chief inspector of schools in Wales once related how, when schools told him how well they were providing opportunities for pupils' spiritual development, he would say to them "That is all well and good but can they do their sums?"' (Rawle, 2009, p299). Rawle recommended the withdrawal of the statutory requirement to promote the spiritual development of pupils. He stated that this would ease tension surrounding the difficulty of interpretation.

Regardless of Rawle's (2009) recommendations, Ofsted made further changes to the inspection of SMSC development. The Ofsted framework (2014), the DfE advice for Head teachers and Governors on SMSC, R.E and Collective Worship (September 2014), followed by their guidance on 'Promoting FBV's fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools' (November 2014), has driven SMSC and with it Collective Worship once again in to the forefront of Ofsted inspections. The scrutiny of SMSC development is now an integral part of Ofsted's inspection framework, with the new framework emphasising the 'key role SMSC, R.E and Collective Worship all play in ensuring a security and breadth of education that will offer children a young people a vision and understanding of Britain and the wider world as populated by diverse peoples' (2014, p4).

However, Lumb's (2014) doctoral research into the factors affecting the SMSC development of students highlights the complex and contradictory relationship in schools between the Ofsted requirements and the need to allow students to explore their own spirituality. She concludes that 'The risk-averse culture of Ofsted had created the need to ensure a consistency of

approach to teaching and learning which could be at odds with the spaces created to facilitate the somewhat risky task of exploring the mystery and meaning of life' (Lumb 2014b, p325). Lumb emphasises the need for a compromise position, between the demands of Ofsted and allowing students to explore spirituality freely, with students' views being listened to and respected.

The guidance offered to schools in 2016 highlights how the provision a school makes for pupils' SMSC development has become a limiting factor in the overall effectiveness of the school and the quality of education it provides:

A school is judged to have serious weaknesses because one or more of the key judgements is inadequate (grade 4) and/or there are important weaknesses in the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. (Ofsted, 2016, p36)

Similarly, a school can only be considered 'outstanding' if 'the school's thoughtful and wide-ranging promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their physical wellbeing enables them to thrive in a supportive, highly cohesive learning community' (Ofsted, 2016, p36). Thus, schools must continue to balance 'a highly performative culture with a hierarchy of inspections where to be outstanding requires high levels of academic achievement alongside a commitment to developing children's spirituality' (Lumb, 2014, p325).

### **SMSC development and SACRE**

Although SMSC development is difficult to measure, effective Collective Worship can enable a school to contribute to the statutory requirement of such development. However, as noted above, it is important to understand that spiritual development is not the same as Religious Education, but is instead about developing learners' appreciation of the spiritual dimensions of life and the wider issues of meaning, purpose and fulfilment. NASACRE claimed that Collective Worship offers a 'golden opportunity' for pupils to experience such sentiments, claiming that effective Collective Worship can 'make values explicit for pupils, challenge their thinking, extend their emotional repertoire, help them to know and celebrate who they are and understand what the school community stands for and aspires to'



(NASACRE, 2012, p6). In an educational environment, NASACRE defined spiritual development as

nurturing the spiritual dimension of every human being, in recognition of the uniqueness of the individual and her or his humanity and potential. It is about helping pupils to develop the capacity to transcend the limitations of the physical world; to lift their horizons beyond the materialistic; to be creative; to consider ultimate questions about the meaning of life in general and their own lives; to develop positive attitudes; to have hope. It goes further than what the child knows, understands and can do [...] to what the child is and is becoming. (NASACRE, 2012, p6).

### **SMSC development and Collective Worship**

Effective Collective Worship can enable a school to contribute positively to the statutory legislation and to the SMSC development of students. Davies (2000b) found that of the 204 headteachers questioned, 94.6% recognised the contribution that worship could make to SMSC development. However, ineffective Collective Worship can also hinder such development, as Gill (2000) noted in her doctoral thesis 'The nature and justifiability of the act of Collective Worship in schools'. Gill discovered that no pupil who took part in her research referred to the spiritual element as a feature of assembly. She concluded that large gatherings of pupils (whole year groups/schools) for Collective Worship are perhaps not conducive to 'an exploration of the spiritual dimension' (Gill, 2000, p116). Smart's study in 2001 mirrored this conclusion; Smart also questioned 'whether spiritual development is best served by gathering large numbers of pupils together, especially when as many as seven years may separate the youngest from the oldest' (Smart, 2001, p122). Smart investigated primary school assembly perspectives and practices, with an emphasis on the implications for pupils' spiritual development. She raised some important issues: she suggested that the development of pupils' spirituality through Collective Worship is hindered by resistance from the students themselves and a lack of adequate training for teachers. To improve the situation, Smart (2001) recommended adequate training and sufficient time for the preparation and planning of spiritually-focused assemblies (p120).

In her article entitled 'Pupils' Perspectives of the Purpose and Value of Collective Worship', for the Journal of Trainee Teacher Education Research, Rutherford (2012) presented similar

views to those above. Rutherford interviewed 12 children, both boys and girls, between the ages of 10 and 11 years old, from one CofE primary school. The children were from different religious and non-religious backgrounds. Most of the pupils interviewed could identify three purposes of Collective Worship, 'gathering together, learning and undertaking religious worship with prayer' (Rutherford, 2012, p72), which are like the aims of Circular 1/94. All pupils interviewed by Rutherford (2012) particularly valued Collective Worship when they were actively engaged, but disliked Collective Worship when they were not engaged or the stories presented had been repeated before or elsewhere. The repetition of stories emphasises the importance of a termly or yearly plan of Collective Worship to help ensure positive engagement with Collective Worship. Many pupils questioned claimed they disliked the spiritual development element, often seen as an essential part of worship; these pupils said that they felt they were not being given freedom of choice, as discussed in Chapter 3 (Cheetham, 1999; Loudon, 2004; CofE, Diocese of Manchester, 2007; Richardson et al., 2013). This led Rutherford (2012) to conclude that although her sample was small, with limited scope for wider generalisations, the implications for the future practice of Collective Worship were that 'it does appear that Collective Worship must be developed to meet these children's spiritual needs particularly', with Collective Worship having a 'clearer purpose and value of spiritual development to all pupils' (Rutherford, 2012, p80). Fearn explored pupil's and teacher's perspectives towards Collective Worship for a Farmington Institute report (2015). In a similar conclusion to Rutherford (2012), she inferred from her research that pupils in both primary and secondary schools do not find Collective Worship to be important or relevant. Fearn also stated that many teachers were unaware of the Collective Worship legislation, leading to issues like those raised by Bishop (2001) regarding the training teachers receive during their initial teacher training period.

In her Master's thesis, Rutherford (2014) developed her earlier research (2012) by designing a sequence of spiritual Collective Worship acts with the aim of enhancing community cohesion. She interviewed nine pupils from Year 5, six boys and three girls. She found that most of the pupils interviewed valued the opportunity to come together, although they gave different reasons, such as sharing experiences, being with friends and reflecting together. Rutherford concluded that whilst her spiritual Collective Worship acts were designed to be inclusive, with the 'social aim of gathering all pupils together' (p64) whilst keeping within the legal requirement for Collective Worship to be 'broadly Christian', she admitted that the worship offered was not all-inclusive, as one boy appeared to feel excluded when Christian

stories were introduced. Nevertheless, Rutherford argued that the introduction of spiritual Collective Worship would enhance the spiritual development of pupils and underline the importance of Collective Worship in schools.

One of the purposes of the acts of spiritual Collective Worship devised by Rutherford (2014) was to allow pupils space to think and reflect. She concluded that many pupils she interviewed, both those of a faith and those who declared themselves atheist, valued 'having time and space to think, particularly commenting on how it was an opportunity for reflection they otherwise did not have' (p43). Some pupils, again both of faith and no faith, did not value the reflection time as highly. Out of the nine pupils interviewed, two pupils said they used this time to pray. Although Rutherford does not explore this further, the lack of pupils praying could be for numerous reasons, including not knowing how to pray. Jane Southward, in her research for the Farmington Institute (2015), queried what pupils understand by the term 'prayer'. She argued that pupils' understanding of the term may differ from teachers' definitions, and thus 'have implications for the way that teaching about prayer is carried out in schools but also for how children are taught to pray in other contexts' (p3). Southward interviewed 33 pupils from three primary schools in an urban area. One primary school was CofE, one was Roman Catholic and the final school was community aided. She uses various children's conceptualisations of prayer, identified in her literature review, to code the findings. She concluded that her findings do relate to the theory of stages of prayer suggested by Long, Elkind and Spilka (1967). However, Southward also argued that the stage a pupil is at is not related to age, but is more closely correlated with the religious and cultural background of both the family and the school. She stated that pupils from church schools 'had a more developed understanding of prayer' (p32) than pupils at non-faith schools. Southward concluded that 'understanding how children learn about prayer is important as it has pedagogical and moral implications for teachers in church schools and in non-faith schools where learning about prayer is part of the RE curriculum' (p32). The findings of Rutherford (2014) and Southward (2015) highlights the importance of effective Collective Worship, including the opportunity to learn about prayer and how to pray, as part of enhancing the spiritual development of pupils.

### **Why does SMSC development matter?**

The cultural context of England has changed dramatically since the introduction of the ERA 1988, and the role of religion in schools has continued to be a hotly-debated subject, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, by Felderhof, 1999/2000; Wright, 2006; Cruse, 2008; Smith and Smith, 2013; Parker, Freathy and Doney, 2016; and Mogra, 2016/2017, amongst others. The ERA 1988 requires school curricula to offer ‘a balanced and broadly-based curriculum which (a) promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society; and (b) prepares such pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life’ (ERA 1988 (c. 40). Part I, Chapter I, Section I (2)). The Chief Inspector’s general duty to report on pupils’ SMSC development was reiterated in the School Inspections Act 1996, and the duty of schools to promote pupils’ SMSC development was restated in the Education Act 2002. Reports and guidance acknowledging the status of SMSC development include ‘Promoting and evaluating pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development’ (Ofsted, 2004) and ‘Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools: Departmental advice for maintained schools’ (DfE, 2014c). However, the compulsory nature of SMSC development raises the following questions: what does an education that seeks to contribute to SMSC development in young people look like, why have successive governments placed such an emphasis on SMSC and spiritual development, and why does the spiritual development of young people matter so much?

In her research, Motornaya Svetlana (2014) claimed that advances in technology, combined with a decline in spiritual development, has led to a situation where humanity is solely engaged in ‘narrow, one-sided professionally-activity orientation’ (p223). For her, preparation for work and life, which begins at school, should include aspects of spirituality:

Spiritual formation of the individual is paramount, a necessary foundation for all-round development of the individual, self-actualization and self-improvement, and is, in our opinion, are the competence of the person that runs through all of the components of human personality. (Svetlana, 2014, p223)

In other words, for Svetlana, spiritual development is an essential element of education and training that enables young people to enter working life with not only qualifications, but also qualities such as a sense of morality, including valuing and supporting their community.

Wright (2000a) argues that education cannot be value free; therefore, schools should be honest about their values, thus enabling students to engage and reflect critically on these values. Astley (2010) contends that all education, regardless of whether in faith or secular schools, engages in a form of evangelism, as students are encouraged to transform, adapt and be moulded according to the values and expectations of their school. At the same time, this form of 'evangelism' can be beneficial to students, as through sharing their own beliefs, teachers may encourage students to become 'rational and critical thinkers as they examine their own convictions about religion' (Thiessen, 2014, p106). According to Wright (2000a), Religious Education in schools should emphasise the study of religious truth claims, rather than the development of personal qualities. For Brandom et al., the ability of students to participate critically in debate is crucial; students should be able to 'engage with spiritual questions in an informed, sensitive and intelligent manner' (Brandom, Poole and Wright, 2007, p290).

However, Mason (2000), in her role as educational officer for the BHA, argued for the complete removal of spiritual development from the school curriculum. For Mason, the spiritual element of SMSC development is unnecessary, especially considering the difficulty in defining, developing and inspecting it. She claimed the word 'spiritual' is 'tainted, ambiguous, and difficult to pin down or use with confidence, leaving teachers wondering what exactly they are supposed to be developing and inspectors scratching around, sometimes quite imaginatively, for evidence of it' (p4). Students, Mason argued, could become healthy, happy and positive contributors to society without any spiritual education or development. She concluded that although she believes 'wholeheartedly in "education of the whole child"', her opinion was that 'sentimental, muddled and superfluous words like "spiritual" and "spirituality" have no real place in education and should not be enshrined in law' (Mason, 2000, p6). However, for Hay and Nye (2006), morality comes from a spiritual awareness; therefore, schools can have a positive or detrimental impact on whether students 'grow up to be morally responsible members of the community' (Hay & Nye, 2006, p39).

Ofsted's guidance (2012) also suggested that spiritual development is important as it informs pupils' perspectives on life, including their awareness of and respect for other people's individual feelings and values. However, Rawle argued that it is possible to be spiritual and amoral at the same time, citing Hitler as an example (p34). Rawle (2009) also asked 'why does a person's capacity for forgiveness and tranquillity in the face of success, failure and injustice necessarily indicate a developed spiritual state?' (p42). This then leads to questions

regarding the importance placed upon spiritual development. Although Rawle agreed that education should encourage positive qualities such as mutual care, respect and a recognition of the intrinsic value of the individual and the wider community' (p300), he claimed that we do not necessarily need to be spiritually developed to achieve such qualities. He recommended that the spiritual development element of the curriculum is either withdrawn or that we should 'improve the training, provision and status of spirituality in schools' (Rawle, 2009, p297). To achieve qualified teacher status (QTS), new teachers must demonstrate that they can 'plan opportunities to contribute to pupils' personal, Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural development' (DfEE 1998, p12). Adams, Monahan and Wills (2015) studied how initial teacher training (ITT) providers delivered SMSC development guidance to trainee teachers and concluded that although many ITT providers valued SMSC development, the time dedicated to developing trainee teachers' understanding of how SMSC development can be developed throughout their subject area was often minimal, reducing the significance of SMSC development. Adams et al. (2015) argued that the pressure of accountability, in terms of trainee teachers focusing on students' academic performance, outweighs the requirement to focus on a holistic approach, leading to negative impacts on students' well-being. They claimed that 'a broader, enriching approach to childhood education is being threatened by this discourse bound by performativity and accountability' (p1). In his article 'Perceptions of the value of Collective Worship amongst trainee teachers in England', Mogra (2016) surveyed trainee teachers to 'investigate their knowledge, understanding and their view about the role that Collective Worship plays in schools'. (p172). Mogra concludes that most trainee teachers surveyed wanted Collective Worship to continue, valuing the contribution Collective Worship makes to SMSC development, especially cultural development as well as contributing to the aims of ECM (Every Child Matters), a national approach to improving the quality of life and well-being of young people from birth to age 19. In further research, Mogra (2017) suggests that trainee teachers are offered the opportunity to observe Collective Worship. Such participant observation would enable them to consider the value of Collective Worship and the wider contributions it makes to SMSC development and community cohesion. The experience would also improve their ability to meet professional standards despite the 'contested nature' (p4) of Collective Worship. However, as already mentioned above, Collective Worship observation and the delivery of SMSC development to trainee teachers must be consistent and appropriate in its approach (Rawle, 2009; Adams et al., 2015) for students to benefit

## 2) **The role Collective Worship plays as a countermeasure to extremism**

### **The ‘Trojan Horse’ letter**

In November 2013, Birmingham City Council received an anonymous letter. The letter suggested that there was a covert and co-ordinated attempt to introduce an uncompromising Islamist ethos in many academies in the Birmingham area. Birmingham City Council, after internal enquires and an audit, claimed there was no substance to the allegations and passed the letter to West Midlands Police. In turn, West Midlands Police passed a copy of the letter to the Home Office in December 2013, who forwarded the letter to the Department for Education. The Department for Education began to investigate the allegations in December 2013. In 2014, their report into the allegations was published. This was followed by the Department for Education issuing guidance entitled ‘Promoting fundamental British values through SMSC’ (2014c). The guidance aimed to help schools understand their responsibilities and duties to ‘actively promote’ the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. The promotion of fundamental British values corresponded with the Government’s ‘Prevent’ strategy (Home Office, 2011).

### **Reports into the allegations**

The ‘Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the “Trojan Horse” letter’ (Clarke, 2014) noted the allegations were true in many of the Birmingham academies in question. In the 21 Birmingham academies at the centre of the letter’s claims of alleged infiltration by Islamic extremists, the report concluded that the academies were indeed targeted and that an ‘organised takeover’ did occur. Clarke states:

This investigation has revealed a sustained and coordinated agenda to impose upon children in several Birmingham schools the segregationist attitudes and practices of a hard-line and politicised strand of Sunni Islam. Left unchecked, it would confine school children within an intolerant, inward-looking monoculture that would severely inhibit their participation in the life of modern Britain. (Clarke, 2014, p49)

Clarke also asserted that in many of the schools ‘changes to the curriculum and educational plans; inappropriate proselytising in non-faith schools; and unequal treatment and segregation’ (p33) were apparent. Other criticisms included teaching religious belief as fact during assemblies. Clarke’s report also found clear evidence of coordinated action to remove secular head teachers and impose a fanatical and aggressive Islamic ethos on pupils, such as a strong emphasis on obligatory prayer. The report noted that in Park View, Oldknow and some other schools, Islamic posters, slogans and instructions were openly displayed in many classrooms. These posters included instructions to say short prayers before and after lessons and promoted compulsory attendance at Friday prayers, using quotations from the Qur’an. Senior staff called students and staff who did not attend prayers ‘kaffir’ (Clarke, 2014, p39), which is used as a derogatory term for ‘non-believer’, with children being taught that all Christians are liars.

### **Criticisms of Ofsted**

For Mogra (2016), the Trojan Horse letter brought the issue of religion in schools to the forefront of public awareness. The nature and role of religion, including the role of Ofsted in inspecting Collective Worship, were questioned; Mogra argued that the Trojan Horse letter ‘exposed the vulnerability of the systems in place, to support schools and governors in providing appropriate acts of worship to their pupils’ (2016, p174). Clarke’s report, ‘Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the “Trojan Horse” letter’ (2014) raised many critical issues, and the implications were far-reaching. It included damning criticism of Ofsted, with the damaging assessment ‘that issues at some of these schools might have been detected earlier had the Ofsted inspection framework been more sensitive to changes in governance and its impact on the character of the school’ (Clarke, 2014, p88). The criticism of Ofsted continued in the House of Commons Education Committee (HCEC) report entitled ‘Extremism in schools: the Trojan Horse affair’ (2015), in which Ofsted was reproached for an ‘inability to identify problems at some Birmingham schools on first inspection’, which raised serious questions about the ‘appropriateness of the framework and the reliability and robustness of Ofsted’s judgements and how they are reached’ (p17). The report concluded that ‘confidence in Ofsted has been undermined and efforts should be made by the inspectorate to restore it in Birmingham and beyond’ (p17). The main recommendations for Ofsted in Clarke’s report included asking the organisation to:



consider whether the existing inspection framework and associated guidance was capable of detecting indicators of extremism and ensuring that the character of a school is not changed substantively without following the proper process. This includes ensuring that the appropriate boundaries for a non-faith school are not breached. (Clarke, 2014, p89).

In response, Ofsted issued new guidance. The ‘Handbook on SMSC, R.E and Collective Worship’ (Ofsted, 2014b) emphasised the duty head teachers and governors have with regards to ‘protecting students from possible extremism’ (Ofsted, 2014b, p4) by actively promoting British values. Head teachers were reminded that they must offer a broad and balanced curriculum that prepares pupils for life in modern Britain, and that ‘inspectors should verify that good teaching within a broad and balanced curriculum, accompanied by effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is helping to prepare children and young people for life in modern Britain’ (Ofsted, 2014b, p42). This preparation for ‘life in modern Britain’ occurs both within and outside of the classroom environment. Therefore, the Ofsted handbook’s guidelines also stated, under ‘Other observations’, that ‘Inspectors must ensure that they observe pupils in a range of situations outside normal lessons to evaluate aspects of behaviour and safety, for example [...] during assemblies’ (p15). The ‘Ofsted Framework’ (2012), the ‘Ofsted guidance for SMSC’ (2014a) and the ‘The handbook on SMSC, R.E and Collective Worship’ (2014b) highlighted the significance of Collective Worship, not just for SMSC DEVELOPMENT but also for the promotion of British values. The handbook on SMCS, RE and Collective Worship, was followed by the Ofsted inspection framework, ‘The common inspection framework: education, skills and early years’ (2015), which also detailed how Ofsted should make judgements with regards to how effectively senior leadership and management teams within schools ‘actively promote British values’ and ‘prevent radicalisation and extremism’ (Ofsted, 2015, p13). These ideas will be examined further in Chapter 4.

### **Extremism and Collective Worship**

The UK Government has defined extremism as ‘vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs’ (HM Government, 2015a, p9). However, the Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR), in their report ‘Counter-Extremism’ (2016), argued that definitions of ‘non-violent extremism’ are difficult to legislate and risk

undermining relations with Muslim communities. The JCHR report also recognised the rise in right-wing extremism and xenophobia, but concluded that ‘the government has not demonstrated the need for new legislation’ (2016, p31) and suggested the government rethinks their proposed Counter-Extremism and Safeguarding Bill. Such policies as ‘Prevent’ (Home Office, 2015b) and ‘Counter-extremism policy in English schools’ (Long, 2017) were mainly, but not explicitly, results of the ‘Trojan Horse’ affair in Birmingham. Richardson (2015) claimed that the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter was the watershed moment for government and media debates on British values. Rather than being limited to recent ‘terrorist’ incidents, such as the 7/7 bombings in London and the beheading of British soldier Lee Rigby in 2013, Richardson argued that the question of British identity has been discussed since the 1960s. The concept of formalising a national identity was introduced by the coalition government to help win re-election and provide a ‘conveniently identifiable enemy both within and beyond the boundaries of the government’s jurisdiction’ (Richardson, 2015, p39). This took the form of a response to the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter, that ‘not only reflected Islamophobic tropes, fantasises and simplifications but also acted as a gift horse for certain pre-existing agendas and interests’ (p40).

Following Clarke’s report (2014), various changes in legislation were made to safeguard students and staff at schools and academies against any future ‘appropriations’. This included new statutory guidance for schools and colleges, ‘Keeping children safe in education’ (DfE, 2014b), the new Ofsted framework (2015a) and the subsequent Ofsted inspection handbook (2015b), which set out the responsibilities placed on educational establishments to ‘safeguard and promote the welfare of children’ (2015, p7). Under the PREVENT strategy (2011) and the ‘Guidance on promoting British values in schools’ (DfE, 2014b), those who educate children, such as childcare providers, schools and universities, must ‘have due regard for the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism’ (Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, Part 5, Chapter 1, Section 26).

Along with the Ofsted’s ‘Handbook on SMSC, R.E and Collective Worship’ (2014b), the DfE also published ‘Promoting fundamental British values (FBVs) as a part of SMSC DEVELOPMENT in schools – departmental advice for maintained schools’ (DfE, 2014c). These values were already in place through the HM government ‘PREVENT strategy’ publication (Home Office, 2011), which was written in response to terrorism and extremism, in England and internationally, and to promote social cohesion. However, the publication

highlights the responsibility schools had to inculcate these values; schools are no longer just required to respect such values, they must demonstrate how these FBVs are embedded and promoted within the curriculum as part of pupils' development at school. The FBV guidance stated that,

schools should promote the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs', clarifying what is considered to be active promotion of these values: 'actively promoting the values means challenging opinions or behaviours in school that are contrary to fundamental British values. (DfE, 2014c, p5).

As well as the promotion of FBVs, according to Lord Nash, then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools, the guidance would also instil 'the importance of respect' and enable young people to 'leave school fully prepared for life in modern Britain' (Nash, 2014).

Mogra (2016) stated that the Trojan Horse letter also raised issues for schools concerning the nature of worship, meeting the legal obligations for 'worship to be wholly, or mainly of a broadly Christian character' (ERA, 1988) and engaging appropriately with any requirements based on granted determinations. Following the report into the Trojan Horse letter, a report entitled 'A New Settlement: Religion and Belief in Schools' (2015), compiled by Charles Clarke, former Education Secretary, and Linda Woodhead, a professor of sociology of religion at Lancaster University, argued for the abolition of Collective Worship. The report reasoned that the current Collective Worship legislation is difficult to enforce and is not reflective of the changing attitudes towards religion since the Collective Worship legislation was introduced in the 1944 Education Act. In response to this report, the Church of England (CofE) issued a 'Statement on RE and Collective Worship' (2015), which affirmed the continuing support of the CofE for the current statutory requirement regarding Collective Worship. The statement focused on the importance of Collective Worship as a way of enhancing spiritual and moral development. The report also emphasised the idea that presence at Collective Worship did not assume commitment to Christianity or any faith: 'there should be no expectation of commitment' (CofE, 2015, p1). The CofE report also encouraged leaders of Collective Worship to teach various religious viewpoints, to enhance community cohesion within the school and the local community.

The DfE guidance (2014c) emphasised how SMSC development can enable and encourage various qualities, including respect, responsibility, tolerance and harmony. The guidance was careful to note that ‘it is not necessary for schools or individuals to “promote” teachings, beliefs or opinions that conflict with their own, but not is it acceptable for schools to promote discrimination against people or groups on the basis of their belief, opinion or background’ (DfE, 2014c, p6). In other words, a Roman Catholic school would not have to actively promote religious values and beliefs that were against the school’s ethos; however, the school cannot encourage discrimination against those who follow other beliefs, or none. This is a significant point in response to the ‘Trojan Horse’ enquiry, where the schools in question were seen not only to be promoting extreme Islam, but also to be encouraging discrimination and intolerance. For example, ‘There is witness evidence of intolerance in several schools towards those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual (LGBT)’ (Clarke, 2014).

The FBV guidelines (DfE, 2014c), also reminded schools of the fact that the advice contained in the guidelines was for all schools, reminding them of their obligation to promote SMSC development under Section 78 of the Education Act (2002). The guidance stated unequivocally that ‘Attempts to promote systems that undermine fundamental British values would be completely at odds with a school’s duty to provide SMSC’ (DfE, 2014c, p5) and offered advice on what schools can and should do to promote fundamental British values: ‘Meeting requirements for collective worship, establishing a strong school ethos supported by effective relationships throughout the school, and providing relevant activities beyond the classroom are all ways of ensuring pupils’ SMSC development’ (DfE, 2014c, p4). The DfE’s supplementary guidance ‘Improving the SMSC development of pupils: supplementary information: Departmental advice for independent schools, academies and free schools’ (DfE, 2014d) advises that ‘Academies and free schools are also required to meet the standard’, highlighting that ‘there is now a sector-wide requirement for individual schools to promote fundamental British values actively’ (DfE, 2014d, p6).

There has been much criticism of the introduction, promotion and inspection of the FBV guidance (DfE, 2014c) from trade unions, religious and non-religious groups, and academics. Bill Bolloten and Robin Richardson, in an article for Race Equality Teaching (2015), criticised the Ofsted guidance and claimed that such guidance will lead to ‘superficial, reductive and meaningless activity focused on FBV in many schools, driven by fear of Ofsted and the desire to tick a “British values” box’. Bolloten and Richardson (2015) quoted Nigel

Genders, the CofE's Chief Education Officer, to emphasise that their critical views of Ofsted inspecting FBV are shared by others. Genders (2014) questioned the guidelines for Ofsted judgements regarding the promotion of FBV in schools. He argued that 'The experience of recent inspections [...] suggests that Ofsted is increasingly being required to make nuanced judgements about aspects of school life where there are few, if any, guidelines' (Genders, 2014). He continued by stating that the lack of guidelines could lead to Ofsted's role being questioned and argued for a reconsideration: 'Without a major rethink, the credibility of Ofsted's judgements will be quickly undermined and we will lose a valuable asset for the sector' (Genders, 2015). Bolloten and Richardson (2015) concluded that the FBV guidelines needed an urgent review as the 'FBV programme reflects not only an Us-and-Them mentality deeply damaging to Muslims but also a radical misunderstanding and misrepresentation of British society, culture and history, deeply damaging to everyone'. In other words, the FBV guidelines are 'contradictory and confusing' with the positing of such values engaging in 'a cogent role in the very division that the intention of such values-education is meant to bridge' (Ford, 2016). Professor Colin Richards (2014), a former HMI, also considered Ofsted's response to the Trojan Horse affair, suggested that Ofsted 'finds itself the arbiter of what constitutes extremism in schools' and questioned whether Ofsted inspectors are adequately trained to make such assessments. Richards (2014) claimed that 'The current situation is fraught with danger to community cohesion, cultural identity, school success' (Guardian, 2014).

Genders agreed with the idea of schools being 'required to promote the values of tolerance and respect for those coming at things from a different perspective' (2014). However, he also argued that the promotion of FBVs 'undermines Christian teaching and is potentially dangerous, divisive and undemocratic'. Nicky Morgan, then Education Secretary, was accused by Genders of adopting a 'narrow' set of values following the 'Trojan Horse' scandal, ignoring Christian concepts such as 'loving one's neighbour'. Genders also raised concerns regarding the use of FBVs to assess the loyalty of a member of a community. Genders encouraged further national discussions and public debate regarding national identity and values. The NSS (2014b) disagreed with the statement made by Genders regarding the possibility of FBVs undermining Christian teaching. The NSS claimed that Christianity does not have a monopoly on morality. The NSS also questioned the 'Britishness' of FBVs and suggested a wider multicultural approach to teaching values.

The new 'Teachers' Standards' (DfE, 2013b) required teachers to uphold public trust by 'not undermining fundamental British Values' (p1); however, teachers at the NUT conference in 2015 claimed that teaching FBVs is an act of 'cultural supremacism'. The NUT passed a motion demanding the strategy be withdrawn. ATL (2015) also challenged the requirement to promote FBVs and argued that the legislation risked 'becoming the source of wider conflict, rather than a means to resolving it' (ATL, 2015). A study by Elton-Chalcraft et al. (2016) also highlighted the lack of training for pre-service and trained teachers on FBVs. They suggested that 'teachers are unable and unprepared to critically engage with issues of Britishness' (p22). In contrast, Haferjee and Hassan (2016), in an article for *Research in Teacher Education*, concluded that newly qualified teachers are 'more comfortable than their experienced peers in imparting British values' (p15). They suggest this attitude may be due to the recent training they had received on FBVs. Haferjee and Hassan also raised the issue of the ambiguous nature of FBVs, and argued that the term 'FBV' is 'highly contestable and interpreted differently by every individual' (2016, p15). They fear that without clarity, the teaching of FBVs may cause some cultures to feel excluded and dismissed, leading to division rather than community cohesion.

## Summary

This chapter examined 1) the contribution Collective Worship makes to community cohesion and SMSC development, and 2) the role Collective Worship plays as a countermeasure to extremism.

This chapter has highlighted the following key issues in the Collective Worship debate:

### **1) The contribution Collective Worship makes to community cohesion and SMSC development**

- The link between Collective Worship, community cohesion and SMSC development.
- The role of SACRE in promoting community cohesion and SMSC development.
- The role of Ofsted in inspecting SMSC development.

These key issues aid in understanding the overall Collective Worship debate by highlighting the spiritual dimension's significance in legislation concerning Collective Worship, but also the difficulties of defining and teaching the term 'spirituality' (McCreery, 1996; Wright, 2000a/b; Hemming, 2009; Nesbitt, 2004/2011). Although Ofsted (2016) regards SMSC development as an essential component of their inspection process,

in general, the contribution Collective Worship makes to effective SMSC development was also questioned (Davies, 2000b; Gill, 2000; Smart, 2001). At the same time, the importance of providing space for reflection was highlighted as necessary for effective SMSC development (Watson, 2001; Rutherford; 2014; Svetlana, 2014; Southward, 2015).

As with Collective Worship, the importance placed upon the spiritual element by individual Ofsted inspectors is influenced by personal agendas, views and perceptions (Wintersgill, 2012; Smart, 2001; Watson, 2001), influencing the observations undertaken during an inspection and the recommendations within the reports. This has direct consequences for how SACRE and Ofsted perceive their remit and conduct their work. The term 'spirituality' is open to interpretation by those whose remit is to inspect and monitor the spiritual element within schools. The inspection of the 'development' of spirituality is also subjective and

difficult to define with differing arguments offered for and against the promotion of spiritual development in young people. This chapter has also highlighted the inadequate training of teachers regarding SMSC development, thus newly qualified teachers are ill-prepared to implement it in their classrooms (Rawle, 2009; Adams et al., 2015; Mogra, 2016/2017).

Community cohesion is another essential element of education; however, there are disagreements on the significance of community cohesion (Thomas, 2011; Beider, 2011; Forrester, 2002), and the role of faith schools has been questioned (Berkeley, 2008; Crabtree, 2010). SACREs are placed at the forefront of government guidelines such as the DfCLG report (2008) for the development of community cohesion within schools, but research by Ofsted (2010) has demonstrated that SACREs are used very rarely by schools. This seeming anomaly will be explored further in Chapter 5.

## **2) The role Collective Worship plays as a countermeasure to extremism**

- The allegations in the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter.
- The report into the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter, including criticisms of Ofsted.
- The impact of the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter, including changes to legislation and the role of Collective Worship in tackling extremism.

These key issues highlight the impact of the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter. The introduction and subsequent inspection by Ofsted of the promotion of ‘Fundamental British Values’ such as democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty in schools were described by the HCEC report ‘Extremism in schools: The Trojan Horse Affair’ (March 2015) as the ‘most wide-reaching of all the measures taken by the DfE in response to the “Trojan Horse” affair, extending to maintained schools, academies, and nurseries’ (HCEC, 2015, p24). Although the introduction of such values has led to some controversy and conflict with some schools, particularly faith schools (HCEC, 2015, p26), the report also included a response by Sir Michael Wilshaw, then Chief Inspector of Schools in England and Head of Ofsted, who argued strongly in defence not only of Ofsted but also the promotion of FBVs. Wilshaw (2015) stated that schools, regardless of their faith or secular status, have a ‘big responsibility to ensure that they teach British values, advise youngsters on what is happening in our society



and give them access to knowledge about different faiths, communities and cultures’ (p26). The introduction of new policies for schools and academies demanding the promotion of ‘British values’ includes recognising and respecting religious differences and students’ rights to religious freedom, and issues have been raised concerning the nature and status of worship in schools (Clarke, 2015; CofE, 2015; Mogra, 2016). In the new policies, Ofsted and SACRE are responsible for ensuring the promotion of such values. Ofsted has a duty to inspect ‘British values’ and to ensure inclusivity; SACRE has a role in promoting community cohesion within their local communities.

Regarding these key issues above, the roles and remits of SACRE and Ofsted are essential. SACRE and Ofsted duties involve the monitoring, supporting, developing and inspection of Collective Worship and its component parts: community cohesion, SMSC development and FBVs. These areas are important countermeasures against extremism. However, in different SACREs and amongst individual Ofsted inspectors, different agendas, views and perceptions may exist, influencing the reports, recommendations and guidelines received by schools. The literature has highlighted that despite their own guidance, Ofsted and SACRE have often faced criticism for not inspecting or monitoring Collective Worship sufficiently. SACRE has been criticised by Dr. Leonard, then Bishop of London, for a lack of strong leadership (Bishop, 2001). NASACRE has been criticised for the confusion caused by the withdrawal of Circular 1/94 (Cumper and Mawhinney, 2015). Ofsted have also been criticised for the lack of Collective Worship inspections, while Ofsted’s inspection framework was criticised in two government reports linked to the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter (Clarke, 2014; HCEC, 2015). Ofsted’s ability to inspect SMSC development elements has also been questioned (Wintersgill, 2012). Despite this, government guidelines, including ‘Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools’ (DfE, 2014c) highlighted schools’ responsibilities to promote SMSC development. At the same time, recommendations were made for adequate training for teachers in SMSC development by various reports (Smart, 2001; Rawle, 2009; Fearn, 2015; Adams et al., 2015). Ofsted’s inspection handbook and guidance (Ofsted, 2014b/c) regarding the promotion of FBVs as a countermeasure to extremism have also been questioned and criticised, leading to the following question: can Collective Worship encourage community cohesion whilst also promoting FBVs, which may lead to intolerance and misunderstanding?

## **Conclusion**

Nobody is in a better position to explain the day-to-day realities of Collective Worship than those whose job it is to monitor and support Collective Worship in schools, namely members of SACRE, and those whose job it is to inspect and report on what they experience and perceive is happening in schools, namely Ofsted inspectors. However, despite the criticisms of SACRE and Ofsted, there has been little research into the insights that members of SACRE and Ofsted inspectors could offer on Collective Worship.

Whereas SACRE works on a local level and can offer a locally-based perception of the issues and implications of the educational policies on Collective Worship, Ofsted works at a national level and can observe and identify issues on a much wider scale. The voices of both SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors offer distinct perspectives and insights into the issues surrounding Collective Worship, enabling a more rounded discussion regarding Collective Worship than there is currently.

As highlighted in Chapter 1, SACRE has a duty to develop and lead good practice in Collective Worship, and to encourage and promote community cohesion and SMSC development. The latter is at the forefront of many governmental policies (DfE, 2014c; DfE 2014d) and Ofsted guidelines (Ofsted, 2014b, 2014c, 2015a, 2015b). However, the introduction of academies in 2010 led to a decline in the authority SACREs hold over schools, as academies are regarded as independent schools and thus outside the remit of LEAs and SACREs. This research emphasises how local SACREs find themselves between governmental legislation that strips them of some of their authority, and other policies that highlight the importance of SACREs for SMSC development and community cohesion.

The emphasis Ofsted has placed on Collective Worship has increased since the organisation's founding in 1992. It has developed from inspecting Collective Worship as an act to inspecting assemblies for elements of SMSC development. Collective Worship in academies is dictated by their funding agreements, which Ofsted inspectors need to be aware of when inspecting individual academies. Ofsted inspectors also need to make judgements on the promotion of British values and be aware of elements of extremism within the whole curriculum, not just within Collective Worship, including the role of leadership and management in this judgement.

In the literature, including government policies, the importance of the roles of Ofsted and SACRE have been referred to on several occasions. Ofsted and SACRE, as agencies, are expected to monitor, support and inspect various educational elements, including Collective Worship and its component parts, community cohesion and SMSC development. However, the literature has also highlighted a lack of understanding of the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on their roles. Thus, my research intends to contribute to this gap in the literature by listening to the views of individual SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors, to gain an understanding of how the Academies Act 2010 has impacted on their duty to monitor, support, develop and inspect Collective Worship and its component parts, community cohesion and SMSC development. The key themes of this thesis, 1) the appropriateness of Collective Worship in 21<sup>st</sup>-century schools, 2) the contribution Collective Worship makes to community cohesion and SMSC development, and 3) the role Collective Worship plays as a countermeasure to extremism, especially considering the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter received by Birmingham City Council (BCC) in 2013, have also been explored in Chapters 2 and 3.

My research objectives developed from the three key themes above, as it is through examining these key themes that a deeper understanding of the current situation SACREs and Ofsted must work in can be gained. The perceptions of individuals from SACRE and Ofsted will raise awareness of the issues and implications of educational policies on Collective Worship, combining SMSC development and community cohesion. These viewpoints may provide valuable insights for policy makers, both at governmental and more local levels, as they strive to ensure an education that is appropriate and relevant for 21<sup>st</sup>-century learners. Such insights may also help to develop a deeper understanding of Collective Worship, and could possibly impact on the continuing roles of SACRE and Ofsted. These are the aspects that I propose to examine in the central body of this research, which begins in the next chapter with an account of the research methodology that was utilised to build a broad picture of the impact of the Academies Act 2010.

## **Chapter 4: Research Methods and Design**

The previous three chapters examined various publications and papers, including Hansard and HMSO documentation, Ofsted and SACRE material, for information regarding the current debate surrounding Collective Worship. Chapter 1 highlighted the issues surrounding relevant government legislation, including the issue of defining Collective Worship and identifying its spiritual elements. Chapter 2 focused on the various perceptions and views to be found in academic writing, published papers and official documents.

To develop a thorough understanding of the issues caused by the passing of the Academies Act 2010, my research approach involved the collection of multiple sources of evidence, using a range of data collection methods. The documentary research in Chapters 1, 2 and 3 became the context for a critical realist approach. The use of a critical realist approach enabled an interface to be constructed between the documentary research and the guided discussions. The documentary research identified issues within the Collective Worship debate. These were then confirmed and elaborated on during guided discussions with individuals, to develop an understanding of the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on the roles of SACRE and Ofsted in relation to Collective Worship, based on the personal views of the participants in the guided discussions. Using a critical realist approach, which focuses on the relationship between structure and agency, this qualitative study adds to the Collective Worship debate through discussions with some of the key people involved, namely SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors, on their perceptions of the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on their roles and remits to monitor, support, develop and inspect Collective Worship, community cohesion and SMSC development. This chapter, which is presented in two sections, offers an overview of the research approach. The first section begins with the research methodology that underpinned this study. The second section outlines the methods and the process of data collection.

### **Section 1: Choosing critical realism**

The critical realist methodology adapted for this research is underpinned by my own position as a Christian. My reality is founded upon the existence of God and my belief in Jesus Christ. My perceptions of the world around me are influenced and constructed by my beliefs and experiences. However, as a critical realist, I have engaged in critical thinking and reflection to ensure that the findings from the guided discussions that are presented in the next chapter

are as objective as possible. Critical realism offers an approach that allowed me to subject my subjectively driven research enquiries to critical and reflective scrutiny; critical realism has allowed me to expose the highly personal and subjective religious beliefs that underpin my research with a more analytical, reflective and layered approach that is relevant and appropriate for Christian researchers and academics (Archer, 2004; Carson, 2005; Gironi, 2012; Wright, 2013/2015; Ippolito, 2017).

The primary reason for choosing critical realism as the theoretical framework stems from reflection upon my understanding of the social realm. I undertook this study with a desire to explore the implications of the Academies Act 2010 for the roles of SACRE and Ofsted. Examining Kant's "transcendental idealism" led me to the critical realist philosophy espoused by Roy Bhaskar and other writers, such as Margaret Archer and Andrew Wright. Bhaskar's views are explicitly grounded in Kantian arguments. Bhaskar's early work focused on the philosophy of science. *A Realist Theory of Science* (1975) and his later book *The Possibility of Naturalism: A Philosophical Critique of the Contemporary Human Sciences* (1979) were particularly significant. Both books challenged established theories by introducing transcendental realism, often referred to as critical realism. Transcendental realism 'regards the objects of knowledge as the structures and mechanisms that generate phenomena; and the knowledge as produced in the social activity of science' (Bhaskar, 1975, p15). Bhaskar's transcendental reasoning, using Kantian ideas, argues that we cannot presume an intellectual understanding of a scientist's use of an experiment without presupposing that there are underlying objects and causal laws govern the experiment.

Bhaskar was concerned with causality and the nature of knowledge claims. These concerns prompted him to theorise about the relationship between ontology (the study of being), epistemologies (theories of knowledge), methodologies (structures and rationalisations of enquiry that develop or test ideas) and methods (techniques or procedures to obtain and assess data) (Bhaskar, 1989). Bhaskar viewed social reality as existing on three levels: 1) empirical, i.e. experienced events; 2) actual, i.e. all events whether experienced or not; 3) causal, i.e. underpinning mechanisms that generate events (Bhaskar, 1989). A distinction is drawn between the 'real', the 'actual', and the 'empirical': the 'real' is the domain of structures with their associated 'causal powers'; the 'actual' is the domain of events and processes; the 'empirical' is the part of the real and the actual that is experienced by social actors. Bhaskar holds that the assumption of the existence of social structures and their causal

powers can be justified by examining the terms used to describe people and their activities. Thus, according to Bhaskar, social structures exist that impact upon the behaviour of interacting individuals and the social groups that they form (pp34-39). Bhaskar also focuses on the constraints that social structures impose on the intentional actions of agents in everyday experience. In terms of this thesis, the constraints of various educational legislation, including the ERA 1988 and the Academies Act 2010, have been imposed upon the work of SACRE and Ofsted agents. The structure of the legislation dictates the actions of SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors with regards to how they must inspect, report on, monitor and support Collective Worship.

### **Critical realist ontology**

Critical realism seeks to make overt the logical ties binding ontology to epistemology and methodology; however, critical realism is also primarily a philosophy of ontology rather than a methodology. Critical realism argues that the world exists independently of what we think about it. Critical realism differentiates between the world and our experience of it, and between the real, the actual and the empirical (Bhaskar, 1975). Critical realism recognises that scientific knowledge is socially derived – ‘knowledge is a social product, produced by means of antecedent social products’ (Bhaskar, 1975, pp16-17) – and that the objects of study are ontologically discrete, that is, that things exist independent of from the knower. Bhaskar thereby distinguishes what is known from what might be known. Critical realism differentiates between the social production of knowledge (what is known) and things that exist (what might be known). According to Bhaskar, ‘the objects of scientific knowledge are the mechanisms or structures that generate phenomena’ (1975, p25). These ‘objects are neither phenomena (empiricism) nor human constructs imposed upon the phenomena (idealism), but real structures which endure and operate independently of our knowledge, our experience and the conditions which allow us to access them’ (Bhaskar, 1975, p25). Wright (2013b) asserts that ‘once the distinction between ontology and epistemology is established it becomes possible to develop a rich account of the contours of reality’. Therefore, critical realists assume a ‘stratified ontology’, which perceives processes/events and structures as different strata of social reality, with different properties. Sayer (2000) argues that this ‘stratified ontology’, by differentiating between the real, the actual and the empirical, is what contrasts critical realism with other ontologies, ‘which have “flat” ontologies populated by either the actual or the empirical, or a combination of the two’ (p12). Critical realism also proposes that social reality is reliant on human action; social reality is also stratified,

consisting of structures, mechanisms and power. Therefore, knowledge of the social world can be open to interpretation: 'All theories about the world are seen as grounded in a particular perspective and worldview, and all knowledge is partial, incomplete, and fallible' (Maxwell, 2012, p5). Due to these shortcomings, Benton and Craib (2001) maintain that the researcher should investigate their field as thoroughly as possible, searching for connections and correlations. In terms of my own research, the previous chapters have examined the historical, political and legal position of Collective Worship, including the issue of defining Collective Worship and identifying its spiritual elements, offering various views that are very much interconnected.

Jessop (1998) also agrees that social structures do not exist independently of the activities they govern; the structures that exist in a given context are often determined by the historical results of human actions and their interaction with the structures themselves. For Joseph (1998), the complexity of relations within society raises the question of the impact of political parties and their dominant policies. Critical realism therefore offers not just an assessment of structures, but also an analysis of the impact of these structures. Margaret Archer (1995) recognises the interdependency between structure and agency, and argues that the natures of both structure and agency can shift over time. Archer (1995) developed her own 'morphogenetic' approach in which she argues causation is presented 'as a process which is continuously activity-dependent [and] also one which is uncontrolled, non-teleological, non-homeostatic, non-adaptive and therefore unpredictable.' (p165). She asserts that the morphogenesis approach 'accords full significance to the timescale through which structure and agency themselves emerge, intertwine and redefine one another' and examines this in terms of three distinct temporal moments – structure, interaction, and structural elaboration (1995, p76). Thus, it is only through the acknowledgement of the non-identity of the nature of structure and agency can one comprehend the shifting properties and consequences of the relations between structure and agency over time. According to critical realism, social structures have several features that differentiate them from physical structures. Social structures both constrain and enable social actions, and the structures are themselves replicated or altered by these actions (Archer, 1995; Bhaskar, 1998; Mingers, 2006). Thus, using critical realism, the impact of the structure and implementation of the Academies Act 2010 on the agencies of SACRE and Ofsted, in relation to Collective Worship, was explored. The aim of this research was to scrutinise the impact of legislation on the role of those whose remit is to inspect and monitor Collective Worship. By examining the views of SACRE

members and Ofsted inspectors, this thesis also contextualises Collective Worship within the social and political sphere. SACRE represents the social and religious arena and Ofsted the political, although both are regulated by government legislation. This research also suggests possible new roles and remits for Ofsted and SACRE with regards to monitoring, supporting and inspecting Collective Worship, and the contribution Collective Worship makes to SMSC development and community cohesion.

Thus, in summary, critical realism seeks to provide a ‘meta-theory’ of structure and agency (Cruickshank, 2003), with these two aspects being distinct but also intertwined. Archer (1995) argued that the reality of social situations can be explained by considering the two essential components of social life; structure and agency. Structural factors or practices can impact both positively and negatively on the work of agents and agencies. In this thesis, structure is defined as the legislation, such as the ERA 1988, that the agencies of Ofsted and SACRE are bound by. This includes both the remit and the specific monitoring, reporting and evaluating activities performed by each agency.

### **Case study design within a critical realism framework**

A critical realism approach does not commit to a single type of research, but rather endorses an extensive variety of research methods. Critical realists argue that the choice of methods should be dictated by the nature of the research problem; Olsen (2002) argues that the most effective approach is the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods or techniques. According to Pratschke (2003), from a critical realist perspective the most important feature is how quantitative and qualitative methods are used to produce information. However, due to their focus on a deep understanding, particularly of agency, critical realists tend to gravitate towards the use of qualitative methods because ‘the key strength of qualitative methods is that they are open ended’ (McEvoy and Richards, 2006, p71). These three statements demonstrate that critical realism does not commit to a single type of research, but rather recommends that the research methods chosen are compatible with the type of project and the aims of the study. Consequently, critical realism is compatible with inclusive research methods, such as case studies. Therefore, to perform a critical realist explanatory analysis of individual participants’ ‘stratified realities’ in relation to the impact of the Academies Act 2010, a case study research approach was chosen.



Sayer (2000) argued that as case studies are often 'intensive' in their design, for instance by focusing on individual agents, they are consistent with a critical realist ontology (p19), as the adaptation of such a research approach can be used to gain a deeper understanding of the issues by illuminating complex perceptions and relationships that may be difficult to acquire using predetermined response categories or standardised quantitative measures. According to Easton (2010), a critical realist approach to case study research includes 'developing a research question that identifies a research phenomenon of interest, in terms of discernible events, and asks what causes them to happen' (p128). This includes examining the relationships between structures and agencies. Easton recommends that the 'research then proceeds by capturing data with respect to ongoing or past events, asking at all times why they happened or are happening' (Easton 2010, p128). Therefore, the primary purpose of this case study was to offer an in-depth understanding of the complexities present within the Collective Worship debate, including examining the relationship between cause and effect; in other words, the case study will assess the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on the role of SACRE and Ofsted by relating the data collected to the historical, political and social events mentioned in Chapters 1 and 2. This was a feasible scope, given the physical and budgetary restrictions the researcher, and therefore the study, was subject to. The predominant methods of collecting data were through an analysis of relevant documentation and guided discussions.

Archer (2016) maintained that our knowledge of reality 'is always historically, socially, and culturally situated' and that 'knowledge is articulated from various standpoints according to various influences and interests' (p4). The perspectives of the Ofsted inspectors and SACRE members engaged in this research are situated within the period March 2014-March 2015. Five SACRE guided discussions took place during May 2014, with the rest of the SACRE guided discussions taking place in November 2014. This had an important influence on the data, as some participants were also councillors involved in local elections, and were therefore unavailable for the first half of May 2014. The local elections caused a political imbalance in power, with some very surprising results for the UK Independence Party (UKIP). I believe these election results, together with the 'Trojan Horse' scenario (discussed in Chapter 1), had an impact on the views offered by these SACRE members.

Research into educational institutions needs to contextualise schools within the wider environment. Willmott (2003) proposed a recognition of how schools work within, not

independently of, contextual constraints, such as those of a financial, legal and political nature. Chapters 1 and 2 briefly identified some of the main legal constraints underpinning the practice of Collective Worship. Chapter 3 recognises the financial and political ideology surrounding the introduction of academies in 1997, and the continuation of the conversion programme through the Academies Act 2010. Cruickshank (2003) argued that ‘research is always political’ (p1), with critical realism being ‘critical in a political as well as a methodological sense’ (p3). As a researcher, I sought to establish a professional context to investigate where and how Collective Worship is situated in the current political climate. According to Crotty (1998), ‘Critical inquiry [is not] a research that seeks merely to understand [it is] a research that challenges [...] that seeks to bring about change’ (p112). Therefore, the choice of a critical realist approach in my research was not made merely to be able to explain the impact of the Academies Act 2010, but also to offer suggestions for how changes to structures and agencies could lead to more beneficial outcomes for all involved in Collective Worship. Therefore, acknowledging and understanding the perceptions and opinions of individual members of SACRE and Ofsted inspectors is important to gain a fuller picture of how the Academies Act 2010 has impacted on their remit to monitor, support and inspect Collective Worship. Such insight may also stimulate a deeper understanding of Collective Worship, but could also potentially impact on the continuing roles of SACRE and Ofsted. From this standpoint, using critical realism in my own research will engage with political issues, to challenge the present remit of SACRE and Ofsted.

As Chapter 2 noted, Collective Worship has the potential to make important contributions to community cohesion and SMSC, and plays an essential role as a countermeasure to extremism. However, in Chapter 2 the appropriateness of the current Collective Worship legislation was questioned, including in the context of issues regarding the type and level of spirituality students should be subject to within Collective Worship (Davies, 1998/2000/2007; McCreery, 1991, 1993a/1993b; Johnson & McCreery, 1999; Watson, J. 2000; Watson, B. 2004; Rawle, 2009; Smith and Smith, 2013; Wright, 2000a/2006; Felderhof, 1999/2000/2016). Critical realism has therefore also been used as a tool to enable me to pursue my research within the realm of Christian education, by asking questions of participants regarding the reality and relevance of current Collective Worship practices. The main advantage of a critical realist is that this approach has enabled me to understand the complexities of the debate surrounding Collective Worship, investigate and evaluate the impact of the Academies Act 2010 and offer suggestions regarding the future of Collective

Worship and spiritual education offered to students as well as the remit of SACRE and Ofsted.

## **Section 2 - Research methodology and data collection**

### **Purpose**

To explore the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on Collective Worship using SW SACRE as a case study and a critical realist approach.

### **Research objectives**

A critical realist approach to case study research requires the development of research objectives that identify an area of interest, focussing on the causality between structure and agency. Thus, my research objectives are based upon gaining an understanding of the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on the agencies of Ofsted and SACRE. At the same time, my research focuses partially on the Educational Reform Act (1988) and Circular 1/94, the current legislation concerning Collective Worship. The issues surrounding this legislation are multi-faceted, with OFSTED, SACRE and the Academies Act 2010 profoundly intertwined with it.

Therefore, the research objectives are as follows:

- 1) To examine the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on Ofsted and SACRE in relation to Collective Worship, including the perceptions of individual SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors.
- 2) To make a professional contribution by offering insights into the interface between the documentary research and the field research.

### **The approach**

Given my circumstances and limited budget, I selected a case study approach. The use of a case study is the most appropriate and meaningful for my work, for the following reasons. As I wished to examine the impact of the Academies Act 2010 in the context of how the legislation has impacted on the agencies of SACRE and Ofsted, 'where the action is defined by the interactions between people and situations, which of course, is the sine qua non of case study research' (Thomas, 2011, p51), the use of a case study made perfect sense. Using

critical realism enabled me to gain an understanding of how the members of SACRE and Ofsted perceived the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on their work. A case study approach allowed me to obtain ‘a texture of reality’ (Wellington, 2000, p.94) and to examine the ‘complexities and nuances’ of the both the overall ethos and individual opinions of key people within these institutions and agencies, which ‘were unlikely to be discovered in another type of data collection (for example, a survey questionnaire or strictly structured interview)’ (Cheetham, 2001, p166). A critical realist case study approach is also seen to be appropriate for a time-bound ‘study of phenomena such as organisations, interorganisational relationships or nets of connected organisations’ (Easton, 2009, p123).

The use of such an approach would also allow me to gain analytical insights (Thomas, 2011), which are essential to critical realism. Critical realism offers a philosophical position that acknowledges the subjective nature of knowledge and recognises the presence of structures in the social world, allowing the researcher to construct a narrative rather than discover ‘the truth’ (Cruickshank, 2003, p1). In other words, in critical realism knowledge claims are not value-free or definitive; bias should be expressed and research positions reflected on, with conclusions grounded in a multifaceted and time-based reality, and constructed on interpretations that are very much influenced by the presence and perceptions of the researcher. This narrative approach has enabled me to offer a ‘rich picture’ (Thomas, 2011, p21), albeit with certain boundaries within which my research has been focused. More importantly, I have presented a narrative that explores the thoughts and opinions of SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors, and which illuminates the context within which they work and its impact on Collective Worship.

### **Research design**

Case studies have been used by both interpretivist and positivist educational researchers (Wilson, 2017; Hartas, 2015), as such an approach allows an in-depth focus on a particular issue. However, given that there are various definitions of the term ‘case study’ (Yazan, 2015), in this research, Carspucken’s (1996) description of the term as ‘like a template or lens to place over complex social life, which then must have the size and focus adjusted to meet one’s interests’ (p34) has been used. Therefore, using a critical realist approach, I developed Thomas’ (2010) case study theme into the idea of a ‘focused snapshot’. Such an approach, as opposed to a longitudinal study, is aimed at studying the central points of a phenomenon, problem or issue, offering a ‘snapshot of reality’ (Burton, Brunet and Jones, 2014, p70)

within a short and specific time frame. An example of this is a national census, offering a view of a population, bound by a specific point in time (Gray, 2009; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011).

The snapshot approach is often the preferred approach for many researchers, as it is not time-consuming to implement for either the researcher or the participants. Although the snapshot approach is bound by time, conclusions reached from such projects can have a far-reaching impact, as illustrated by the research undertaken by Schihalejev, a Senior Lecturer in Religious Education at the University of Tartu, Estonia (2013). The ‘snapshot’ approach used by Schihalejev aided her in introducing new pedagogical approaches that helped to promote mutual understanding among people with various religious and non-religious views in Estonia. Similarly, my use of the snapshot approach allowed me to provide insights into the structural impact of the Academies Act 2010 legalisation.

Critical realism, like interpretivism, recognises the significance of social actions between human actors as an essential theme of research and conjecture. However, unlike interpretivists, critical realism also emphasises how the context of pre-existing structures can influence and impact on the social actions of human actors. Critical realism demands an understanding of a social situation, which goes further than what can be initially perceived, into investigating the structures that underpin an event or situation. Therefore, the purpose of my focused snapshot was ‘evaluative, explanatory and exploratory’ (Thomas, 2011), produced to build a narrative based on the insights offered by members of SACRE and Ofsted inspectors on the impact of the Academies Act 2010, within the period 2014-2015. Using a critical realist analytical approach enabled me to explore discourses as causal forces that have real effects, and was used in this research to recognise the narrative of each interviewee and to analyse the constraints within which members of SACRE and Ofsted act.

By drawing information from the data provided by guided discussions with members from SACRE and Ofsted during this narrow time frame, as well as from other sources of contextual data, the interconnections between the two enabled me to draw ‘a three-dimensional picture with all the colours painted in’ (Thomas, 2011, p146). In other words, the guided discussions were framed by the documentary research to gain an understanding of the impact of the Academies Act 2010. This professional framework contextualised the historical, social, legal and political situation in which the chosen area of research was

situated, as described in Chapters 1 and 2. The findings obtained from the guided discussions informed an understanding of the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on the work of SACRE and Ofsted in relation to Collective Worship.

After considering various research methods, and based on my personal situation (living in Luxembourg with a full-time teaching job and two young children), the use of Skype to conduct guided discussions was decided upon as the most practical and realistic way to gain an understanding of the chosen area of research.

### **Guided discussions**

In a critical realism approach, research methods are chosen that correspond to the type of project and the aims of the study. This means that critical realists can utilise interviews and other social research methods to gain an understanding of the issues and to analyse the social contexts, constraints and resources within which agents' act (Smith and Elger, 2012). For critical realists, research methods such as interviews provide a significant source of knowledge to gaining a rich insight into the experiences of social reality as the agents perceive it. Wright (2004) reasons that critical realism offers a subjective truth, based on the perceptions and understanding of the social actors, and that 'our comprehension of the world must take account of our own subjective engagement with reality' (2004, p55), including, within the context of this thesis, religious beliefs.

Underlying the guided discussions was the role of religion; as many of the SACRE participants were representatives of Committee A or Committee B (see appendix 2), and two of the Ofsted inspectors (Boris and Lisa) considered discussed their own faith, the guided discussions also enabled me to construct an interface between religion and the research enquiry, with their Christian perspectives highlighted in Chapter 4. The use of critical realism enabled me to explore the 'subjective realities' experienced by the individuals being interviewed and how these impacted on their positions as SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors in relation to the Academies Act 2010. I conducted individual guided discussions via Skype with one SACRE advisor, 13 SACRE members and six Ofsted inspectors. The SACRE advisor was contacted in March 2014, all SACRE members were contacted between May and November 2014, one Ofsted inspector was contacted in June 2014 and the other five Ofsted inspectors were engaged in guided discussions in March 2015 (see Appendix 3). SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors were chosen as they could offer a fuller picture of the impact of the Academies Act 2010, based on their personal experiences with monitoring,

inspecting and supporting Collective Worship in schools and academies. Each participant in the individual guided discussions was given a pseudonym.

Pawson and Tilley (1997) argue that interviews should be explicitly 'theory-driven', in the sense the interviewer is an 'expert' regarding the issues being explored. In other words, for interviews to offer beneficial insights into relevant issues, an appropriate analytical framework, which can direct questions and suggest areas for discussion, is required to process the answers offered by the agents. At the same time, Pawson (1996) asserts that the agent being interviewed will also have a wealth of experience and expertise, and therefore 'the researcher will often assume that the balance of expertise lies with the informant in describing the detailed way in which reasoning contributes to social change' (Pawson, 1996, p303). However, critical realism also emphasises that the validity of such expertise cannot be taken for granted, as the perspectives offered are often tempered by the preoccupations of those being interviewed. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) suggest that 'the more effectively we can understand an account and its context – the presuppositions on which it relies, who produced it, for whom and why – the better able we are to anticipate the ways in which it may suffer from biases of one kind or another as a source of information' (p126).

Therefore, the themes from the documentary research framed the guided discussions; however, the flexibility of the research method allowed for the elaboration of information that was important to participants and detailed insights into the perceptions and views of SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors. Questions in each guided discussion emerged from the desire to understand previous answers in more detail. That is, questions were asked to either consolidate my understanding of what the participant was saying, or to encourage the participant to offer more details. The guided discussion approach also enabled me to clarify points when asked to do so. For example, when Hazel, a SACRE member, asked 'do you want a personal view or an understanding of some of the frustrations for SACREs in the middle of all of this?', I could respond accordingly: 'Both, which is one of the reasons I wanted to get hold of SACRE members, because I want individual points of view but I also want to understand how the Academies Act has impacted on the work that you do'.

I have used the term 'guided discussion' rather than 'interview' deliberately. A guided discussion is a technique often used in the classroom to elicit information from students on topics they are already familiar with, and is 'a non-hierarchical verbal interaction among a

group of persons on a specified topic with a purpose' (Mohan, 2011, p145). There are many benefits, including encouraging critical thinking skills and allowing students 'to bring their opinions and feelings to the study of the topic' (Mohan, 2011, p145). The intent of the guided discussions in the context of this thesis 'was not to create categories or themes but rather to better understand the data in context of the setting or situation' (Berg, 2004, p200). Such guided discussions are appropriate for a critical realist approach, as the views expressed offer a 'snapshot' of the impact of the Academies Act 2010 as experienced directly by SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors within the period March 2014 to March 2015.

After I engaged with the participants on a formal basis regarding consent and other administrative issues, I began each guided discussion by talking about why the research matters to me. It was made clear to the participants that the purpose of the research was to identify the status of the debate on Collective Worship and the impact of the Academies Act 2010.

### **Initial contact**

My intention was to engage on a one-to-one basis with 10-20 participants, chosen based on their involvement with SW SACRE. The SW area was chosen due to my personal familiarity with teaching in the region, and I also chose SW SACRE due to my original proximity and local accessibility (Bryman, 2008; Fink, 2003). I specifically chose members of SW SACRE who were mentioned directly in their 2012-2014 development plan.

First contact was made via an email to the support officer for SW SACRE, with introductory information about my thesis, including a brief explanation of my research and a request for further communication. The support officer agreed to forward my email to the SACRE diocesan advisor based in the SW area. The SACRE advisor, who became known for the purposes of this research as Anna (see Appendix 3 for all SACRE and Ofsted contacts) responded positively to my email. This was followed by a telephone call to Anna. It was my intention to use the initial phone call to set up a convenient time for a guided discussion via Skype or telephone. The envisaged short telephone call, however, turned into a long discussion regarding the impact of the Academies Act 2010, the work of SACRE and the debate surrounding daily Collective Worship. Not anticipating this, unfortunately I did not have my recording equipment ready, and therefore only written notes were taken.



After such an engaging conversation with Anna, I emailed her again (Appendix 4) on several occasions to set up another guided discussion, which I could then record. However, my emails were not answered. Anna had offered my details to the Chair of SW SACRE. I heard no more from this line of enquiry. Although this was disappointing, Anna also advised me to directly contact a member of SW SACRE, Nicola. Nicola was a useful contact, since as well as being a member of SACRE, she was also completing her PhD in a different area of Collective Worship, and therefore had a wealth of knowledge and an understanding of the subject that was invaluable.

### **Further contact**

I also contacted other members of SW SACRE directly via email, using their email addresses as listed either on the SW SACRE information page of the SW Council website or LinkedIn. Within the emails, I introduced the research and requested their participation. I was very interested in understanding the perspectives of all members of SW SACRE. However, as expected, not everyone responded to my request. One person I was very keen to contact was Peter, the one co-opted member of SW SACRE and a humanist. Unfortunately, despite many efforts, I was unable to engage him in my research. For me, this was disappointing, as I would have liked to have included the perspective of someone who had volunteered to be a member of SACRE, knowing they had no voting powers, yet wanting a representative voice of their beliefs to be heard.

During the guided discussion with Nicola, she advised me to contact Owen, an Ofsted inspector and national advisor for Religious Education, to whom she had also spoken as part of her own doctoral research on Collective Worship. Owen was very helpful, giving me contacts for other Ofsted inspectors who he thought would be willing to help. Thus, using the 'snowballing' technique (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981) and direct contact via email a total of one SACRE advisor, 13 SACRE members and six Ofsted inspectors agreed to participate in my research.

### **The use of Skype for guided discussions**

I chose Skype as the primary means of collecting data due to its flexibility and personal approach, as well as due to the geographical distance between myself and the participants.

There are some disadvantages to the use of Skype for the guided discussions. Sullivan (2012) discussed in depth the use of Skype, questioning the appropriateness of such a method of data collection for qualitative interviews. She raised some issues that are pertinent to this study: authenticity, ethical concerns and technical problems. The question of authenticity is a very problematic one in the digital age. Not only are there reports in the news of individuals who have masqueraded as someone else using social media, there is also the question of the presentation of the self. Since I was not meeting the participants face to face, I felt it was important for participants to be able to verify who I was. Therefore, in the initial and subsequent phases of communication, I advised them of the contact details of my supervisors, should they wish to confirm my identity and the validity of my research.

The second issue raised by Sullivan (2012) is one of ethical concerns. She questioned whether consent given verbally is appropriate and whether anonymity can be assured, especially with covert research. Such covert research was not part of my research method; however, in line with the University of Gloucestershire's research ethics guidelines, informed consent was sought from all participants. During the initial stage of recruiting willing participants, I sent each prospective participant an email with detailed information regarding the research and asked participants to sign the attached informed consent form, detailing the issue of confidentiality and their right to withdraw. To help increase participants' willingness to participate honestly, participant confidentiality was assured, and pseudonyms were used in all published research materials, including this thesis. I recorded participants' actual identities separately, to facilitate any necessary checks later. I confirmed consent, confidentiality and the right to withdraw at the beginning of each guided discussion (Appendix 5). In addition to this, I also reminded the participants of the purpose of the research, how the research would be recorded, how the information would be stored and how it would be used. Additionally, with Skype the participant always has the option to turn off the video conferencing aspect and continue with audio only, or stop the guided discussion altogether, at any time. Thus, participation in the guided discussions was entirely voluntary.

### **Other issues**

The use of any technology is fraught with the possibility of technical problems and failures, such as issues with sound quality, microphones, webcam malfunctions and sometimes frustrating delays in the live feed, which occur more often with video calls. Although some of these issues may be prevented by checking equipment before use, not these issues can be

foreseen. In cases of the technical breakdown of recording equipment, I also made notes during the guided discussions. To ensure the accuracy of my written notes during the Skype guided discussions, the discussions were also recorded and then transcribed (see Appendices 7-9), with the resulting transcripts being forwarded to the participant for comments. No comments were received in return.

### **The use of a research journal**

The research design process was not as linear as it may perhaps appear. I continued to return to secondary research findings, including Ofsted and SACRE reports, to help me reassess and, if necessary, alter the study during the research stage. My research journal began as a product of my reflective thinking during the documentary research stage, as explained in Chapter 2. The initial notes included brief summaries, quotes and citations, key words, points and concepts. Thomas (2011) argued that, through the literature review, initial ideas and research questions are shaped and reformulated into an enhanced concept, leading to a more enlightened case study (p31). As I wrote and rewrote my literature review using the documentary research and continued into my field work, I used my research journal to build upon and refine my ideas, and to compartmentalise my thinking, identifying recurring themes during the documentary research and the guided discussions. Thomas (2011) suggested that the completion of a research journal is ‘best done immediately after your session’ to help record and focus ‘ideas, reflections, thoughts, emotions, actions, reactions, conversations and so on’ (p164). Therefore, my research journal entries were typically made before I began transcribing the guided discussions. I kept dated notes on the guided discussions, and my initial interpretations and analyses of the participants, throughout the process. This allowed me to track, question and ultimately enhance my understanding of the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on the work of SACRE and Ofsted in relation to Collective Worship.

I used my research journal as a tool for reflective practice. The term ‘reflective practice’ originates from the work of Dewey. Dewey (1910) wrote that reflective practice refers to ‘the active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it’ (p6). Although such a definition is now over 100 years old, critical analysis and reflection remain key tools for helping teachers learn from the paradoxes and difficulties they encounter, allowing them to develop and grow professionally (Bolton, 2010; MacGregor and Cartwright, 2011; Rushton and Suter, 2012; Impedovo and Khatoon, 2016; Bassot, 2016). Reflective practice is often seen as an essential element of

being a teacher; for example, the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland implemented reflective practice as part of their professional competencies for teachers (GTC NI, 2004). Ofsted have also emphasised the link between reflective practice and very good teachers (Ofsted, 2004). Such critical reflection enables teachers to analyse and improve their own practice. Reflective practice is cyclical, combining analytical and questioning approaches, leading to the development of new concepts that are then used to plan the next stages of learning. In teaching, this may include analysing students' exam results to reframe explanations, or approaching topics from alternative perspectives. In this thesis, my use of reflective practice has included examining the various issues within the Collective Worship debate from different perspectives, which has helped me to further my understanding of the issues and to scrutinise my own values and assumptions.

A critical realist approach also enabled me to identify and include my own personal values in the research. As stated in the Introduction chapter, I am a teacher and reflective practitioner, contributing to academic research. My faith, however, is also an integral part of who I am and why I chose this area of research. I care deeply about the role of religion and spirituality in education; for me, religion does have a significant part to play as part of the curriculum and the development of the whole child, as discussed in Chapter 3. I wish to contribute as a teaching practitioner to gain a fuller picture of how the Academies Act 2010 has impacted on the remit of SACRE and Ofsted to monitor, support and inspect Collective Worship. My research is shaped by my faith; however, my research journal was used to contextualise my research and my faith, enabling me to reflect on my research journey and develop an interface between my faith and academic rigour.

### **The themes: SACRE**

The key themes of my research were heavily influenced by suggestions made by Cheetham (1999). I chose Cheetham's thesis as a starting point as, although the methods of his thesis are different from my own, one of his main aims is like my own personal thinking, which is the 'belief that the Collective Worship debate will continue to flounder without both a serious analysis of the underlying issues and more research into what is actually happening in practice' (Cheetham, 1999, p11). I utilised three of Cheetham's main themes: freedom of choice and personal integrity, inclusivity and the influence of teachers. Cheetham's themes informed the choice of key areas for the guided discussions. Throughout the guided discussions, SACRE members were encouraged to reflect on the key topics of 1) the

appropriateness of Collective Worship in 21<sup>st</sup>-century schools, 2) the contribution Collective Worship makes to community cohesion and SMSC development, 3) the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on the roles of SACRE and Ofsted and 4) any personal reflections on the future of SACRE. I linked my four key areas to Cheetham's themes as follows: 1) the appropriateness of Collective Worship in 21<sup>st</sup>-century schools was connected to 'freedom of choice and personal integrity', 2) the contribution Collective Worship makes to community cohesion and SMSC development was linked to 'inclusivity' and 3) the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on the roles of SACRE and Ofsted with the 'influence of teachers', which I altered to 'the influence of others'.

The guided discussions were directed by the key themes and influenced by the documentary research, including Swindon SACRE's 'Time to Breathe' policy (2012) and SW SACRE's draft and actual 2012-2014 development plan.

The first person to participate in the guided discussions was Nicola, a member of SW SACRE, who was also completing her PhD in a different area of Collective Worship. After the initial introductions, I began the guided discussion by asking for quantitative information regarding how many schools had applied for 'determinations', requests to be declared exempt from the current Collective Worship legislation, for the academic year 2013-2014. Nicola replied that no determinations were applied for by either academies or LEA schools in this period. The lack of determination applications is also reflected in the wider context, as discussed later in Chapter 4.

The SW SACRE development plan was written in response to the Academies Act 2010, as many schools in the area, including all but one secondary school, had converted to become academies. This led to SW SACRE questioning its remit and suggesting that the powers of SACRE to enforce standards in Religious Education and Collective Worship were now uncertain:

This plan reflects the current context that SW SACRE finds itself in: [...] b) local responses to the Academies Act 2010 which has meant that the majority of Secondary Schools are no longer under Swindon local authority control, some primary schools have become Academies too and therefore SACRE's remit as funded by Swindon LA towards them is unclear c) SACRE's role in challenging

Swindon LA about RE is reduced and the powers SACRE has in ensuring standards and entitlement in RE and Collective Worship in Academies are uncertain. (SW SACRE draft development plan 2012-2014, p1 – see Appendix 10)

Points b) and c) above directly relate to my field of research and I was keen to understand why these points were in the draft, but did not appear in the final version of the development plan. During the guided discussion, Nicola explained that these points were in the draft development plan but not in the final development plan as they were issues SW SACRE were initially concerned about; however, after careful consideration, SW SACRE realised that their remit, despite the passing of the Academies Act 2010, had not changed. Members of SW SACRE considered their remit to still be to support and monitor Collective Worship and Religious Education in schools still under local education control, and offer resources and training to academies, so that ‘we don’t differentiate in our provision between LA schools and academies’ (Nicola).

The difference between the draft and final version of SW SACRE’s development plan 2012-2014 was not asked to other participants in the guided discussions. The reasons for this were twofold. Firstly, I felt the response I had gained from Nicola stipulated SW SACRE’s position very clearly. There was no longer any concern regarding their future remit; their remit remained as it was: ‘in many ways for us, things have not changed for SACRE. I think we’re quite clear, as far as funding allows, we will continue to support schools in the way we have done previously’ (Nicola). I also wanted to ensure the guided discussions with the other participants were more directly linked to my research questions.

### **The themes: Ofsted**

The key areas for the guided discussions with Ofsted inspectors were guided by the documentary research surrounding the lack of compliance by schools with the Collective Worship legislation and the lack of inspection of Collective Worship by Ofsted. Like SACRE members, Ofsted inspectors were therefore asked to reflect on 1) the appropriateness of Collective Worship in 21st-century schools, 2) the contribution Collective Worship makes to community cohesion and SMSC development, and 3) the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on the role of Ofsted.

## **Data analysis**

The use of critical realism during the data analysis stage allowed me to focus on ‘the idea that social structures and human agency exhibit causal powers’ (Archer, 1999, p12). A critical realist ontology enhances evaluation through critical reflection on the reality offered by the participants. Thus, the impact of the structure of the Academies Act 2010 on the agencies of SACRE and Ofsted guided my analysis and discussion of the findings, leading to my recommendations in the final chapter. Such reflection and analysis offer a deeper understanding and explanation than can be achieved without their use of the significance and impact of the Academies Act 2010.

All guided discussions were recorded and transcribed verbatim afterwards, as this protects against bias and provides a permanent record of what was and was not said (Pontin, 2000). I also made notes in my research journal during and immediately after each guided discussion on any observations, thoughts and ideas that occurred during the guided discussions. My notes were used during the data analysis process as a reminder of initial feelings and judgements.

After fully transcribing all guided discussions, I then analysed and coded each transcript. Coding is the procedure of examining the data for themes and ideas and categorizing similar segments of the research so they can easily be identified later for further comparison and analysis. Codes can be based on key topics, concepts, constructs, terms, words, etc. Thomas (2009) advised that ‘there is no substitute for your intelligent reading of your data’ (p207) and emphasised the danger of over-reliance on computerised data analysis programmes. Bearing this in mind, to analyse the data, after each guided discussion was transcribed, I highlighted the key constructs myself.

Key constructs were acknowledged using a deductive and an inductive approach, meaning that some expected strands were investigated, whilst an open mind was maintained to spot themes that emerged from the data itself (Evans, 2009). Anticipated themes were the key areas that guided the discussions: 1) the appropriateness of Collective Worship in 21<sup>st</sup>-century schools, 2) the contribution Collective Worship makes to community cohesion and SMSC development, and 3) the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on the roles of SACRE and Ofsted. I carefully reviewed the transcribed guided discussions and, using different coloured highlighter pens, highlighted phrases and sentences that referred to the key themes. Any

words and/or phrases that were repeated by several participants were also noted as potentially important emerging themes (Kvale, 1996; Ryan and Bernard, 2003).

Each line of the guided discussion was given a number. I did not include my questions in this numbering. By giving each line a number, each guided discussion could be recorded easily. Close reading of each guided discussion led to the line number being placed in a table of the themes outlined above (see Appendix 6).

After this, a second reading of the guided discussion enabled 'second order constructs' (Thomas, 2011, p172) to be construed. These were themes that were in addition to the key themes from the first reading. These second order constructs were based on Cheetham's (1999) three main themes: inclusivity; freedom of choice and personal integrity; and finally, the influence of teachers, which I altered to 'the influence of others' to include all those whose role it is to implement Collective Worship legislation. Some of the second order constructs overlapped with the first order constructs. For example, the idea of inclusivity, that is, Collective Worship being an inclusive event that unites the whole community within an educational establishment, has links to the principles of community cohesion. However, I wanted to make a separate note of those individuals who mentioned the terms 'community cohesion' and 'inclusivity', to aid my thinking and help to answer the research objectives. A third reading reinforced these 'second order constructs' as 'final themes', between which connections were made (Thomas 2011, p172).

Smith and Elger (2012) argue that interviews 'do not simply generate narrative accounts, but can provide insights into substantive events and experiences and thus form the basis for analysing the interplay of social contexts and generative mechanisms' (p26). Thus, using 'second-order constructs' enabled me to demonstrate that I 'weighed up ideas, looked at them critically and tried to form interconnections in the narrative' (Thomas, 2011, p180). Exploring a narrative is an essential part of a critical realist approach and enabled me to gain a more thorough understanding of the views held by the individual members of SACRE and Ofsted inspectors. By adopting Pawson and Tilley's (1997) theory-led approach, the data generated by the guided discussions were not treated as separate narratives. Smith and Elger (2012) reason that researchers should carefully study and analyse the data collected, to gain a deeper understanding of structure and agency. A critical realist approach allowed me to gain an understanding of reality based on an analysis of the experiences of the SACRE members



and Ofsted inspectors engaged in the guided discussions, correlated with other types of data, such as the SACRE reports and policy documents, as well as Ofsted school inspection reports, annual and special reports, handbooks and framework documents. Therefore, the guided discussions were contextualised by the documentary research and assessed in terms of their usefulness and appropriateness for providing insights into the impact of the Academies Act 2010.

### **Summary**

The ‘stratified ontology’ of critical realism, which differentiates between the empirical, the actual and the real, enabled me to gain an awareness of reality based on an analysis of the experiences observed and interpreted by the participants, along with other types of data. A critical realist ontology seeks to explain social processes and events in terms of the causal powers of both structures and human agency and the impact of each. A critical realist approach therefore formed the basis of my research and impacted on my research design. By recognising the distinct characteristics of structure and agency, and understanding that each needs to be valued as intrinsically different from, but also linked to, the other, the use of critical realism enabled me to settle on a research method, a small case study, to gain an in-depth understanding of the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on the role of members of SW SACRE and Ofsted inspectors with regards to Collective Worship.

The research design, a case study, offered a ‘snapshot of reality’ as experienced by the Ofsted inspectors and SACRE members during the period March 2014 to March 2015, with their views captured via guided discussions on Skype and by telephone. I conducted individual guided discussions with one SACRE advisor, 13 SACRE members and six Ofsted inspectors as the main method of gathering data (see Appendices 7-9). The guided discussions were centred on issues identified in the literature. These discussions were used to construct an interface with the documentary research to offer a wider picture of social reality of the impact of the Academics Act 2010 on Collective Worship there was previously available. These individuals offered viewpoints on the impact of the Academies Act 2010 based on their personal experiences of monitoring, inspecting and supporting Collective Worship in schools and academies. The use of critical realism in my research allowed me to use guided discussions to gain a deeper understanding of the views of SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors concerning the structure of the Academies Act 2010 and the impact the act has had on their roles. Such insights, from those whose role and remit is to inspect, monitor and

report on Collective Worship, offered a further layer of perspective to the Collective Worship debate.

## **Chapter 5: Perspectives and Views of SACRE and Ofsted**

This chapter presents and discusses the narrative account of the guided discussion transcripts acquired during fieldwork, which includes interviews with one SACRE advisor, thirteen SACRE members and six Ofsted inspectors. Bhaskar (1989) argued for an epistemological position that combined both the role of human agency in constituting the social world and an understanding that people's actions will be influenced by personal and societal mechanisms and so, as stated in the introduction this thesis has utilised a critical realist approach to explore the components of structure and agency.

Although those who participate in qualitative guided discussions are usually referred to as interviewees, critical realists refer to them as agents (Archer, 2012). Therefore, the term 'agent' has been used when referring to SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors in places throughout the thesis. In this thesis, legislation such as the ERA 1988 and the Academies Act 2010 represents the structure, as defined from a critical realist perspective that the agencies of Ofsted and SACRE are bound by. Thus, within this chapter, the impact of the structure and implementation of the Academies Act 2010 on the agencies of SACRE and Ofsted, in relation to Collective Worship, is explored.

This chapter explores the perceptions of individual members of SW SACRE and Ofsted inspectors on the theoretical areas identified in Chapters 2 and 3: 1) the appropriateness of Collective Worship in 21<sup>st</sup>-century schools, 2) the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on the roles of SACRE and Ofsted, and 3) personal reflections on the future for SACRE and Ofsted. As explained in Chapter 4, I have used Cheetham's study (1999) as a starting point for my own research; however, I adapted and adjusted his themes to the context of this thesis. Cheetham's key themes are as follows: freedom of choice and personal integrity, inclusivity and the influence of teachers. These were adapted and used to subdivide my key areas. Cheetham's themes are explored within a 21<sup>st</sup>-century context, which adds to the understanding of the issues surrounding Collective Worship, with examples offered of the consequences of extremism, the very antithesis of freedom of choice, in the context of the new millennium.

## 1) The appropriateness of Collective Worship in 21<sup>st</sup> century schools

### Freedom of choice and personal integrity

Cheetham (1999) emphasised that freedom of choice is ‘the individual’s right to choose his own beliefs and to shape his life by his own independent, freely made choices’ (1999, p154). Cheetham associates such rights with ‘The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion’ (Human Rights Act 1998, Article 9: Freedom of Religion), arguing that non-adherence to these rights could have ‘very significant consequences’ (1999, p154) for Collective Worship, which by its very nature relates to inclusivity, as discussed below.

Cheetham highlighted that, for many teachers, Collective Worship is both important and problematic. He examines four different perceptions of Collective Worship offered by teachers ‘to provide what in their view constituted an acceptable and satisfactory assembly’ (p200). These diverse views include using assemblies as a period of moral instruction, reflection, spiritual development and worship. For Cheetham, freedom of choice consisted of three distinct elements: ““open” response, “individual act” and “space to be what they want to be”” (p155). The tension between these three and the idea of Collective Worship was not lost on many teachers he interviewed. The word ‘collective’ implies togetherness, at the very least on a social level, in contrast with ‘worship’, which suggests some degree of personal belief or adherence. Cheetham’s data included examples of how ‘this individual thing’ was stressed in all infant and junior Collective Worship policies he examined. Swindon SACRE’s guidance on Collective Worship, ‘A Time to Breathe’ (2012) emphasised this point too: ‘Collective Worship gives time to breathe, offering space and stillness before, during or at the end of a hectic and pressured day to be oneself, to reflect or just to sit at rest’ (p2). It includes concepts relating to how such Collective Worship can help the spiritual development of the sense of self, including ‘developing self-knowledge – awareness of thoughts, feelings, emotions, responsibilities and experiences, awareness of own developing identity, development of self-respect’ (p10).

In any act of worship, an open response can only be possible if the worship does not dictate a doctrine or belief. Instead, pupils require space to express themselves freely in their response, or equally in their lack of response. This is a choice based on personal belief, something emphasised by most teachers as an important part of the process. By emphasising the three

elements, “open” response, “individual act” and “space to be what they want to be” (Cheetham, 1999, p155), Collective Worship is an important means of encouraging children to develop their own beliefs and values in response to the shared experience of worship. However, Joshua, a retired Religious Education teacher and SACRE member, argued that Collective Worship in its current format was not allowing that freedom of choice or personal integrity, because:

Worship is not appropriate in non-faith schools. We need to seriously think about who or what we are asking young people to worship when we ask them to attend CW in non-faith schools. What does it mean? What is it for? Who is it for? Do they agree?

Similar questions have been asked before in Collective Worship research. Davies (2000b), for example, argues that although Collective Worship offers opportunities for schools to develop community cohesion through the sharing of similar values, one of the arguments against Collective Worship was its compulsory nature. Rutherford (2012) also concludes that although most of the primary pupils questioned did value ‘assembling all together and being involved’, they disliked the spiritual dimension, seen by Rutherford as ‘vital for worship to be taking place’ as the pupils felt they were ‘not being given a choice about the religious beliefs that are presented to them and are uncomfortable with how people of different faith backgrounds can share in this together’ (2012, p6).

Joshua felt very strongly that the current legislation governing Collective Worship is no longer appropriate. However, he also stated that ‘Collective Worship is a valuable contributor to SMSC’. Although it does seem that Joshua is contradicting himself, this is not actually the case. He was very much against the current legislation, which demands daily worship, but can nevertheless appreciate the contribution Collective Worship makes to SMSC development. This is true for eight other members of SW SACRE, who agreed that the current legislation requiring daily worship is not appropriate for modern schools, but also valued the influence of Collective Worship on development:

There is the SMSC element of Collective Worship, which is fundamental to a child’s development so yes, I think Collective Worship is still appropriate, though

not in its present format, which is too cumbersome. Maybe once a week or even once a month. Do it less, but do it properly, with meaning. (Luke)

Rose agreed, also focusing on the SMSC element:

It should be about providing space and ideas for reflection, rather than worship, which I think is nearer to more of what happens anyway. And this is something which academies could do, regardless of whether they are faith-based or not. I think giving students and staff time to think about it, time to reflect, to be still, to be silent is so important.

She suggested that a more manageable alternative would be half-termly Collective Worship, 'but not daily. Weekly is even problematic. Maybe monthly or a half-termly? Yes, once every half term would be good. And manageable (Rose). Hannah suggested once a week would be a realistic option for Collective Worship:

I would much rather prefer to see it a more realistic answer that happens once a week with a cohort, whatever that cohort can be described as, which can actually meet. I think, at the same time, to build in an understanding of reflective practice in schools, to actually enable pupils to have space to think and to reflect and be given ways to do that, I think we don't actually teach them enough of. (Hannah)

It seems clear that Collective Worship, per se, is not the issue. The issue is the current legislation, which demands *daily* worship. Many academies, even those with a religious designation, find this requirement difficult to comply with. Hannah suggests 'Prayer Spaces in school', an organisation that transforms an area within a school for a few days or a week to encourage personal reflection on various issues such as forgiveness, injustice and identity. The use of 'Prayer Spaces in school' is seen, by Hannah, 'as an alternative to traditional Collective Worship. Hannah claimed that 'lots of schools are really keen on it because it does provide opportunities for individuals to find ways which work for them'. With over 31 regional networks, prayer spaces in schools seems to be one way forward that would meet the demands of SMSC legislation, although whether it could meet the requirements of Collective Worship legislation is unlikely. However, it certainly meets the criteria of freedom of choice

and personal integrity, as discussed by Cheetham (1999), with teachers facilitating and encouraging ‘the idea of different faiths pointing to a common truth, albeit in various ways’ (p238). In other words, whatever we call God, whether it be Allah, Brahman, God, Yahweh etc., whatever holy book we read, whatever way we worship, the spiritual path is different but also the same; we are all seeking the truth. Teachers and others who are responsible for education should be encouraging this journey of faith; however, the future of Collective Worship, whether it be in the traditional sense, in the way Hannah suggests, or an alternative way, is profoundly influenced by how others perceive its importance and what they gain from it.

### **Inclusivity**

Cheetham defined inclusivity as being the opposite of freedom of choice. For Cheetham (1999), inclusivity includes the school meeting together, regardless of the beliefs of students or staff. Words used by those interviewed by Cheetham to describe this inclusivity included ‘togetherness’, ‘belonging’ and ‘sharing’, as well as ‘community’ and ‘family’ (Cheetham, 1999, p122). For this study my definition is like Cheetham’s, incorporating the idea of ‘community cohesion’. However, I also define inclusivity in the context of Collective Worship embracing, and contributing to, the entire school community. Following the ‘Trojan Horse’ episode and its ramifications, inclusivity has become central to the monitoring of Collective Worship. This is a safeguard against extremism with the implementation of new policies on FBVs to be inspected by Ofsted.

### **Impact of the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter and enquiry: SACRE views**

For many SACRE members who engaged in guided discussions during November 2014, the impact of the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter and the following enquiry was far-reaching. They were shocked by what had occurred, with words such as ‘horrified’ (Joanna), ‘perplexed’ (Iain) and ‘disturbed’ (Rose) used to describe how they felt. Joanna reasoned that in religious schools it was important to inspect and report on Collective Worship because of the Trojan Horse enquiry: ‘I think assemblies still need to be monitored, though maybe not specifically inspected, to ensure what happened in Birmingham does not happen again’ (Joanna).

However, Joanna missed one of the most significant points regarding the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter: the academies in question did not have a religious designation. Although the academies

were at the forefront of an attempt at Islamic extremist takeover, they were not designated as Muslim educational institutions, which is why I believe the attempted takeover of the academies was and remains such a problem. The parents of the pupils who attended the academies, and the teachers who worked there, were under the impression that they were not religious academies. Joshua, an ex-Religious Education teacher and SACRE member, stated that ‘for me, it went against everything I had taught in RE whilst in the classroom; the principles of respect and tolerance’, and he questioned how such an approach to religion could encourage a meaningful relationship between the person and God as ‘religion should not be forced, it should come from a willingness to want to explore and know more about God’ (Joshua).

For Hayley, the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter has impacted directly on the future of Collective Worship, with head teachers concerned about parents’ reactions:

I guess some schools may be afraid of parents’ reactions, being accused of Bible bashing, whatever [...] The ‘Trojan Horse’ in Birmingham has impacted heavily on assemblies [...] indirectly [...] I think many heads are worried that they will be accused of the same thing. Some could argue that is what Christian schools are already doing, attempting to convert (Hayley).

### **Impact of the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter and enquiry: Ofsted views**

For the Ofsted inspectors involved in the guided discussions, the impact of the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter and enquiry was extensive. They were all shocked by what had occurred, with statements such as ‘totally appalled’ (Ben), ‘anxious’ (Lisa) and ‘concerned’ (Mark) used to describe how they felt. Lisa questioned why those involved in the ‘Trojan Horse’ incident thought this would be an effective approach to religion, as ‘faith which is forced is not faith at all’. Her sentiment was that true worship must not be forced, it must be given freely, although this does bring up the question of ‘freedom of choice’. Can our children be free to develop their own thoughts on religion, faith and spirituality if they must attend Collective Worship? I believe so, as Collective Worship is not the same as corporate worship, and this should be reflected in the inclusive worship offered.



### **British values legislation and guidelines**

Watson (2016) argues that education must offer genuine debate on religion, in which students are given opportunities to reflect on religious issues without fear of indoctrination. However, the appropriateness of Religious Education and Collective Worship is subject to the effective inspection of and reporting on Collective Worship in secondary education by Ofsted. Following Clarke's (2014) report into the allegations made in the 'Trojan Horse' letter, various changes in legislation were made to safeguard students and staff at schools and academies against any future 'appropriations'. These included the new statutory guidance for schools and colleges, 'Keeping children safe in education' (DfE, 2014b), the Ofsted frameworks (2014, 2015) and the subsequent Ofsted Inspection Handbook (2015), which set out the responsibilities placed on educational establishments to 'safeguard and promote the welfare of children' (Ofsted, 2015, p7). In these policies and guidelines, the idea of promoting the 'British values' of 'individual liberty' were emphasised, which could be also be interpreted as freedom of choice.

Along with the new Ofsted 'The handbook on SMSC, R.E and Collective Worship' (2014b), the Department for Education also published 'Promoting fundamental British values as a part of SMSC in schools – departmental advice for maintained schools' (2014c). These values had already been defined in the government's 'PREVENT strategy' publication (June 2011), written in response to terrorism and extremism in the UK and internationally, and to promote social cohesion. The new publication highlighted the responsibility schools had with regards to these values: schools are no longer just required to respect such values; they should demonstrate how these values are embedded in and promoted through the curriculum as part of pupils' development.

However, despite this guidance, some Ofsted inspectors remain reluctant to fail schools due to a lack of SMSC in their Collective Worship: 'Should we grade a school down just because they are not following out-of-date legislation? No, of course not; however, assemblies should be meaningful and I think there should be a programme followed' (Lisa).

### **Collective Worship and community cohesion**

Cheetham (1999) in his observations on Collective Worship, noted that only two out of 59 teachers directly mentioned 'inclusivity', although he explains this in the following way: 'the lack of direct comment (when compared with the frequency of comment in the interviews) is

not surprising given that it is the activity of the assembly itself which unites the school – the very fact of gathering is a statement about the importance of the school community. There is no need for a verbal reinforcement’ (Cheetham, p126).

My own data revealed a similar story. No participants mentioned the term ‘inclusivity’ directly, with five SACRE members choosing instead to use similar terms to the ones previously mentioned by Cheetham, such as ‘sense of belonging, a sense of community’ (Hayley) ‘themed assemblies and thought for the day programmes’ (Iain) and ‘morals and lessons’ (Joanna). Only one SACRE member, Bridget, referred to the term ‘community cohesion’ directly, when discussing the appropriateness of daily Collective Worship: ‘No, it is not appropriate. England has changed. Collective Worship is still appropriate, still important for community cohesion etc., but not as it is, not daily’ (Bridget). The above exposes an interesting possible discrepancy between what the government considers to be an important part of SACRE’s remit – the principle of community cohesion – and how this is interpreted by SACRE members. However, this remains to be investigated further.

On the other hand, the idea of assemblies being vital for community cohesion is welcomed by some of the SACRE members I spoke with, who mentioned that ‘Collective Worship is still appropriate, still important for community cohesion’ (Bridget) and ‘it gives them a sense of belonging. A sense of community’ (Hayley). This picture is reflected in the guided discussions with Ofsted. Not one inspector mentioned either ‘inclusivity’ or ‘community cohesion’. In other words, the very individuals whose role it is to inspect, monitor and develop community cohesion barely mention it at all.

## **2) The impact of the Academies Act 2010 on the roles of SACRE and Ofsted**

### **Influence of others**

Cheetham (1999) concludes that teachers’ personal beliefs have had an extensive impact on the variety and quality of the Collective Worship that occurs (p242), with two hundred and sixteen examples of teachers speaking about their own beliefs in the thirty-seven interviews that took place. Cheetham divided the beliefs held by teachers into categories, including:

implicit influence, explicit influence and personal and moral values. Cheetham describes the latter view as ‘those whose personal and moral values shaped what they did in collective worship’ (1999, p243). Therefore, in the context of this thesis, Cheetham’s themes of ‘personal values’ have been moved to the key area of personal reflections. I altered Cheetham’s theme of ‘influence of teachers’ to ‘the influence of others’ to include those whose role it is to inspect, monitor and support Collective Worship legislation, namely SACRE and Ofsted.

Considering the impact of Academies Act on the roles of SACRE and Ofsted regarding Collective Worship, the influence of others encompasses explicit and implicit influences, including the power and influence of funding agreements and academy sponsorships and the personal and moral values of both SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors. This section will also discuss the influences of the Academies Act 2010, school support, and local government, as well as how these have impacted on the remit and roles of SACRE and Ofsted regarding Collective Worship.

### **Explicit influences**

Within the ‘influence of teachers’ Cheetham describes explicit influences as being ‘those whose faith was a major and more explicit influence’ (Cheetham, 1999, p243). However, in the context of this thesis I use the term ‘explicit’ to mean ‘stated in detail’ (Tulloch, 1996, p520) about academy funding agreements.

As noted in Chapter 2, academies are independently funded state schools and are outside the remit of the LEA. Each academy should adhere to their funding agreement. The funding agreement is the contract between the Secretary of State for Education and the academy trust that sets out the terms on which the academy is funded. The funding agreement specifies how the academy is run, its duties and the powers that the Secretary of State has over the academy. The funding agreement affects many aspects of the school’s life, for example the exclusion of students, admissions policies and withdrawal from Religious Education or Collective Worship. The funding agreement is the method by which academies are held accountable to the Department for Education (DfE). Within the funding agreement, there will be specific references to existing legislation to ensure that academies operate in a similar fashion to other state-funded schools.

Beckett (2007), disagreed with the notion that academies were guided by the same legislation as state schools. He argued that the Education Reform Act of 1988 does not apply to city academies: ‘not a single paragraph of any of these laws or procedures applies to city academies. They are not state schools, and they are above all the laws applying to state schools’ (p49). Beckett explained that the law is replaced by the funding agreement between the government and the academy sponsor. The funding agreement affects many aspects of the school life, but at the same time it is this funding agreement, Beckett claims, that offers parents and students virtually no rights (p50). Although there is a model agreement, which offers parents and students the same rights to withdraw from Religious Education and Collective Worship as they have in state schools, in practice, with many sponsors negotiating their own funding agreement, these rights are not recognised. Beckett offered many examples of children’s human rights being undermined, with some parents hiring barristers to take legal action on behalf of their children. One such barrister, David Wolfe, claimed that ‘parents were being told: forgo your rights in maintained schools’ (Wolfe, quoted in Beckett 2007, p59). With regards to Religious Education, Wolfe claimed ‘that in some academies the funding agreement appears to allow religious elements to extend far beyond the RE and Collective Worship aspects of the school, such that any right to withdraw may be extremely difficult to exercise in practice’ (Wolfe, quoted in Beckett 2007, p51). Beckett uses ‘The Bexley City Academy’ to highlight this point. Their funding agreement gave the right to parents to withdraw their children from Religious Education and Collective Worship. However, the ethos of the Bexley City Academy was to teach Religious Education, not just as a separate subject, but throughout the entire curriculum, including in science, history, dance and drama; this cross-curricular approach to Religious Education seems to have rendered the right to withdraw meaningless.

### **Funding agreements and the roles of SACRE and Ofsted**

The ‘School Inspection Handbook’ (Ofsted, 2015) also emphasised the role of Ofsted inspectors in ensuring the provision of Collective Worship. Inspectors are encouraged to ‘visit lessons and assemblies to help them evaluate how those contribute to pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their personal development, behaviour and welfare’ (Ofsted, 2015, p71). Academies are reminded that Collective Worship can reflect the religious backgrounds of their students, but are also reminded that ‘Academies without a defined religious character must provide collective worship that is ‘wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character’. Inspectors should note any requirements of the academy’s

funding agreement (Ofsted, 2015, p72). Schools and academies are encouraged to apply for a determination if necessary; schools should apply via SACRE and academies via the Education Funding Agency (EFA). The Swindon SACRE guidance ‘A Time to Breathe’ (2012) also offered advice for those schools and academies that wished to declare a determination, and for individuals who wished to withdraw from either Religious Education lessons or Collective Worship, or both. However, it should not be assumed that if any SACRE has not received any determinations, then the current Collective Worship legislation is accepted and adhered to. As Nicola pointed out:

We do not have any determinations in SW [...] which is, you haven’t got evidence, but I think it is interesting as I think rather than people saying, “we’re fine with it”, it actually shows they’re not taking it seriously, so they’re not providing Collective Worship and they’re not bothered about whether they need to do something more formally or not. (Nicola)

Nicola also suggested that if funding agreements could be withheld for non-compliance, this might encourage academies to comply with the legislation:

In some ways, you could argue the funding agreement is a stronger incentive because Ofsted does not inspect Collective Worship in schools unless the lack of Collective Worship or the way it is being provided is detrimental to the SMSC of the pupils. But the funding agreement, if you could theoretically have your funding withheld for not complying with your funding agreement, which requires you to provide Collective Worship, then that theoretically is a stronger weapon. (Nicola)

As Nicola proposed, academy funding could potentially be withheld for non-compliance, as the model funding agreement written by the DfE states:

The Academy Trust must ensure that so far as is reasonably practicable and consistent with [...] this Agreement and the Equality Act 2010, the policies and practices adopted by the Academy [...] enable pupils of all faiths and none to play a full part in the life of the Academy, and do not disadvantage pupils or parents of any faith or none. For the avoidance of doubt, this requirement applies

irrespective of the proportion of pupils of any faiths or none currently attending or predicted to join the school. (DfE, 2014e, p12)

Not offering Collective Worship could be in breach of the above. However, not all academies follow this model agreement, especially as this was only published in 2014. Nicola acknowledged that schools of a religious character would be under a different sort of pressure from their respective dioceses than non-religious academies would be under. However, the non-religious academies, Nicola claimed, ‘probably haven’t even thought about it [Collective Worship], it is probably just one of the lines of small print they really ignore’.

Despite governmental regulations stating that the funding agreements for academies with no religious designation should adhere to the legislation regarding Collective Worship, Bridget, a SACRE member, claimed that this was not always the case. ‘Academies are governed by their funding agreements, and Collective Worship is left off the funding agreements. It is forgotten about – either on purpose or by accident’. Bridget also argued that with no one on the board of the academy trust concerned, and Ofsted not examining the funding agreement effectively, the academies in question can quietly ignore the legislation. With sponsors and trust boards failing to mention Collective Worship in their funding agreements, and Ofsted not adequately checking funding agreements for references to Collective Worship, the implications for the future of Collective Worship are potentially problematic. The lack of references to Collective Worship in funding agreements could also be due to the confusion surrounding Circular 1/94, with Cumper and Mawhinney (2015) suggesting schools and academies are unsure how to adhere to the law regarding Collective Worship in their policies without mentioning Circular 1/94, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2.

### **Implicit influences**

Cheetham (1999) considered implicit influences to be those teachers ‘whose religious beliefs shaped and informed what they did, but in an implicit manner’ (Cheetham, 1999, p243). In the context of this thesis, however, the term ‘implicit’ is used to mean ‘implied but not plainly expressed’ (Tulloch, 1996, p752). This section, therefore, examines some of the implicit influences that have impacted on and influenced the roles of SACRE and Ofsted.

## **Collective worship and the roles of SACRE and Ofsted**

Despite the legislation, including the Ofsted ‘The handbook on SMSC, R.E and Collective Worship’ (2014b) and the DfE ‘Promoting fundamental British values as a part of SMSC in schools – departmental advice for maintained schools’ , and the knowledge that, as part of an Ofsted inspection, inspectors would look at Collective Worship, Boris (an Ofsted inspector from 1994 and National Advisor for Religious Education from 2001, retired 2012) stated that as early as the 1990s, non-compliance with Collective Worship legislation was commonplace:

In the 1990s we used to inspect Collective Worship as we used to inspect nearly all areas of the school. Did I see a lot of Collective Worship during my inspections? No, I saw a lot of assemblies [...] Collective Worship was not really occurring when we were present. (Boris)

This suggests a general absence of Collective Worship. If Collective Worship did not take place during an inspection, it was hardly likely to have been happening when an inspection team was not present. The issue of non-compliance by schools regarding Collective Worship legislation has already been discussed in Chapter 2, therefore, it is not my intention to give every example of non-compliance by schools with their statutory obligation to provide daily Collective Worship. However, I think it is useful to comment on a selection of cases to highlight the continuing implicit problem of non-compliance, despite the explicit guidelines set by Ofsted, and how Ofsted has responded to this non-compliance. The selection of cases was based on a close reading of Ofsted and DfE reports during the documentary research.

The Ofsted report ‘Religious Education and Collective Worship 1992-1993’ (1993) claimed that most primary schools complied with the statutory requirements, with 75% of the acts of Collective Worship regarded as satisfactory or better, and 20% judged to be good. In comparison, the provision of Collective Worship in secondary schools demonstrated a compliance that was considerably lower than for primaries, with 40% of inspected schools declared to not be complying with the legal requirements. In the remainder of schools, the report mentions ‘tensions and difficulties’ (Ofsted, 1993, p33). The report claimed that a detailed examination of the evidence from 96 full inspections revealed that no school complied fully with the letter of the law. The report concluded:

Many reasons are given by schools to explain why it is difficult to provide collective worship on a daily basis. Many of these – inappropriate and/or inadequate accommodation, unwilling staff, inexperienced staff, lack of will on the part of head-teacher and, governors – have been confirmed in inspection. Whatever the cause, it remains the case that if the findings of this survey are replicated across all schools, few are providing the good-quality daily acts of mainly Christian collective worship required by recent legislation. It might be appropriate to consider how that requirement could be better implemented. (Ofsted, 1993, p38)

The Ofsted report on Collective Worship was written in 1993. Since then, Ofsted has not written or commissioned a similar report on Collective Worship. A DfES report in 2004 stated that ‘inspection evidence suggests that despite the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship, the majority of secondary schools fail to comply with this’ (DfES, 2004, p5). In other words, the situation regarding compliance with the law regarding Collective Worship had not improved between 1993 and 2004. Yet, despite being aware of many schools’ disregard for the legislation concerning Collective Worship, instead of demanding adherence to the law, David Bell, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools and Head of Ofsted, informed his inspectors in 2004 that they no longer had to examine or mention Collective Worship in their reports, unless it had a negative impact on the SMSC development of a student. Bell claimed that this decision was made following a “firestorm of protest” from schools over the issue’ (Bell, 2004).

The ‘firestorm of protest’ from schools demonstrated what may be termed a symbiotic relationship between Ofsted and schools regarding Collective Worship. School policy on Collective Worship has been largely directed, not only by legislation, but also through the guidance offered by Ofsted. However, as Ofsted’s advice has often been ignored, Ofsted’s stance on the inspection of Collective Worship became driven by not just what was observed in schools, but also by the actions by the school following the report. Boris recalled these events:

But this was becoming an absurdity, because for two reasons: one, it was turning up in nearly every report, with nearly every school failing in this



regard, but also it wasn't being addressed even though the schools were told to improve it; they didn't do it.

Following this, Boris claimed:

Effectively schools realised [...] [...] by about mid-2005, that Ofsted really wasn't going to check this rigorously at all and so I suspect what happened is whether or not schools provided Collective Worship assemblies to a large extent depended on whether the school itself thought they were of value.

Similarly, John, an Ofsted inspector between 1990 and 2004, claimed:

We stopped inspecting Collective Worship because even if we did report that this was an area that needed improvement, schools did very little towards this particular target. What we said made no difference in this area. It made sense to focus more on the teaching and learning – areas where we could insist schools made significant changes if they were deemed necessary and the schools would listen to us, as in these areas, they dared not to.

John suggested that schools would only listen to the advice and recommendations in the Ofsted report following an inspection if it deemed the advice appropriate or in an area that carried weight, that is, an area in which schools could be judged unsatisfactory. Ben, an Ofsted inspector since 2012, criticised the legislation openly:

I genuinely do think it is a bad legislation when you have something that is being ignored so consistently, especially in secondary schools. It is almost meaningless to start reporting on it, as the actual inspection becomes meaningless, as school after school would be asked for improvement in CW and you would go back three years later and every single school has ignored it. Ofsted's own inspection process is drawn into disrepute.

These sentiments highlight how Ofsted, as an organisation, has been implicitly influenced by what schools thought. In other words, as schools ignored the legislation, Ofsted began to discreetly ignore the issue too, until 2005, when they were told explicitly to ignore the issue.

Boris, (an Ofsted inspector from 1994 and National Advisor for Religious Education from 2001, retired 2012) recalled when Ofsted stopped inspecting Collective Worship:

Right until about 2003, I guess, Ofsted tended to make some reference to this in its report; indeed, it would even make a point of improvement for schools that they should meet their statutory requirements [...] from somewhere about 2004 onwards, effectively we started to ignore the issue and the only thing we would look at would be the quality of the experience the pupils were getting in relation to SMSC.

### **School support and the role of SACRE**

As noted in Chapter 2 and above, a lack of compliance with Collective Worship legislation is not uncommon, and many SACRE individuals revealed similar stories of non-compliance. Nicola, then diocesan advisor for SW SACRE, claimed that, from informal conversations she has had with people, many schools, especially at secondary level, are not interested in religion and ‘certainly not interested in something which has the word “worship” in it’. This leads one to question the power and authority SACRE has regarding schools that do not comply with Collective Worship legislation.

As more and more schools convert to academies and are no longer under LEA control, the influence of SACRE has lessened, not just with individual academies, but within their area. SACREs do not have any control or authority over what occurs in academies. One SACRE member, Hannah, wondered whether the whole academy process had been appropriately formulated:

The Academies Act has placed SACREs in an invidious situation – for though they are seen to have a legal role, as far as academies are concerned, they don’t. And it’s one of those things where you get the feeling that this has been rushed through and has not been properly thought out in advance and policy seems to be have been made on the hoof’.

Bridget, also a SACRE member, echoed this view. She felt that as the conversion of schools to academies progressed, the role of SACRE with regards to Collective Worship would

reduce: ‘We will still proactively monitor and support schools, but I can see it becoming more RE, with Collective Worship becoming less and less till we don’t include it in our remit anymore’.

Guidance, including ‘Religious Education and Collective Worship in Academies and Free Schools Q&A’ (NATRE, 2013) and ‘Mainstream academy and free school: single model funding agreement’ (DfE, 2014e) placed SACREs in the undesirable situation of having to support academies, even though they are independent educational establishments outside of LEA remit and control. These academies are very much encouraged to use the resources funded by the LEA., that is, SACRE guidelines and resources for Religious Education and Collective Worship. In other words, SW SACRE found itself in the position of offering support to all education establishments within the area, including all academies, yet at the same time, having no legal jurisdiction to monitor Collective Worship in academies. It was not surprising to find that some SACRE members (Gillian and Rebecca) discussed the frustration and personal struggles they felt in their roles with SACRE and the realities of Collective Worship. Gillian felt that the whole role of SACRE was being undermined:

I sometimes struggle with my role in SACRE because a big part of the role is looking at Collective Worship in schools and I know schools don’t do it and won’t do it, no matter what SACRE does. So, a lot of the work we do is targeted at primary schools as we know we won’t get secondary schools on board. So yeah, I think it does undermine the role of SACRE, definitely.

The frustration is quite clear to see. Individual members of SACRE wished to support schools in their area, but often felt their role is not supported, recognised or valued: ‘I have been in SACRE for 3 years now and I am still not convinced about why we do what we do, it seems so depressing as we have no authority and no-one cares anyway’ (Rebecca, SACRE member).

As discussed in Chapter 3, Nicola, a SACRE member who was also completing a PhD in the field of Collective Worship, discussed her concerns regarding SACRE’s remit, which were mentioned in the draft version but not the final version of SW SACREs development plan 2012-2014. Nicola claimed these concerns were no longer valid: ‘I think our remit is clear

[...] we have a legal responsibility to support and monitor RE and Collective Worship [...] things have not changed for SACRE'. In one way, Nicola was correct. The legal remit of SACRE has not altered, as demonstrated by a letter by Lord Nash, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Schools (2013-2016), to all SACREs in January 2015, which reinforced the 'important role SACREs and local authorities have' and confirmed the role of SACRE as being 'to support the Religious Education Curriculum and Collective Worship within schools' (Nash, 2015, p1). Certainly, SW SACRE continues to offer advice and support on both Collective Worship and Religious Education to all schools and academies within their area, by offering professional development training courses for Religious Education and their use of the Swindon SACRE publication, 'A Time to Breathe' (2012), a guidance document on Collective Worship.

Cheetham (1999) mentioned the influence of other groups and organisations, including those belonging to the school community (governors, parents and pupils) and those who belonged to the wider community, such as faith groups, professional teacher's organisations, local authorities and governments. However, he also noted that the influence of the wider community is often inconsequential:

The guidelines produced by professional teachers' organisations, the faith communities and the local authorities were hardly referred to at all in the interviews and I take this as evidence that they had relatively little significance for the teachers other than to give a general framework of broad principles. (Cheetham, 1999, pp253-254).

Undeniably, the uptake of the resources and workshops offered by SACRE is entirely reliant on the individual schools themselves and the willingness of staff to take part, as explained by Brett, a SACRE member:

We will still offer support to academies, including guidance and workshops, but it is up to them if they take any notice. Some do now. Will they in the future? I think this depends on the staff of the school, especially management.

Another SACRE member, Joshua, succinctly phrases it:

We will provide the expertise for an agreed syllabus and other resources for Religious Education and Collective Worship for those academies who want to use it. How much we are used depends on the staff within the academies [...] Our role is to support the schools, but it is a two-way process. They need to support us too.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the conversion of schools to academies has led to a situation where local schools are disconnected from their LEAs (Arthur, 2015). However, Heather claimed that SW SACRE does not ‘differentiate in our provision between LA schools and academies’. She asserted that all schools and academies are invited to attend and participate in training, and all received guidance on Collective Worship. However, despite the resources, guidelines and workshops offered by SACRE, a lack of participation by schools and teachers could lead to a loss of opportunities for teacher development and for the improvement of the education received by students in relation to Religious Education and Collective Worship, as well as contributing to the demise of the role of SACRE.

### **Funding and the role of SACRE**

As well as the lack of support from schools for SACREs, some SW SACRE members also felt their role was insignificant, especially since the Academies Act 2010. This was summarised by Joanna, a SACRE member:

SACRE will not have an important role, as a body we are not seen important, our opinions and our work are not valued at a local or national level, not by the government or local council. Some schools value us, but mainly Church of England.

This cynical view was also shared by another SACRE member, Hayley: ‘I wonder why we bother at all. The LEA does not really acknowledge our existence, only when it comes to our budget which they seem to give to us so grudgingly’. The issue of funding by the LEA is crucial to the work SACRE does. However, SW SACRE receives only £5,000 per year to help them support and advise 60 infant and junior, 12 secondary and six special schools and

academies in their area. Therefore, the training provided by SACRE is limited by funding, as Heather mentions: ‘we don’t have a lot of funding, we only have a very part-time advisor’. The issue of funding was also mentioned by the SACRE advisor, Nicola. Nicola discussed how the budget limited the resources and support SACRE could offer. Although I did not record the guided discussion with Nicola for reasons mentioned in Chapter 3, I wrote in my research diary that ‘it all comes down to money. Without a decent budget, how can SACRE possibly meet their remit effectively?’ (13<sup>th</sup> March 2014). Annual reports from other SACREs conveyed similar views, discussing both the possible impact of the Academies Act on their funding and their limited funding in general. Swindon SACRE also mentioned the budget in the introduction to its annual report for 2013-2014: ‘In this year SACRE has managed on a limited budget to maintain its services to schools’ (Swindon SACRE, 2014, p1).). One of the challenges facing SW SACRE was ‘offering support within a limited budget’ (p4). Therefore, it is necessary to ask whether the financial constraints placed on SACRE are more of a hindrance to their work in supporting and monitoring Religious Education and Collective Worship than the Academies Act of 2010. Ofsted reports on local SACRE’s also mention the restricted funding SACRE works within. For example, an Ofsted report on East Sussex SACRE stated that ‘SACRE has kept within its budget, but current funding limits the scope of its work and does not allow working groups to meet on sufficient occasions to produce publications of greater substance’ (Ofsted, 2003, p2).

LEAs have a legal obligation to fund SACREs: ‘The LA’s duty to convene a conference or to establish a SACRE implies providing sufficient funds for these bodies to perform their duties’ (ERA 1988) This statutory duty is reaffirmed in the DfE (2010b) guidance ‘Religious Education guidance in English schools’, which states that ‘An LA should fund and support a SACRE [...] satisfactorily in line with the duty to constitute or convene each of these bodies and to enable them effectively to carry out their function’ (DfE, 2010b, p11). However, the funding received depends on various factors, including the size and faith diversity of the local authority. The fewer schools there are under the local authority’s control, the lower the funding for the local SACRE. With many schools converting to academies, funding has been cut accordingly, although the remit for the SACRE remains the same: to support Religious Education and Collective Worship. Thus, it is evident that the Academies Act 2010 has impacted directly on the funding received. However, even before the Act, SACREs were constrained by their budgets and this is even more the case today.

The report by Ofsted ‘An evaluation of the work of Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education’ (2004a) notes that ‘Nowhere is the relationship between the SACRE and the LEA so opaque as in the matter of funding’ (p13). This has led to a situation where ‘very few teachers were able to represent their SACRE nationally, for example at the National Association of SACREs (NASACRE) conference, because funding was not available for supply cover’ (Ofsted, 2004a, p13). The financial support provided to individual SACRE members has been criticised for being inconsistent: ‘Some SACREs meet during the day; their members are paid travelling expenses and supply cover is provided for teachers. Elsewhere, meetings are held in the evenings and no expenses are paid’. This led the report to conclude that ‘The level and nature of funding is a key factor in determining the effectiveness of SACRE and its status’ (Ofsted, 2004a, p13). The Ofsted report also conveys the inconsistency in how individual SACREs use their budget; the report offers examples of how SACREs procuring expenditure in various ways, including meeting costs, supply costs, funding training courses and supporting initiatives in schools. The report argues that:

Where SACREs receive ad-hoc funding from the LEA, this can inhibit properly focused development planning, limit the ability of SACREs to participate in decisions about funding priorities, and lack the transparency desirable in the administration of public funds. (Ofsted, 2004a, p13)

### **3) Personal reflections on the future for SACRE and Ofsted**

As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, one of the underlying themes in this research is that religion matters. Religion matters to those who have faith and to those who have none. Religion matters to those who wish to convert others and those who question the role of religion in our society. Within the educational arena, religion matters and this is plainly illustrated by the Ofsted inspectors who offered their views on the changing role of Ofsted in the effective inspection of and reporting on Collective Worship in secondary education.

#### **The future of Collective Worship**

As SACREs have little jurisdiction over academies, since academies are no longer under the control of the LEA, and Ofsted have not inspected Collective Worship since 2005, many members of SW SACRE saw the conversion of schools to academies to be further evidence

of the decline of Collective Worship. Iain, a SACRE member, claimed that ‘I think Collective Worship is facing the death sentence, it has been for years. Academies are like the nail in the coffin’. This statement highlights two points. The first is that Collective Worship was in decline before the Academies Act 2010, which has been noted and discussed in Chapter 1. The second point is Iain’s belief that, due to the Academies Act 2010, Collective Worship will disappear altogether. Luke, also a SACRE member, agreed that he could ‘foresee Collective Worship diminishing with the rise of academies due to pressure of time and other priorities’. However, Luke also made the following query:

But is this to do with academies or the march of educational progress into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century? I think the latter, as Collective Worship was declining before academies, but the conversion to academies has not helped the situation.

Like Iain, Luke highlighted a recurring theme with the individual SACRE members I spoke with, one that has been repeated in other literature and discussed in Chapters 2 and 3: many primary schools, though certainly not the majority, adhere to the Collective Worship legislation, but very few secondary schools have done so for many years. ‘Certainly, in the high schools “worship” has almost died, but this is not so in the infant and junior schools’ (Cheetham, 1999, p204). Gillian, a local Labour councillor and SACRE member, agreed that most primary schools adhered to the law. She stated that she understood why it was not adhered to in secondary schools, and argued that ‘if no-one was going to pick up on secondary level, then let’s not have the requirement’. She declared four times that ‘there is no point having it’ [the legislation].’ The future of Collective Worship has been discussed many times since its implementation in 1944, by academics such as Hull (1975), Bishop (2001), Cheetham (1999/2001), Gill (2000), Inglis (2012), Smart (2001), Rutherford (2012), Rawles (2009) and Amankwatia (2007); by religious and non-religious organisations and bodies, such as the CofE, the BHA, the MCB and the NSS; and Ofsted, amongst others, as explored in Chapter 2. The arguments for and against the continued existence of Collective Worship range from Collective Worship being part of the Christian heritage of Great Britain and contributing to SMSC development, as described in Chapter 3, to it not being relevant for modern, multicultural Britain (Cheetham, 1999).



Since the Academies Act 2010, the future of Collective Worship in academies has been seen to be dependent on academies' funding agreements, as discussed earlier in this chapter, as this defines the very nature and ethos of the academy. The future of Collective Worship in academies was seen by some SACRE members as inconsistent and very much dependent on the background of the academy. Rebecca, a SACRE member, explained this: 'I think the future is very variable dependent on the reason for the conversion to academy including the background of the academy'. The impact of the Academies Act 2010 depended very much on whether the academy in question was of a religious designation or not. This premise was also repeated by Brett, also a SACRE member, who felt strongly – repeating the idea twice – that Collective Worship would continue in religious schools: 'With more schools becoming academies, Collective Worship will only really exist, I think, in schools with a religious background, like Church of England or Catholic schools'. However, Brett considered whether it would be daily worship or even include what constitutes worship: 'But won't be daily Collective Worship, maybe won't even include hymns or prayers'. Hayley similarly agrees that Collective Worship would still exist in religious academies. She cited the example of a Catholic academy in the SW region, which as far as she was concerned was the only secondary institution in the SW SACRE area that 'conforms to the legislation'. This view was common, with three other members of SACRE all agreeing that the continued existence of Collective Worship depended on the nature of the academy: 'Some academies in our authority are church schools, but the fact they are academies has no impact on their Collective Worship, it still remains strong' (Joshua). In those academies without a religious designation, the view was bleaker, with many SW SACRE members expressing similar views to each other during the individual guided discussions: 'There is no future for Collective Worship at the moment and things will only get worse' (Hayley). It was felt that those schools that gain academy status will have less reason to comply, despite legislation that states otherwise, and 'Collective Worship will not exist – full stop' (Hannah).

The views held by the six inspectors on Collective Worship were all rather similar, with the current legislation being described as 'outdated' (Mark), a 'bad law [...] inappropriate' (Boris), 'irrelevant [...] a waste of time' (Matthew) and 'fundamentally inappropriate and unimportant' (Ben). The frustration regarding Collective Worship was also clear from the guided discussions with all the Ofsted inspectors. Many Ofsted inspectors spoke about how they felt the 1988 ERA legislation regarding Collective Worship did not adequately reflect the changes or diversity in modern society: 'asking children to worship daily is not significant

or relevant in 21<sup>st</sup> century multicultural Britain’ (Boris) and ‘I don’t think it was appropriate for the 20<sup>th</sup> century – maybe at the turn of the century, in the 1900s’s [...] To ask children to worship daily? Why? What is the point?’ (John). John also added that to remind schools of their obligation to promote SMSC development through the provision of Collective Worship was a null point, as the current legislation is not appropriate for 21<sup>st</sup>-century Britain.

Possible alternatives to Collective Worship can be found in the report by Cumper and Mawhinney (2015), entitled ‘Collective Worship and Religious Observance in Schools: An Evaluation of Law and Policy in the UK’. The report suggested three options: the first was to maintain the status quo (p9), with the next two options being abolishing or reforming the legislation. Cumper and Mawhinney (2015) concluded that a review of the rationale of the current policy is urgently needed:

The lack of a clear and agreed rationale for the current duties relating to collective worship and religious observance makes it difficult for governments to evaluate existing law and policy, and to assess future approaches (Cumper and Mawhinney, 2015, p13).

Cheetham (1999) stated that for many teachers, Collective Worship is both important and problematic. He offered four different perceptions of Collective Worship presented by the teachers he interviewed ‘to provide what in their view constituted an acceptable and satisfactory assembly’ (p200). The views presented included using assemblies as a time of moral instruction; reflection and spiritual development and worship. For all the six inspectors who were involved in the guided discussions in this research, the assemblies witnessed could be considered to constitute Collective Worship if the perception of Collective Worship as being ‘moral instruction’ is used to define them as the Collective Worship observed were often ‘moral based’ (Matthew) or focused on ‘inspirational people’ (Boris). However, some inspectors discussed how very little ‘spiritual development’, ‘worship’ or ‘reflection’ was present. This was illustrated by Boris, an Ofsted inspector and national advisor for Religious Education, who stated that Collective Worship in secondary schools ‘lacked lustre and [...] any meaningful engagement.’ Boris also mentioned that he could not remember the last time he heard singing in a secondary school, and certainly not any prayers, comparing the Collective Worship he observed to ‘an administrative task or an extension to PSHE’. This sceptical view of the value of Collective Worship was also displayed by Mark, who stated

that ‘inspecting Collective Worship and then reporting on the lack of it is far less important than the quality of teaching and learning’. However, for Joanna, the move to inspecting assemblies for elements of SMSC development rather than observing assemblies as part of the Collective Worship programme was a logical move. She explained that:

When we moved the focus to SMSC, inspecting assemblies made a lot more sense to us, well, to me personally! SMSC is important to the development of the child and this is seen to be valued by government too, but Collective Worship is not valued by government and I am not sure Collective Worship does anything to aid the development of the child unless it is a religious school.

Joanna disagreed with Ofsted inspecting Collective Worship, as she felt the legislation was out of date and should be amended to ensure assemblies were ‘meaningful and adapted for the local school and school population’.

Despite the new guidance, ‘The Ofsted School Inspection Handbook 2015’, The members of Ofsted I spoke with had differing views on the changing role of Ofsted in the effective reporting on Collective Worship, although all agreed that the current legislation’s demand for daily Collective Worship is beyond both any reasonable expectation and the realities of school life.

Some Ofsted inspectors doubted they would observe any dramatic change in assembly practices: ‘assemblies will still take place, Collective Worship will not’ (Stephen).

Boris claimed that:

It is unlikely, in most cases, to include anything particular related to religion. But this does not follow the guidance of 1/94, which says it should be about the origins of God and it should mainly be holy ideas which is, as the phrase goes, “wholly or mainly Christian in character””, but this is very uncomfortable for many, many schools.

These views are like those held by Hayley, who asked:

Do I think schools would suddenly take Collective Worship more seriously if they knew they were going to be inspected on it? Possibly. At the same time, I still think most schools, even those of a religious nature, would fail on the daily. Daily is impossible.

As noted in Chapter 1, modern society is dramatically different from that of post-Second World War Britain at the time the 1944 Education Act came into being, and has become more diverse since the introduction of the ERA 1988. For many SACRE members, the current legislation does not allow Collective Worship to reflect either modern society or the needs of the students in the current educational system; therefore, it is not surprising that schools do not comply. The question therefore arose again of whether the ERA 1988 and Circular 1/94 should be amended to render the 'daily' part of the Collective Worship legislation more realistic and accessible for 21<sup>st</sup> century schools and academies. Bridget claimed that 'it is not appropriate. England has changed.' Similarly, Heather summed up her view and position on Collective Worship in the following way: 'Collective Worship is out of date. It offends parents, teachers and students. General, thought provoking assemblies are the way forward.' Iain continued this theme by suggesting 'themed assemblies and thought of the day programmes' were 'more in tune with what the students need and what they can relate to.'

Some Ofsted inspectors suggested the law could be revised, in the same way that Circular 1/94 was revised, in those sections relating to Religious Education, but admits that they also knew this would not happen due to parliament being 'busy with other more pressing matters' (Boris) and concerned with 'a backlash from the Church of England, who have quite a lot of clout' (John). The view that the Church of England would disapprove of amending the current 1/94 legislation with regards to Collective Worship is also held by some SACRE members, who felt that it was the Church of England who were 'holding up change' (Rebecca) and attempting to 'hold on to a sense of Christian heritage' (Hayley). Certainly, the CofE has made its position on Collective Worship clear through a statement released in June 2015, which said that 'The church strongly supports the statutory requirement for collective worship in all schools'. However, it is important to note that individuals within the CofE do not necessarily hold these views, as SACRE member and a religious leader for the CofE Hannah demonstrated by suggesting that she would like to witness 'once a week [...]

reflective practice in schools, to actually enable pupils to have the space to think and to reflect’.

To summarise, many of the Ofsted and SACRE members I spoke with argued for a review of Circular 1/94, without realising NASACRE’s position and its recommendations to schools and academies regarding Circular 1/94. As discussed in Chapter 2, in 2012 NASACRE deemed Circular 1/94 to not have any legal status. With SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors being unfamiliar with the law, it is not surprising that Cumper and Mawhinney (2015) recommended, ‘a review of Department for Education Circular 1/94, to assess its proper status and role in relation to Collective Worship’ (p13).

### **The future for SACREs**

As mentioned in previous chapters, the historical roots of Collective Worship have led to modern day controversy, with some politicians and other organisations, such as the BHA, as well as individual members of SW SACRE, questioning the relevance and appropriateness of the law for multicultural England in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, other individual members of SACRE saw the future of Collective Worship, and thus the role of SACRE, in a positive light. Hazel, a SACRE member, suggested the future of Collective Worship could be one where local SACREs do consider and represent the views of their local communities, with these views reflected in the support and advice they offer to schools and academies concerning Collective Worship. Hazel argued that ‘to have a local group, such as SACRE, that seeks to reflect the religious views of the community is a positive thing’. Hazel also offered a personal view on SACRE: ‘I do think SACRE is the most unbelievably truly elite organised body that exists’ (Hazel). Hazel makes a very good point. Each SACRE is composed of four representative groups with voting powers: Christian and other religious denominations, the Church of England, teaching associations and elected Councillors, with members co-opted when necessary. For example, SW SACRE co-opted a member, Peter, who is a humanist. As a humanist, he did not ‘fit’ into any of the set groups, and thus could voice an opinion but was not eligible to vote. At the same time, each SACRE is supposed to represent their local area, reflected in the local syllabus for RE, which differs from local authority to local authority.

The selective and exclusive nature of SACRE is also a feature of the negative views held by a SACRE member, Iain, who considered SACREs to be ‘out of date and out of touch’ and

‘not truly representative of the area in which they reside’ with members who know ‘little about modern methods of teaching. There is no attempt to talk to teachers, parents or more importantly students. They are an anachronism’. Such elitism is not unique to SACRE though; a report by the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (August 2014), ‘Elitist Britain’,

found that over a third of the current Cabinet and 33% of all Members of Parliament attended independent schools. The Right Honourable Alan Milburn, as chair of the report, highlighted that this lack of diversity could lead to establishments relying on ‘too narrow a range of people from too narrow a range of backgrounds with too narrow a range of experiences they risk behaving in ways and focussing on issues that are of salience only to a minority but not the majority in society.’ (Milburn, 2014, p1). If there is to be a change in legislation regarding Collective Worship, any modifications must manifest themselves as being true reflections of society, not just a small minority or based on reminiscences of a public-school education.

Iain suggested that a national Religious Education curriculum should be developed, ‘which reflects modern Britain’. Such a national curriculum would mean the dissolution of the local SACREs ‘as we do little for Collective Worship as it is’ (Iain). Freathy and Parker (2016) also discuss the dissolution of SACRE. They argue that if SACREs are not replaced by a national statutory structure for Religious Education, individual schools may provoke controversy through their teaching of the subject. They also contend that, at both local and national levels, religious and non-religious organisations should be consulted to ensure community cohesion.

When asked about the future of Collective Worship as more schools convert to academies, Hazel offered a different perspective, suggesting that the future does not necessarily have to be bleak, but instead seeing a future where there ‘could be recognition that mutual co-operation is positive and to have a local group, such as SACRE, that seeks to reflect the religious views of the community is a positive thing’. This view of the role of SACRE would go some way to resolving the current situation, where SACRE has no legal jurisdiction over academies to monitor or support Religious Education or Collective Worship. Hazel continued this reasoning when answering whether Ofsted should inspect Collective Worship. Hazel agreed that there should be a way of monitoring and reporting on Collective Worship, but instead of the involvement of Ofsted, Hazel would prefer:

If that monitoring and reporting was actually a local activity; I would love to see that academies were required to report to the local SACRE [...] I think it would be good if local SACREs were required to monitor it. [...] [...] It would make Collective Worship accountable to the local community, who are, in theory, supposed to be helping form the local agreed syllabus.

The view that Collective Worship in schools should be monitored by local SACRE's was also held by Mark, an Ofsted inspector: 'Schools, including religious schools, should be monitored and inspected by the appropriate diocese/religious organisation and the local SACRE – this would ensure, or at least I hope so, the appropriateness of Collective Worship'.

SACREs being given responsibility for reporting on and monitoring, as well as simply supporting, Collective Worship within schools and academies does make perfectly good sense, as the members would be more aware of the cultural and religious needs of their area than an Ofsted inspector. This could also lead to closer monitoring of Collective Worship in both schools and academies, which could perhaps ensure that there is no repeat of the 'Trojan Horse' incident. However, for SACRE to be involved in the more formal monitoring of Collective Worship, and to effectively promote the premise of community cohesion, the dynamics and certainly the financial situation of SACRE would have to change. For example, to be truly effective, all SACREs would have to be pro-active in ensuring recruitment from all local religious and secular organisations who have an interest in religious matters. This would ensure a SACRE would be more aware of the religious needs of its area, and then perhaps could invite individual schools to apply for determinations. One of the arguments against Collective Worship, as outlined in Chapter 2, is that it does not represent the school population. However, following Hazel's suggestion, a head teacher of a school, after consulting with the governing body and possibly parents, could apply for a determination from the local SACRE for Collective Worship to more closely reflect the cultural and religious needs of those in their care. This could then be supported by religious leaders or others within SACRE. Such a determination would not require a change in the law, but would ensure the law was met in that educational establishment. Furthermore, if SACREs could follow up on the determination by monitoring and reporting on Collective Worship, this would ensure any issues or support requirements could be dealt with effectively and efficiently by the SACRE. Newham SACRE faced similar issues to SW SACRE, with an overview of Newham's strategic programme highlighting problems with the lack of a formal

system to monitor either RE or Collective Worship, to follow up on recommendations in Ofsted reports or to approach schools regarding their non-compliance with legislation. Newham SACRE maintained that:

As we had no formal system in place in 2006, there was inconsistency across the LA in terms of knowledge of whether schools are complying in terms of RE and collective worship. This left the LA having no overview to draw upon to prioritise support, or to disseminate effective practice. (Newham SACRE, 2008, p2)

This is also evident in the QCA's annual analysis of SACRE annual reports from 2006/7, which stated that 'A number of SACREs mention that it is difficult to monitor collective worship. There were 17 SACREs that reported determinations. No data are available on withdrawals. Clearly there is potential for collective worship, done sensitively, to support a school's commitment to community cohesion' (QCA, 2008, p13).

To combat some of these issues, in 2007 Newham LA and the local SACRE collaborated to introduce a monitoring strategy, which included SACRE visiting local schools and monitoring their provision of both RE and Collective Worship. Following these visits, a report outlining strengths and areas of support/development was offered. The school report was also useful in providing formative and summative information for both the LA and SACRE, for use in their meetings and the annual report that SACRE submits to the QCA. However, this monitoring strategy was short-lived, as the economic climate led to a dramatic restructuring of educational support services across the country. Thus, Newham LA was no longer able to retain the full-time services of a subject adviser for RE, and in 2011 the LA decided to put a reduced contract out to tender, with the post advertised including responsibilities for reviewing the standards of RE and Collective Worship across schools.

From the above example, for SW SACRE to be able to work within this new remit, it would entail greater financial expenditure at a time when both central government and local authorities are attempting to reduce their budgets. Therefore, I cannot see how SW SACRE, in the present climate, could take on this extra workload.



## **The future for Ofsted**

The role of Ofsted with regards to Collective Worship has evolved due to circumstances and events. Spiritual development has been an essential part of the curriculum since the 1944 ERA. The role of Collective Worship, however, has often been ambiguous. The Education Act of 1992 stated that Collective Worship in schools was to be inspected by the newly established Ofsted. Collective Worship continued to be inspected by Ofsted up to 2005, with inspections of Collective Worship being used as evidence of some aspects of SMSC development. Since 2005, SMSC development has continued to be an important element of the school inspection

process; however, the inspection of Collective Worship was not considered essential. This view altered again in response to the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter and enquiry in Birmingham. Emphasis continues to be on SMSC development; however, Collective Worship is also once again seen as an essential part of the inspection of SMSC development.

Legislation provides academies with freedom from local Religious Education syllabuses and the ability to set their own agenda; however, Arthur (2015) questions Ofsted’s authority to form valid judgments concerning academies that decide their own religious structure. He claims that, despite the Trojan Horse letter and subsequent criticism of Ofsted, some inspectors’ personal views still cloud their judgement and lead to the interpretation of their observations at such schools as constituting extremist behaviour. John had strong feelings about the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter and its implications. He argued that within religious schools, it was important to inspect and report on Collective Worship due to the ‘Trojan Horse’ enquiry: ‘I think assemblies still need to be monitored, though maybe not specifically inspected, to ensure what happened in Birmingham does not happen again’. Of course, this view misses the point that the examples of Islamic fundamentalism discovered were found in non-faith academies. Other Ofsted inspectors who were involved in the guided discussion during March 2015, after the reports on the ‘Trojan Horse’ were published in 2014, also agreed that assemblies should be observed to ensure ‘the legitimacy of the assembly’ (Lisa) and that there was ‘no manipulation of faith but mindfulness, quiet reflection and perhaps prayer [...] without coercion or pressure’ (Beverley). However, Ben did admit that ‘to meet all the needs of the students at one time is difficult’, adding ‘however, the legislation is pretty flexible at the same time’

The idea of monitoring Collective Worship, rather than inspecting Collective Worship, was also brought up by Mark, an Ofsted inspector since 2010, who stated with regards to Collective Worship that ‘Ofsted should simply report on what the school actually does, with no “inspection” aspect’. This monitoring element could be adapted by SACREs, as suggested above. However, the legal and funding implications of this are complicated and need further research.

## **Summary**

A critical realist approach formed the basis of my research. The use of a critical realist approach enabled me to create an interface between the theory identified in the literature review and observations from the fieldwork, and to integrate primary and secondary sources with the opinions of SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors. The intention was to generate useful insights regarding possible future roles and remits for SACRE and Ofsted concerning the monitoring and inspection of Collective Worship. According to Layder (1998b), establishing connections between structural tensions at an agency level allows findings to switch from being merely descriptive to explanatory. This approach produced an in-depth rather than surface understanding and offered an a ‘snapshot of reality’ concerning the underlying legislative structures that the agencies of SACRE and Ofsted work within. This chapter highlighted the concerns and opinions of SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors engaged in guided discussions between March 2014 and March 2015 with regards to the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on their role. Their views were used to construct an interface with the document-based research. The views offered by SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors are experiential; their perceptions are informed by their real experiences and personal observations. The findings identified through the participants’ narratives offered a professional context for looking at and understanding where and how the roles of SACRE and Ofsted, with regards to Collective Worship, were informed by the current political climate.

In this chapter, the impact of the structure and implementation of the Academies Act 2010 on the agencies of SACRE and Ofsted in relation to Collective Worship has been explored. This chapter concluded that the agencies of SACRE and Ofsted have often been marginalised through government structure, including legislation; lack of funding and training. The guided

discussions have highlighted how governmental legislation, SACRE guidelines, various training opportunities and Ofsted recommendations on Collective Worship have often been ignored by schools.

This chapter used and adapted Cheetham's (1999) themes. The themes used throughout the guided discussions were as follows:

- Freedom of choice and personal integrity
- Inclusivity
- The influence of others

The influence of others was further subdivided into explicit and implicit influences, including the influence of legislation, school support, funding agreements and personal values.

This chapter has demonstrated a symbiotic relationship between schools and Ofsted. In 1992, Ofsted were originally obliged to inspect Collective Worship. Despite this, many schools were not complying with the law. Schools were ignoring the advice of Ofsted and, thus, Ofsted began to ignore Collective Worship. As Chapter 2 also highlighted, this led to David Bell, then Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools and Head of Ofsted, stating in 2004 that Ofsted inspectors no longer had to examine or mention Collective Worship unless it had a detrimental impact on SMSC development.

The 'Trojan Horse' incident, the ensuing enquiry and recommendations, along with terrorist attacks on various countries before and after the 'Trojan Horse' incident, including France (Louvre, 2017; Normandy, 2016; Bastille, 2016; Nice, 2016), Germany (Munich, 2016), Sweden (Stockholm, 2017), Belgium (Brussels, 2016)) and England (London, 2005 and 2017) to name but a few, has led to Islam and Muslims being placed in the media spotlight (Poole, 2009). This mass media scrutiny has often given rise to further social, racial and religious tensions in what could be considered a 'media panic' (Hall et al., 1978). The British government and other bodies, in response to such tensions, have written papers and guidelines placing an emphasis on the role of schools to encourage and promote social and community cohesion. The role of SACRE is significant for community cohesion, as mentioned in the DfCLG guidelines 'Face to face and side by side: A framework for partnership in our multi-faith society' (2008) referred to in Chapter 3. It is also seen as

significant in the development of SMSC development within schools, which is itself seen as a vital part of a child's overall education and the promotion of FBVs, as mentioned in the DfE guidelines 'Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC development in schools' (2014). SMSC development is seen to be a significant contributor to a child's overall development and to the promotion of FBVs, yet SACRE, the very organisation whose role it is to support this development through Collective Worship, finds itself in a challenging situation. On one hand, SACRE has a duty to support Collective Worship in schools, and government guidelines suggest SACREs are in a vital position to promote SMSC development and community cohesion, yet the Academies Act 2010 has deemed academies to be free from LEA and SACRE authority, leading some SACRE members to question the significance of SACRE. At the same time, the role of SACRE has been challenged and undermined through the lack of consistency in funding for its vital work.

Using Cheetham's (1999) themes of influence of others, inclusivity and freedom of choice, this chapter has explored the ramifications of the 'Trojan Horse' letter and subsequent reports on the roles of SACRE and Ofsted with regards to Collective Worship. Without a doubt, the 'Trojan Horse' letter and subsequent enquiry changed the educational landscape, with various frameworks and policies being implemented, including the new Ofsted inspection framework (2014), the DfE advice on 'Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools' (2014c) and the 'Ofsted Inspection Handbook 2014 on SMSC, RE and Collective Worship' (Ofsted 2014a). This chapter has also explored the ramifications of the 'Trojan Horse' letter and subsequent reports on the roles of SACRE and Ofsted with regards to Collective Worship.

This chapter has suggested a change in the remit of SACRE to ensure proper local representation to allow SACRE to monitor Collective Worship in schools and academies, instead of Ofsted. However, in Chapter 3 this research also highlighted the financial constraints local authorities, and therefore SACREs, are already working under.

The future of Collective Worship was also questioned by SACRE members, with some suggesting that although Collective Worship was in decline before the Academies Act 2010, the Act has amplified the situation. The funding agreement of an academy is seen to have a pivotal function with regards to Collective Worship. Collective Worship is often not mentioned in the funding agreement. It was suggested by one SACRE member that Ofsted did not inspect funding agreements efficiently and therefore was allowing academies to ignore the legislation. Another SACRE member suggested that funding could be withheld for

lack of compliance with Collective Worship legislation. On the other hand, the confusion surrounding the legalities of Circular 1/94 may also be a reason why some academies do not mention Collective Worship in their funding agreements. NASACRE advised in 2012 that Circular 1/94 no longer had legal status, yet many SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors directed their criticism towards Circular 1/94, rather than the ERA 1988.

All the SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors I spoke with agreed that the current legislation was not appropriate for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with suggestions of weekly, rather than daily, reflective assemblies being more relevant for modern multicultural and multi-faith England. As a reflective practitioner, I agree with this suggestion. As a Christian, I believe, as already mentioned in Chapter 3, that if Collective Worship is to be meaningful, it must focus on the concept of worship and how we can relate to the spiritual, as explained by Swindon SACRE's guidance, 'Time to Breathe':

Collective Worship in schools is to do with the fundamental recognition of worth and worthiness. It is concerned with ultimate questions and values. It is about identifying, affirming and celebrating those ideals and values held to be of central importance in the worshipping community. (p3)

Finally, Collective Worship is not corporate worship; it should not be preaching to the masses as if in church, neither should it be assumed that everyone shares the same or similar faith and beliefs. Swindon SACRE stated that Collective Worship should be inclusive rather than exclusive: 'In selecting broadly Christian material or any other material, it is important that schools ensure that acts of worship are "inclusive". It must be remembered that it is not the role of the school to nurture religious faith' (2012, p5).

## **Chapter 6: Afterword and Recommendations**

This research began with a disconnection: the documentary research highlighted the significance placed upon the roles of Ofsted and SACRE by government legislation, but also revealed that many SACREs were becoming concerned about their role and remit regarding falling standards in Collective Worship, especially since the Academies Act 2010. Thus, the unique contribution of this research to current knowledge was through examining the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on the roles and remits of both government agencies to reveal the reality of their situation through the perceptions of their staff.

The focus of this thesis, therefore, has not been on theory, but rather on establishing where and how Collective Worship is situated in the current political climate. The documentary research was a key contextual factor and included Hansard, HMSO documentation, Ofsted and SACRE material, as well as published and unpublished academic work, which when combined provided a rich view of Collective Worship.

### **The use of critical realism**

A critical realist approach allowed me the flexibility to explore my three-fold position as researcher, teacher as reflective practitioner and Christian. Such an approach enabled me to identify and include my own personal values in the research. As noted in the preface and in the introductory chapter, my views on Collective Worship are informed by my faith and my role as a teacher.

Two further features of the critical realist approach were highly applicable to this study. First, Bhaskar (1989) argues that critical realist research involves looking beneath the surface to understand the social mechanisms that result in needs not being met. The documentary research identified a discrepancy between the Academies Act 2010 legislation and the roles of SACRE, which was then explored further through fieldwork. The second characteristic of critical realism correlates to its theoretical pluralism. Critical realism seeks to build upon, rather than replace, existing knowledge. Therefore, the use of critical realism has also enabled me to combine documentary and fieldwork research, to integrate primary and secondary sources with the opinions of SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors, with the intent of generating useful insights regarding possible future roles and remits for SACRE and Ofsted

in regards to the monitoring and inspection of Collective Worship. The data analysis used critical realism to present a narrative that has explored the thoughts and opinions of SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors, and to illuminate the context within which they work and its impact on Collective Worship. Using a critical realist approach allowed me to contribute an understanding of how the structure of the Academies Act 2010 has impacted on the agencies of SACRE and Ofsted to monitor, support and inspect Collective Worship.

The overall research approach designed for this study was a ““focused snapshot”” approach, (Schihalejev, 2013; Burton, Brunet and Jones, 2014),), focusing on the views and perceptions of SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors during the period between May 2014 and March 2015. The guided discussions with SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors were centred on the issues raised in the literature. These conversations were used to construct an interface with the documentary research in Chapters 1, 2 and 3. The interface between the documentary research and the field research utilised Cheetham’s themes of influence of others, freedom of choice and personal integrity and inclusivity as a starting point for my own research. However, the themes were adapted to the context of this thesis, which extends an understanding of the issues surrounding Collective Worship into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **Revisiting the discursive threads**

In the introduction to this thesis, I described four common discursive threads that emerged from the literature. These discursive threads were referred to throughout the thesis; they overlapped but were also independent of each other. These threads helped to define the context in which Collective Worship is situated, the different views and opinions on it, and why listening to the voices of members of SACRE and Ofsted inspectors matters as an integral element of the whole debate. I refer to these discursive threads again to specify their individual and combined contributions to the overall Collective Worship discussion and to set the scene for further research in this area.

### **1. Participants’ perceptions and opinions**

The views of the participants formed a constant thread in this research. My research model required the participants’ opinions to be central to the research process through guided discussions, as explored in Chapter 4. Chapter 4 presented the individual views and opinions of SACRE and Ofsted members. Their views were used to define the arguments as part of the academic discourse, adapting Cheetham’s (1999) analytical themes: inclusivity, freedom of

choice and personal integrity, and the influence of others. As I explained in Chapter 3, Cheetham's (1999) work has had a considerable influence on this thesis. His themes have allowed me to examine the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on the roles of SACRE and Ofsted in regards to Collective Worship and have consequently enabled me to make a unique contribution to the issues surrounding Collective Worship.

Chapter 5 examined the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on Ofsted and SACRE in relation to Collective Worship, including the perceptions of individual SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors. The use of both documentary research and field research enabled me to make a professional contribution by offering insights into the interface between the two types of research. The chapter highlighted concerns and opinions on the position of Collective Worship today, as well as the symbiotic relationship between schools and Ofsted. It also illustrated how, since the Academies Act 2010, SACRE has found itself in a difficult situation, between government guidelines emphasising their significance in promoting community cohesion and the Academies Act 2010, which led to the decentralisation of authority in local education.

SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors were chosen for this research as they could offer an extra layer of understanding regarding the impact of the Academies Act 2010, based on their personal experiences of monitoring, inspecting and supporting Collective Worship in schools and academies. The views and opinions of both SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors offered distinct perspectives and insights into the issues surrounding Collective Worship, enabling a more rounded discussion regarding Collective Worship than has been the case in the past.

Throughout Chapter 5, numerous personal observations and assessments of the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on the work of SACRE and Ofsted have been highlighted. In Chapter 4, those engaged in the guided discussions were given an opportunity to deliberate and emphasise how the structure of the Academies Act 2010 legislation has directly and indirectly impacted on the work they do on a regular basis. The hope is that these views and opinions will be taken note of and used to formulate future policies, to ensure both SACRE and Ofsted are given local and government funding, and the support required for them to effectively and efficiently meet their remits, thus becoming more effective monitoring and inspecting agencies.



## **2. Multi-disciplinary research**

Taking a multi-disciplinary approach has meant that this research has explored various issues and concerns surrounding Collective Worship. Collective Worship does not occur in a social vacuum and Chapters 1, 2 and 3 identified the main issues underpinning the practice of Collective Worship, focusing on the educational, historical, sociological, political and religious (including spiritual, theological and secular) elements, through various Hansard and HMSO documents and academic research. Such an approach has enabled me to fully position and represent the diverse issues surrounding the Collective Worship discussion, as well as to contextualise the voices of individual SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors as important contributors to the debate. It also enabled me to locate the work and views of SACRE and Ofsted within the debate about Collective Worship and its future.

Chapters 1, 2 and 3 set the groundwork for my field research, and located the study within the historical context of an established body of knowledge. Chapter 1 highlighted the legal framework in which Collective Worship sits. The legal framework with regards to education has changed radically since the 1944 Education Act, especially with recent government policies placing the promotion of SMSC development, community cohesion and FBV's at the forefront of educational policy in the wake of the 'Trojan Horse' letter. Chapters 2 and 3 served as both a literature review and an introduction to some of the leading positions on the ERA 1988 and Circular 1/94 with regards to Collective Worship. These perceptions and views include religious and non-religious leaders, as well as organisations. Chapter 2 began by examining what Hansard and HMSO documents, Ofsted, SACRE and other material tell us about the current debate surrounding the appropriateness of Collective Worship, including exploring the definition of Collective Worship, the differences between assemblies and Collective Worship, and those between corporate and Collective Worship. This chapter served as a foundation for my contribution to the Collective Worship debate. I have contributed to the gap in the literature and the educational profession by compiling and analysing the views of individual SACRE and Ofsted members.

Chapter 2 highlighted the fundamental roles SACRE and Ofsted should play with regards to Collective Worship, especially in the promotion and monitoring of community cohesion and inclusivity. SACRE and Ofsted are supposed to guide and support teachers and schools through the legislation. However, as Chapter 4 has noted, some SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors were unaware of recent changes to the legal status of Circular 1/94, thus the

ongoing training received, and methods of communication between various organisations, may need to be reviewed to ensure awareness of new guidelines and legislation. Documenting their views in Chapter 5 led to a deeper understanding of how the structure of the Academies Act 2010 has impacted on the agencies of SACRE and Ofsted, encompassing their duties to monitor, support, develop and inspect Collective Worship and its component parts, community cohesion and SMSC development. Such perceptions also raised awareness of the issues and implications of educational policies on Collective Worship, combining SMSC development and community cohesion. Ofsted was criticised by SACRE members over its lack of inspection of Collective Worship, which in turn has undermined the remit of SACRE. SACRE has been placed in an invidious situation, in which they have been given increasing responsibility in government legislation and guidelines for the promotion of SMSC development and community cohesion; however, their significance has diminished due to the Academies Act 2010, which led to academies being outside of the jurisdiction of SACRE.

### **3. Religious discourse**

Collective Worship was conceived by those responsible for drafting the ERA 1988 as an inclusive educational activity, in which young people of all faiths, and those of none, could engage without loss of integrity. It was understood that it would provide young people with time to reflect on those deeper issues that give our lives worth and value. However, we now live in a world that is very different from when ERA 1988 and Circular 1/94 was introduced. Bearing in mind these societal and cultural changes, throughout this thesis I have questioned the appropriateness of the current Collective Worship legislation. I questioned whether the activity of Collective Worship should be a compulsory element of the programme for all pupils, as well as what type of worship would be appropriate to provide in the schools of a society whose government seeks to maintain its traditional Christian heritage, whilst at the same time supporting its plurality of cultures.

Chapter 5 highlighted the SACRE members' and Ofsted inspectors' concerns and opinions regarding the position of Collective Worship today. They explained how marginalised and side-lined they feel their roles have become. The views of SACRE and Ofsted members are presented within the context of the current social, cultural and educational climate. Thus, the thesis makes a professional contribution by enhancing our understanding of the position and problems of Collective Worship in academies and schools today, and by identifying the

correlation between the legal framework around Collective Worship and the perceptions of those whose remit it is to monitor, support and inspect its delivery. I also envisaged this research as a contribution to existing knowledge, as it recognises and acknowledges the impact of the structure of the Academies Act 2010 on the work of SACRE and Ofsted. This research has offered an opportunity for the views of individual members of both agencies to be heard and has revealed the reality of their situation through their perceptions.

#### **4. The teacher as reflective practitioner**

Throughout this research, I have maintained the view that I am a teacher who is both a researcher and a reflective practitioner. My role as a researcher gave me access with a degree of authority to SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors, with my role facilitating the exploration of their perceptions regarding the impact of government legislation. My professional identity as a teacher enabled me to relate to the daily issues, realities and pressures facing teachers that were mentioned by the SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors interviewed.

As noted above, my views on Collective Worship are intertwined with my faith and my role as a teacher. The use of a critical realist approach has enabled me to include and identify my own personal and religious values in the research. The critical realist methodology adapted for this research is underpinned by my own position as a Christian. It was my own set of values and commitment to appropriate Collective Worship that led me to begin this research journey. I have shared my views on Collective Worship, as necessary, with some of the participants in the guided discussions. As a reflective practitioner, I have offered a perception of the Collective Worship debate based on professional experience and context, leading to a representative understanding of where and how Collective Worship is situated in the current political climate. I have also used critical realism to suggest changes to the structure of SACRE and Ofsted; these changes are based on my experience and views on the appropriateness of Collective Worship, as well as the data from the documentary and fieldwork research.

As a reflective practitioner, I have also highlighted the relevance and appropriateness of Collective Worship in secondary schools. Throughout the research process, a research journal has been used as a tool for reflective practice, allowing me to further develop my thinking and analysis. With regards to my professional development, this thesis has granted me the

opportunity to develop critical knowledge, awareness and an understanding of how education works, including the impact of educational policies, and it has allowed me to transform my own educational practices and contexts through the skills I have gained.

## **The main findings**

All my findings are presented from the perspective of my threefold position as researcher, teacher as reflective practitioner and Christian. My threefold position acknowledges that I am not a neutral researcher; my position has impacted on my decision to use a critical realist approach and has influenced my analysis; however, my conclusions, based on my research, are as rigorous and honest as possible.

The use of a critical realist approach has enabled me to combine documentary and fieldwork research, to integrate primary and secondary sources with the opinions of SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors, with the intention of generating useful insights regarding possible future roles and remits for SACRE and Ofsted with regards to the monitoring and inspection of Collective Worship. This section summarises the main findings, followed by my professional recommendations.

### **1) The Academies Act 2010 has impacted on Collective Worship in the following ways:**

#### **Funding agreement and sponsorships**

- The funding agreement and source of sponsorship dictate whether the academy will have a religious designation or not.
- Those academies that do not have a religious designation must still adhere to Collective Worship legislation including the ERA 1988. However, most SW SACRE members felt that, as academies were no longer under the authority of an LEA due to the Academies Act 2010, Collective Worship in non-religious academies would continue to decline.

The research highlighted the confusion surrounding the current legal status of Circular 1/94. This uncertainty led to a situation where some academies without a religious designation deliberately failed to mention Collective Worship in their funding agreement, as they did not know how to refer to Collective Worship without referring to Circular 1/94. Many SACRE

members who were engaged in the guided discussions also referred to Circular 1/94 without being aware of the change in its status implemented by their own national body, NASACRE, in 2012. SACRE members felt that those academies that had religious designations would continue to adhere to Circular 1/94, or apply for a suitable determination, depending on the religious designation of the academy in question. The findings surrounding funding agreements and sponsorships suggest that, in the future, funding agreements should be scrutinised by SACRE or Ofsted to ensure academies with and without religious designations adhere to the Collective Worship legislation appropriately. Such funding agreement analysis would also provide clarity for teachers, parents and students.

### **Freedom of choice and personal integrity**

- The Academies Act 2010 granted academies greater independence. This independence has led to examples of both religious and non-religious academies in which pupils' freedom of choice and personal integrity were not catered for. Examples were also offered of the consequences of extremism, the very antithesis of freedom of choice, for Collective Worship and education in a wider context.
- The report into the 'Trojan Horse' letter led to various changes in legislation to ensure the safeguarding and welfare of pupils, and to encourage the promotion of British values.

The research established that there is discontent with the current Collective Worship legislation. Several SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors felt that the current legislation did not effectively reflect contemporary society and did not allow for freedom of choice or personal integrity. The views of SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors contended that all schools and academies, including those with religious designations, were struggling to meet the daily requirements of the ERA 1988. The findings emphasised that amendments should be made to the current legislation, or for the current legislation to be revoked altogether. Changes to the current legislation may serve to clarify the existing ambiguity and confusion, leading to more meaningful and relevant Collective Worship for teachers and students.

### **Inclusivity**

- The report on the 'Trojan Horse' letter led to legislation that actively sought to promote community cohesion in all schools and academies.

- Community cohesion can be defined as common values, a sense of belonging and a shared vision/ethos.
- Collective Worship is a significant contributor to community cohesion.

The Academies Act 2010 has had a significant impact on Collective Worship. The implementation of the Academies Act 2010 led to a situation in which religious extremism was promoted in some academies in Birmingham. Reports following the incident led to new guidelines and legislation, with Collective Worship being given a substantial role to play in promoting community cohesion to ensure what occurred in the academies in Birmingham involved in the ‘Trojan Horse’ incident does not occur again in any school or academy. However, those whose remit it is to support, monitor and inspect Collective Worship have differing perceptions and views of Collective Worship, as highlighted in Chapter 5. Moving forwards, changes to the current Collective Worship legislation may lead to a more united front from SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors with regards to the importance of Collective Worship. This in turn may lead to closer adherence to the law by schools.

**2) The Academies Act 2010 has impacted on the role of SACREs in relation to Collective Worship in the following ways:**

**Inclusivity**

- The report on the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter led to legislation designed to further promote community cohesion and FBV’s in schools and academies.
- SACREs are seen by the British government as having an important role in the promotion of community cohesion.
- The influence individual SACREs have on community cohesion in schools and academies is affected by many factors, such as the impact of the Academies Act 2010 and the issue of funding.

**The influence of others – explicit and implicit influences**

- Academies with no religious designation are obliged to follow the agreed local syllabus for Religious Education, supported by SACRE.
- SACREs have no legal remit to monitor Collective Worship in academies, due to the Academies Act 2010.

The Academies Act 2010 has clearly had a significant impact on the role of SACREs, diminishing their responsibility for monitoring Collective Worship. SACRE's have limited power and authority over academies due to the Academies Act 2010. The members of SW SACRE who were involved in the guided discussions emphasised that they still offer Collective Worship training and resources to the academies in their area. However, whether these were taken up was very much up to the individual teachers at these academies, as there was no obligation for them to attend. At the same time, the legislation prompted by the 'Trojan Horse' affair in some academies in Birmingham led to SACREs being given a substantial role to play in promoting community cohesion. This has led to SACREs finding themselves caught between legislation that has stripped them of their authority, and legislation that emphasises their role in promoting community cohesion. Effectively developing community cohesion at a local level can present challenges for certain schools; for example, the requirement that schools must engage in 'promoting shared values and encouraging their pupils to actively engage with others to understand what they all hold in common' (DCSF, 2007, p6) may be more problematic where diverse communities reside within a single catchment area. Therefore, the role of SACRE is an essential one to help support and promote community cohesion, especially in disparate communities.

However, the support, resources and training some SACREs can provide to promote community cohesion is hindered considerably by the inconsistencies in funding from one SACRE to another. LEAs have a legal obligation to fund SACREs. However, this research has emphasised that the funding of SACREs by LEAs is inconsistent, and the financial support given by SACREs to individual SACRE members is also seen as varying. Various ways forward, including SACREs being responsible for the monitoring of Collective Worship, were suggested in Chapter 5. Such changes could lead to SACREs' being able to provide more training and support for Collective Worship, SMSC development and community cohesion, but these changes to the remit of SACRE would involve a budgetary increase. However, such an increase in financial assistance for SACREs', as discussed later in my professional recommendations, is unlikely to occur.

### **3) The Academies Act 2010 has impacted on the role of Ofsted, in relation to Collective Worship, in the following ways:**

#### **The influence of others - explicit influences**

- The role and remit of Ofsted with regards to Collective Worship have transformed over time.
- The new framework for Ofsted 2015 emphasised that inspectors should report on SMSC development.

#### **The influence of others - implicit influences**

- Non-compliance with Collective Worship legislation was a regular occurrence during the 1990s.
- Non-compliance with Collective Worship legislation has been well-documented, as seen in the introduction and Chapter 1 of this thesis.

This research has highlighted a symbiotic relationship between schools and Ofsted with regards to Collective Worship. Ofsted were aware that schools were not complying with the legislation. Schools were aware that Ofsted would rarely inspect Collective Worship. If Ofsted did report on Collective Worship, the schools would ignore the advice and recommendations. Thus, in 2004, David Bell, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools and Head of Ofsted, informed his inspectors that they no longer needed to inspect Collective Worship. In 2005, Ofsted inspectors were informed that Collective Worship only needed to be commented on if it was a positive example of SMSC development. In 2012, Ofsted guidelines required inspectors to examine schools and academies and report either positively or negatively on the provision of SMSC development, including Collective Worship. In 2014, following the 'Trojan Horse' letter and subsequent enquiry, schools and academies could be classified as requiring significant improvement if Ofsted deemed key areas: 1) the achievement of pupils at the school, 2) the quality of teaching in the school, 3) the behaviour and safety of pupils at the school, 4) the quality of leadership in and management of, the school. and/or there are weaknesses in the provision of SMSC D development. This research has raised questions regarding the ability of Ofsted to inspect for elements of SMSC development and more training in inspecting SMSC development is recommended to ensure consistency in inspections. More efficient training in SMSC development is also



recommended for trainee teachers, as this research highlighted how very little time is dedicated to this area, leaving trainee teachers ill-prepared to develop SMSC in schools.

### **The influence of the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter and subsequent enquiry**

- The ‘Trojan Horse’ letter alleging a radical Islamic occupation of academies in Birmingham led to enquiries and reports.
- Ofsted was criticised in Clarke’s report, ‘Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the “Trojan Horse” letter’ (July 2014).
- The Department of Education published various pieces of legislation to promote safeguarding and counter-terrorism, placing responsibility on educational establishments to challenge extremism ideology, as well as publishing documents promoting British values and community cohesion.

The introduction of new policies and guidelines for educational establishments demanded the promotion of FBVs, including recognising and respecting religious differences and students’ rights to religious freedom. SMSC development is a significant contributor to FBVs (DfE, 2014c and 2014d). Collective Worship is seen to be an essential contributor to promoting both SMSC development and FBVs. Within the legislation, *Keeping children safe in education*, (DfE, 2014b) and *Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools*. (DfE, 2014c), Ofsted and SACRE have been given responsibility for ensuring the promotion of such values. Ofsted responded by introducing a new Ofsted framework in 2015. A school could be judged to need improvement if the overall grade received for SMSC development was 4 or below. With appropriate support and training from local SACREs’, schools would be able to meet the SMSC development requirements in the Ofsted framework. However, as already noted, SACREs’ are hindered by the Academies Act 2010 and inconsistent financial support from LEAs’.

The research has also highlighted that the impact of the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter. The letter led to Collective Worship being on the agenda of the British government and Ofsted. However, this research has also emphasised that despite the importance placed on Collective Worship due to the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter, all Ofsted inspectors engaged in the guided discussions regarded the current legislation as inappropriate for modern society. Some of the inspectors claimed that the Collective Worship witnessed by them could not be considered ‘worship’. For this reason, some inspectors did not consider the inspection of Collective Worship to be

important; however, other inspectors did perceive the inspection of Collective Worship for evidence of SMSC development as significant in raising standards and helping to ensure good practice within schools. The research suggests changes to the current Collective Worship legislation. Such a change would need significant support from Ofsted and SACREs,' with a consistent message from both agencies regarding the changes and the importance of the changes for SMSCSMSC development and community cohesion. This, I believe, would lead to schools and teachers being more mindful of their obligations, thus also benefiting students and the wider school community.

## **Overall findings**

The roles of SACRE and Ofsted have been indirectly impacted by the Academies Act 2010. The independent nature of academies led to the 'Trojan Horse' situation, where religious fundamentalism could be promoted. The reports and enquiries into this led to changes in legislation and guidelines, not just for educational establishments, but also for Ofsted and SACRE.

The Academies Act 2010 has significantly altered the role of local SACREs, while their remit towards Collective Worship has remained the same. Local SACREs have a fundamental role in the promotion of community cohesion, SMSC development and FBVs;' however, the Academies Act 2010 has diminished the authority of SACREs to monitor Collective Worship in academies. Furthermore, the inconsistent funding of local SACREs has also had a detrimental impact on how much support SACREs can provide.

The Academies Act 2010 has significantly altered the role of Ofsted, although their remit towards Collective Worship has fluctuated over time. Ofsted inspectors have a substantial role in ensuring mistakes from the 'Trojan Horse' incident are learnt from and not repeated, within Ofsted or in society.

Thus, the main findings from the guided discussion with both the SACRE members and the Ofsted inspectors suggest that, whilst the act of Collective Worship contains many of the elements currently recommended for the development of SMSC development and the promotion of community cohesion, factors including the lack of monitoring and reporting by Ofsted and the Academies Act 2010 have led to a diminishing role for SACRE. The data has

also raised questions about the suitability of the current form of Collective Worship and has led to queries regarding whether the legislation is fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Furthermore, the data suggests that unless SACRE and Ofsted together offer a united front, opportunities to develop SMSC development and promote community cohesion through Collective Worship will continue to be problematic and divisive.

## **Contributions of the study**

In the introduction, I took the standpoint that the impact of the Academies Act 2010 legislation on Collective Worship has not been sufficiently considered. The individual perceptions and views of members of the government agencies (SACRE and Ofsted) that are commissioned to ensure Collective Worship occurs in educational establishments have also been very rarely heard. This new perspective has added a further layer of understanding to the context of the current debate surrounding Collective Worship, by raising awareness of the issues and implications of educational policies on the roles of Ofsted and SACRE with regards to Collective Worship and its component parts, SMSC development and community cohesion. The thesis has highlighted the confusion over the legal status of Circular 1/94 and has also emphasised the public documentary context of the situation in schools regarding the misperception of Collective Worship's function, form and viability. This thesis has also demonstrated that it is unsurprising that most schools are not engaging with the real meaning of Collective Worship, when the whole issue of religion (and extremism) is now extremely contentious, and when there are so many other areas, such as SMSC development, FBVs and community cohesion, that Collective Worship is supposed to embrace.

This thesis, therefore, makes the following unique contributions:

- The use of unpublished theses, published documents and field research has created an interface between the documentary research and field research and provided a new perspective on the issues surrounding the Collective Worship debate.
- The unique use of the Swindon SACRE publication 'Time to Breathe' throughout this thesis has contributed to an understanding of the responsibilities of schools and academies with regards to Collective Worship.
- The guided discussions with individual SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors has contributed to a deeper understanding of the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on Collective Worship in academies, and has also led to an awareness of how the Academies Act 2010 has impacted directly and indirectly on the roles of SACRE and Ofsted.

This thesis contributes to the teaching profession, as it explored the perceptions of individual members of SACRE and Ofsted and highlighted how both bodies are positioned between the

government and schools. As those who inspect and monitor schools, the views of SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors have offered personal insights into the realities of government legislation and the possible ways forward for Collective Worship in a society that is becoming increasingly secular, yet which at the same time faces threats from fundamentalism that impact on the freedoms we take for granted. Continuing to heed the perspectives of individual SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors is essential, as both have offered an insight into the realities and impact of governmental legislation on their ability to continue with their sanctioned roles and remits. The thesis has also shown that there is the potential for a change in the roles of SACRE and Ofsted, which would impact on teachers and students. This is discussed further in the section on professional recommendations.

This dissertation should be of interest to teachers who are engaged in Collective Worship at schools, SACRE members, Ofsted inspectors, policy makers and government review boards. It should also be of interest to academics who have or are engaged in research pertaining to the relevance of Collective Worship.

## **Professional recommendations**

Cruickshank (2003) suggested that critical realist researchers encourage change by engaging in political discussion to challenge the structure (the system or organisation) that they are researching. With this mind, I offer my recommendations and suggest changes to the roles and remits of Ofsted and SACRE.

Circular 1/94, in its definition of Collective Worship, envisioned a school community coming together and reminding itself of its shared ethos and values. At the same time, Collective Worship was designed not to mask or minimise differences, but to celebrate them; to embrace the genuine spiritual life of young people, regardless of whether they were religious or not. Collective Worship was conceived by those responsible for drafting the ERA 1988 as being an educational, inclusive activity in which all young people of all faiths, and those of none, could engage without loss of integrity. It was understood to provide young people with time to reflect on those deeper issues that give our lives value and worth. For these reasons, I agree with Webster, who argues that Collective Worship should be an asset, rather than a burden, as 'at its best collective worship contributes to the understanding of how to live in the global society of the new millennium' (2000, p201). The Bloxham Project (2008) also articulates this view, and states that the very nature of modern Britain, as both multi-faith and multicultural, can be an asset for Collective Worship. However, this is only true with the correct guidance and sensitivity, which can then lead to 'genuine, shared worship in an interfaith context' (The Bloxham Project, 2008, p29).

What is clear from documentary research is that there is still a need and a desire for an education that enables our children to learn about and from other religions and faiths, to foster an understanding and respect for cultural differences and to encourage our children to develop into young adults who embrace open-mindedness. This was illustrated by Cheetham, who argued in his conclusion that 'the future of Collective Worship lies in human nature being encouraged to flourish in humanitarianism, democracy and citizenship, all of which include respect for those who hold beliefs different from one's own' (Cheetham, 1999, p300). How to achieve this, however, remains a task of Herculean proportions, and there is much debate on the best way forward.

Nevertheless, it is also clear that, as previous research and the AHRC report (2015) have also indicated, Circular 1/94's approach is not appropriate to or relevant for this undertaking. I agree with the recommendation by Clarke and Woodhead (2015) that the current guidance for Collective Worship, Circular 1/94, should be completely repealed and replaced by granting schools independence to set their own standards and guidelines to meet the requirements of their individual school community (p63). This is in line with the literature review for this research and my own research findings, based on the guided discussions with Ofsted inspectors and individual members of SW SACRE. For example, Hazel suggests Collective Worship in schools should be made to be accountable to the local community and thus also help to promote social and community cohesion. However, given the 'Trojan Horse' situation, granting independence to schools and academies with regards to Collective Worship would have to be within structured guidelines, which would then need to be carefully monitored and inspected. The transformation of Collective Worship would also need increased support and guidance from central government, academics and other organisations such as NASCRE, various churches, and other faith and non-faith groups to encourage a more consistent, relevant approach that reflects the individual nature of a school community.

The social and religious unrest and tensions highlighted throughout this thesis, including the 'Trojan Horse' incident, has led to various papers and guidelines intended to define and promote community cohesion. For example, the Commission for Integration and Cohesion report, *'Our Shared Future'*, (2007) described community cohesion as being a 'clearly defined and widely shared sense of the contribution of different individuals and different communities to a future vision for a neighbourhood, city, region or country' (p10). Other papers and guidelines, such as the DfCLG guidelines (2008), Swindon SACRE (2012) and Clarke and Woodhead (2015), have emphasised the role of educational establishments in promoting social and community cohesion. The focus on inclusivity and social/community cohesion also offers an opportunity to refocus Collective Worship, and a possible monitoring and inspection role for SACRE. Although this research has highlighted that for SW SACRE, their remit to support Collective Worship in schools and academies has remained the same, their monitoring role has been diminished due to the Academies Act 2010, which stripped SACREs' of control of non-LEA-funded educational establishments. Therefore, I also recommend that legislation is introduced to counter this, enabling SACREs' to monitor and scrutinise Collective Worship in all schools and academies in their area. Changes in

Collective Worship and the Academies Act 2010 legislation, within a relevant framework and transparent inspection guidelines, would enable SACREs' and Ofsted to support and monitor schools more efficiently, with effective training. More effective teacher training would then lead to teachers becoming more aware of their obligations and how to meet them.

The idea suggested by Clarke and Woodhead (2015) of a national SACRE is one I agree with. A national SACRE consisting of 'relevant experts on religion and education, who should together represent some of the variety of religious and nonreligious stances characteristic of the UK today, including the main faith communities and humanism' (p37) would mark a new way forward for Religious Education and Collective Worship, enabling both areas to truly reflect an education suited for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As well as a new national SACRE, the report by Clarke and Woodhead also recommended retaining local SACREs as an important link to the area in which they are situated. SACREs would work within their local communities and support and promote community cohesion in educational establishments. SACREs would also receive more substantial financial support directly from the government, easing the burden on local authorities to finance SACREs and readdressing the financial irregularities in funding, explored in Chapter 4. An increase in financial support would enable SACREs' to support teachers in schools and academies more successfully, with more training and resources made available for this purpose. With more support and training, teachers would be able to offer students a more relevant Collective Worship experience, which would in turn would enhance students' SMSC development and promote community cohesion within the school.

Being a SACRE member is a voluntary role, yet if their role is to be taken seriously by all concerned, including Ofsted, schools, LEAs and the government, I suggest that it may also be time not just to form a national SACRE but to also reconsider the remuneration of SACRE members. It can be argued that the voluntary responsibility shared by SACRE members to meet the requirements of their remit is too great for mere volunteers. This was illustrated by Joanna, a member of SW SACRE and local councillor, who argued that SACRE members 'may have other commitments and other pressing engagements that may deter them from giving the matter their fullest attention'. An increase in financial support for SACREs' would enable them to support more schools, academies and individual teachers with training and resources. However, is it likely, given the financial and political situation the current Conservative government finds itself in, including with issues surrounding Brexit, that they



would spend the time in parliament debating such changes to the role of SACRE, grant SACRE more authority or change the voluntary nature of SACRE to a paid organisation? At the moment, I think the answer to this question is no. Nevertheless, I believe that the above recommendations should be considered and merit further research as teachers, students and the wider school community would benefit from such changes, and an increase in financial support for SACREs' could also lead to a deeper sense of community cohesion.

## **Limitations of the study**

Critical realism has allowed me to consider the ways in which the legislative structure has influenced the nature and effectiveness of services provided by the agencies of SACRE and Ofsted. The study has provided a “focused snapshot” (Schihalejev, 2013; Burton, Brunet and Jones, 2014) of the views of Ofsted inspectors and SACRE members between March 2013 and May 2015, detailing their perceptions of the impact of the Academies Act 2010 with regards to Collective Worship. However, as previously mentioned in Chapter 4, critical realism acknowledges the time-bound nature of the research. Thus, the data provided by the individual members of SACRE merely represents the perspectives of a small sample of one SACRE at a point in time, and certainly cannot be generalised to other SACREs, whose members may have had different experiences. The data provided by the six Ofsted inspectors also cannot be viewed as a comprehensive representation of all Ofsted inspectors. My circumstances also limited the scope of this study. Looked at through a wider lens, different conclusions may potentially be reached about the impact of the Academies Act, so there is value in replicating this study on a larger scale with other SACREs and Ofsted inspectors, especially considering my recommendations. In different circumstances, a wider network of local SACREs’ could be chosen, with additional Ofsted inspectors also invited to participate. A pilot study would enable the researcher to refine my themes and related questions, leading to guided discussions within focus groups. Such focus groups could ‘generate rich information’ (Thomas, 2000, p82), as they may encourage and enable SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors to provide in-depth answers and views through stimulating each other’s thought processes when sharing experiences.

## **Final words**

Undertaking this research has been an invaluable learning experience; this study has provided some key ideas that have helped me to further examine my own values concerning my faith and how much my faith and my role as a teacher have impacted on my personal views regarding Collective Worship. This research has also helped me to understand and adapt my thinking towards the act of Collective Worship. I have referred to my own faith from the beginning of this research process, as it is my faith that began this whole research journey.

As a practising Christian, as I said in my preface, I believe in the following message: ‘and he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation”’ (Matthew 16:15). I am concerned about the future of Christianity as church membership declines and secularisation increases. However, although I am a Christian and value the Christian heritage of Britain, I have become more concerned with enabling and encouraging children to explore their own spiritual development and journey, whilst at the same time promoting social and community cohesion and protecting them from the effects of fundamentalism. As this thesis, has demonstrated, schools are not the place for religious evangelism or fundamentalism. Therefore, we need to ensure that the lessons that have been learnt from the ‘Trojan Horse’ enquiry are indeed put into practice. There is a difference between proselytising to our children and offering them an education that enables them to become knowledgeable about the world they inhabit. Such an education, I believe, should include SMSC development as an integral part of an overall educational curriculum. As a practising member of the Church of England, my view on Collective Worship is influenced by my faith; however, as a professional teacher, my view is also shaped by my knowledge and understanding of the realities of daily school life, where there are many pressures placed upon teachers and students alike. I also find it useful to compare the statutory requirement for daily Collective Worship to my own worship pattern, which is like that of many fellow Christians I know. I worship collectively once a week and privately whenever I wish. I could not ask from the pupils I teach something that I do not practise myself: daily worship. Thus, I agree that, for Collective Worship to be a meaningful reflective practice and encompass the religious and cultural needs of the students of a school, as well as to help develop SMSC, then it is best approached through regular weekly or monthly gatherings, but certainly not daily.

As this thesis has explained, spirituality in the classroom has been debate in educational forums for many decades. The 1944 Education Act explicitly required that public education ‘contributes towards the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community’ (HMSO, 1944, Pt.2, section 7). It is certainly evident through the Ofsted guidance (2014a) that SMSC development has a prominent place within the new framework, with an emphasis placed upon the ‘key role SMSC, RE and Collective Worship all play in ensuring a security and breadth of education that will offer children a young people a vision and understanding of Britain and the wider world as populated by diverse peoples’ (Ofsted 2014a, p4).

On this basis, I believe Collective Worship has much to offer towards such SMSC development. However, I have raised the concerns of the SACRE members and Ofsted inspectors who participated in my research regarding the significance of the current legislation of Collective Worship for 21<sup>st</sup>-century Britain. School communities have changed radically since the 1944 Education Act and the ERA 1988, especially with regards to religious perspectives and beliefs held. I remain convinced that the current legislation needs to be either amended, or replaced with legislation that more befits not just the multicultural nature of Britain today, but also the reality of the daily demands placed upon teachers in schools. We also need to continue to listen to the views and opinions of those whose job it is to inspect and monitor Collective Worship and assemblies, as they have an enhanced view of the impact of various pieces of legislation on ensuring we offer our children a model of education that reflects modern Britain. However, I am also aware that any change in the current legislation to reflect some of the suggestions above, just as with previous legislation regarding Collective Worship, is unlikely to satisfy everyone.

In a post- ‘Trojan Horse’ climate, I also believe that Collective Worship or assemblies should continue to be monitored by organisations such as SACRE and Ofsted to ensure that a repeat of the ‘Trojan Horse’ incident does not occur. The only way to protect children from such indoctrination, regardless of what religious form it takes, is through legislation, monitoring and inspection, and this must continue, even if Circular 1/94 does not. At the same time, even though it has been suggested by an Ofsted inspector I interviewed, I am not convinced that transferring authority for inspecting Collective Worship from Ofsted to SACREs would be useful or appropriate, as SACREs have no jurisdiction over academies, and most schools have now become academies. Whilst the role of SACREs in the monitoring of Collective

Worship has been considered throughout this thesis, based on reasons of accountability, finance and the difficulty of moderating different SACREs, the responsibility for inspecting and reporting of Collective Worship and assemblies remains and should remain with Ofsted for now. However, Ofsted should provide more detailed information on their observations of Collective Worship, including policies and practices, in their final written reports to schools and academies. This would promote a better understanding of the contribution Collective Worship makes to the promotion of FBVs, community cohesion and the development of SMSC. More comprehensive reporting by Ofsted would also help local SACREs to work with schools to improve these areas where necessary.

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## **Appendix 1: Web links to key documents/resources throughout thesis**

- a) Swindon SACRE Annual report 2011-2012  
<http://www.nasacre.org.uk/file/nasacre/2011-12-swindon-2.pdf>
- b) North Somerset SACRE 18th Annual Report 2013-2014  
[https://www.nsomerset.gov.uk/Education/student\\_and\\_adult/Documents/SACRE/SACRE%20annual%20report%202013-14%20\(pdf\).pdf](https://www.nsomerset.gov.uk/Education/student_and_adult/Documents/SACRE/SACRE%20annual%20report%202013-14%20(pdf).pdf).
- c) Analysis of 2004 SACRE annual reports (QCA 2005)  
[http://www.mmiweb.org.uk/publications/re/sacre\\_04.pdf](http://www.mmiweb.org.uk/publications/re/sacre_04.pdf)
- d) An evaluation of the work of Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education (Ofsted 2004)  
[http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/5181/1/An%20evaluation%20of%20the%20work%20of%20Standing%20Advisory%20Councils%20for%20Religious%20Education%20\(PDF%20format\).pdf](http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/5181/1/An%20evaluation%20of%20the%20work%20of%20Standing%20Advisory%20Councils%20for%20Religious%20Education%20(PDF%20format).pdf)
- e) NASACRE Survey of Local Authority Support for SACREs' (2011)  
[www.nasacre.org.uk/media/file/NASACRE\\_QtoS\\_ap111.pdf](http://www.nasacre.org.uk/media/file/NASACRE_QtoS_ap111.pdf).
- f) The Policy and Guidelines for Acts of Collective Worship in Community Schools' (Northumberland County Council (2007)  
[http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/WAMDocuments/BA05CA8E-1648-452F-96CF-92C1411D7E14\\_1\\_0.pdf?nccredirect=1](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/WAMDocuments/BA05CA8E-1648-452F-96CF-92C1411D7E14_1_0.pdf?nccredirect=1)
- g) Education Reform Act (1988)  
[http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/40/pdfs/ukpga\\_19880040\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/40/pdfs/ukpga_19880040_en.pdf)
- h) Circular 1/94  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/collective-worship-in-schools>
- i) Academies Act 2010  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/32/contents>
- j) The nature and status of religious belief in contemporary Britain (with particular reference to the concept of 'truth') as reflected by acts of collective worship in a sample of Luton schools since the 1988 Education Reform Act (Cheetham 1999)  
<http://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.300049>
- k) Funding Agreements for Academies 2015  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-and-free-school-funding-agreements-single-academy-trust>



- l) Promoting fundamental British values as part of SMSC in schools: Departmental advice for maintained schools (DfE, 2014)  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/380595/SMSC\\_Guidance\\_Maintained\\_Schools.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/380595/SMSC_Guidance_Maintained_Schools.pdf)
- m) Time to breathe – new guidance on Collective Worship (Swindon SACRE 2012)  
<http://www.bristol.anglican.org/i/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Swindon-SACRE-Collective-Worship-Guidance.pdf>
- n) Cumper, P., & Mawhinney, A. (2015). *Collective worship and religious observance in schools: An evaluation of law and policy in the UK*. Swindon: Arts and Humanities Research Council.  
<http://collectiveschoolworship.com/documents/CollectiveWorshipReligiousObservanceAHRCNetworkReport13November2015.pdf>
- o) Report into allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter (Clarke, 2014)  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/340526/HC\\_576\\_accessible\\_-.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/340526/HC_576_accessible_-.pdf)
- p) House of Commons Education Committee Extremism in schools: the Trojan Horse affair Seventh Report of Session 2014-15  
<http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/pdfs/2015-cesc-trojan-horse.pdf>

## **Appendix 2: SACRE Committees**

Each SACRE is divided into four committees as follows:

- Committee A – Representatives of Christian denominations such as the Roman Catholic Church, Free Churches, Baptist, Methodist, United Reformed Church, Salvation Army, Society of Friends. It also contains representatives from other faiths, such as Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, Baha's etc. Humanist representatives cannot be members of Committee A, but can be co-opted to SACRE as additional members.
- Committee B – Representatives nominated by the local Church of England dioceses.
- Committee C – Representatives of teacher associations.
- Committee D – Representatives of the LA.

Committees A and B should present a positive image of their religion, so that members of the other committees are disabused of any religious stereotypes about each denomination or religion. They must also make clear any grounds on which they may differ from each other, but also the respect they have for each other's viewpoints. The committees should appreciate the difficulties schools are facing in the local area, support their best endeavours, and act, where necessary, as a link between schools and the faith communities, encouraging a sense of community cohesion.

Committee C should, with regards to Collective Worship, ensure that the needs of schools and teachers are considered by the SACRE in their discussions and ensure that the associations they represent are informed about the work of the SACRE.

Committee D should be the supporters of RE within the various committees and structures of the LA, including offering political support to enable locally determined RE to flourish within each LA (financial support, advisory support, etc.). Committee D should also focus on issues raised by a multi-faith, multicultural society for the education of children in RE and reflect these issues in the Education Committee, Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and beyond as a means of supporting RE. The committee should reflect the 'public' dimension to the debate about RE provision and support.

### Appendix 3: SACRE and Ofsted guided discussion dates and pseudonym

<b>Ofsted inspectors</b>		
<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Date of guided discussion</b>	<b>Other information</b>
Boris	2nd June 2014	Ofsted Inspector since 1994 and HMI inspector since 2001, National Advisor for Religious Education since 2001
John	23rd March 2015	Ofsted Inspector 1990-2004. Retired.
Mark	25th March 2015	Ofsted Inspector since 2010.
Lisa	25th March 2015	Ofsted Inspector since 2008. Used to teach RE.
Beverley	26th March 2015	Ofsted Inspector since 2011. Taught History for 25 years.
Ben	30th March 2015	Ofsted Inspector since 2012.

<b>SACRE members</b>		
<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Date of guided discussion</b>	<b>Other information</b>
Anna	13th March 2014	SACRE Advisor
Nicola	17th May 2014	Member of SACRE, teacher and writing a PhD on Collective Worship.
Gillian	17th May 2014	SACRE member since 2012. Local councillor.
Hannah	30th May 2014	SACRE member for eight years (on and off). Local councillor.
Hazel	30th May 2014	Religious leader.
Joshua	17th Nov 2014	Retired teacher, taught RE for 16 years, SACRE member for 18 months.
Rebecca	18th Nov 2014	SACRE member for 3 years. Teacher.
Bridget	18th Nov 2014	SACRE member for 6 years. Primary school teacher.
Joanna	20th Nov 2014	SACRE member for a few months in current position, 2 years in previous one. Local councillor.
Luke	20th Nov 2014	SACRE member for two years. Ex-maths teacher.
Hayley	21st Nov 2014	SACRE member for three years. Teacher.
Iain	24th Nov 2014	SACRE member for 20 years. Teacher.
Brett	24th Nov 2014	SACRE member for four years.
Rose	25th Nov 2014	SACRE member for three years.

#### **Appendix 4: Copy of email to Anna**

[Email to ANNA (SACRE advisor) regarding initial phone call on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2014]

Dear ANNA,

Thank you so much for your time the other day. I thoroughly enjoyed being able to talk about my thesis with you.

To confirm, I am looking for willing participants to help me with my Educational Doctorate research project which I am undertaking on a part-time basis at University of Gloucestershire, Cheltenham.

The principal aim of my research is to explore the impact of the Academy Act of 2010 on Collective Worship, in particular on the work of SACRE. Thus I would like very much to guided discussion SACRE members to gain an insider's view on the impact of the Academy Act 2010.

As I currently reside in Luxembourg, with my husband currently working as assistant chaplain for the Anglican Church of Luxembourg, I would like to hold the guided discussions via Skype or telephone, however, I am also willing to meet in person.

All participants would be protected by anonymity.

I do not anticipate the guided discussions taking more than half hour.

I really would appreciate any assistance you could give me in this matter.

In the meantime, if you have any questions, or would like any more detail, regarding this research please do not hesitate to contact me directly via email [carolinekafka-markey@connect.glos.ac.uk](mailto:carolinekafka-markey@connect.glos.ac.uk) or my thesis supervisor Dr. Jenny Fryman at the University of Gloucestershire ([jafryman@glos.ac.uk](mailto:jafryman@glos.ac.uk)).

Yours,

Caroline Kafka-Markey

## **Appendix 5: Participant letter and informed consent form**

Dear Participant,

I am an Educational Doctorate research student at the University of Gloucestershire. I would like to invite you to take part in a research study.

The study is voluntary and you will only be included if you provide your permission. The purpose of this study is to explore the impact the Academy Act 2010 has had on the role of SACRE's, within the field of Collective Worship.

I would like to invite you to participate in a Skype guided discussion. The guided discussion will be at a time convenient to yourself and will be recorded orally, not visually. The questions asked will be based on your personal perceptions on the

- 1) the appropriateness of Collective Worship in 21<sup>st</sup> Century schools,
- 2) the contribution Collective Worship makes to community cohesion and SMSC
- 3) the role Collective Worship plays as a counter-measure to extremism, especially considering the Trojan Horse letter received by Birmingham City Council (BCC) in 2013.

I will keep all data private and secret. I will keep data in a locked office and only I will have access to the data. I will keep data for five years after the study has finished. After five years, I will destroy the data. Once I have finished the study, I will present my findings in a final thesis and possibly in academic journals. When I publish the results, no participant will be identifiable by name.

By taking part in this study, you may help to advance the understanding of the work of SACRE's plus the impact of legislation on their work, as well as enhancing the Collective Worship experience of young people in our schools.

There are no known risks associated with taking part in this study.

The University of Gloucestershire faculty research ethics panel has approved this study.

In the meantime, if you have any questions regarding this research, please do not hesitate to contact me directly via email ([CarolineKafka-markey@connect.glos.ac.uk](mailto:CarolineKafka-markey@connect.glos.ac.uk)) or Dr. Jenny Fryman (thesis supervisor) within the University of Gloucestershire ([jafryman@glos.ac.uk](mailto:jafryman@glos.ac.uk))

If you would like to participate in this study, please read and sign the informed consent form and return it as soon as possible.

Many thanks,



**Informed consent form**

Title of Project: Examining the impact of the Academies Act 2010 on the roles of SACRE and Ofsted in relation to Collective Worship, using a critical realist approach.

Researcher: Caroline Kafka-Markey

Do you understand that I have asked you to participate in a research study?	Yes	No
Have you read and received a copy of the attached information letter?	Yes	No
Do you understand the benefits and risks involved in taking part in this research study?	Yes	No
Do you understand that you are free to contact me to ask questions and discuss this study?	Yes	No
Do you understand that you free to refuse participation, or to withdraw from the study at any time, without consequence, and that your information will be withdrawn at your request?	Yes	No
Do you understand that I will keep your data confidential?	Yes	No
Do you understand who will have access to your information?	Yes	No

I wish to take part in this study:

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Contact number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 6: Close reading and coding of answers given to guided discussions**

<b>APPENDIX 23 – SAMPLE OF CLOSE READING OF GUIDED DISCUSSIONS - SACRE</b>				
<b>Guided discussion</b>	<b>NICOLA</b>	<b>REBECCA</b>	<b>IAIN</b>	<b>HANNAH</b>
<b>Inclusivity</b>			12 - 16	14-16; 19 - 20
<b>Freedom of choice/personal integrity</b>	55-59			
<b>SMSC</b>		5 - 6; 29 - 30	30 - 33; 34 - 36	14-16; 19 - 20
<b>Appropriateness of CW</b>	34-36;	12; 15 - 17; 18 - 19	11,	10-11, 12 - 14
<b>Influence of others</b>	22-23; 46-49; 66-68; 100-103			
<b>Lack of compliance</b>	22, 25; 55-64	26 - 28	27 - 29	24-28; 30-32
<b>Future of CW</b>	11	1; 6; 7; 10	3; 5 - 6; 7, 8	1-3; 4 - 6
<b>Role of SACRE</b>	8-9, 10; 83-88; 97-100	20 - 22; 25	17 - 18; 21 - 22; 25 - 26	
<b>Role of OFSTED</b>	15-17; 42-44	31	34 - 36	25, 29; 35 - 38
<b>Role of Academies/Funding Agreement</b>	13-14, 17 - 20			

## Appendix 7: Transcribed guided discussion with NICOLA

Skype Guided discussion with NICOLA – 17 <sup>th</sup> May 2014	<b>Beginning of guided discussion confirmed that NICOLA agreed to be recorded and gave informed consent to guided discussion. Also informed SLC of anonymity and that a copy of guided discussion transcript would be emailed to her.</b>
<b>Basic information</b>	<b>Member of SACRE, teacher and writing a PhD in CW – hoping to submit 2014.</b>
CKM	If CW in academies is governed by the individual ‘funding agreement’ - have any academies approached you for CW advice?
NICOLA	None have actually approached us but we have sent the advice to all schools and academies in the borough. We only have one secondary school now which is not an academy.
CKM	That’s really interesting, isn’t it?
NICOLA	I don’t think we have any school approach for CW advice so I don’t think there is a distinction in Swindon between maintained schools and academies in terms of what they are asking for.
CKM	Did you have more before they turned into academies or not?
NICOLA	I don’t think schools on the whole have been really very interested in finding more about CW. It is much the SACRE that’s given them advice, to help them understand their responsibilities.
CKM	So, you say, and I am not trying to put words into your mouth but trying to understand what you said, SACRE’s have been pro-active and the schools haven’t been?
NICOLA	Ours certainly has been proactive, yes.
CKM	Lots of what you are saying is what I thought... but I can’t just say... you need to find the evidence to say this is what is happening. In regards to the appropriateness of CW, what are your views?
NICOLA	That’s really interesting cause as a researcher I don’t want to say yes or no cause I haven’t come to my conclusion but I think the majority of schools would tell you that it is not, if they know there is law that says that and my research, which is obviously limited to one specific area and cannot be taken as wholly representative of schools in England... I am not sure it does exist in most secondary schools. There are no statistics but I think the majority of secondary schools are not complying with law, in my experience. And I don’t think, in some ways you could argue the funding agreement is a stronger incentive because OFSTED does not inspect CW in schools unless the lack of CW or the way it is being provided is detrimental to the SMSC of the pupils. But the funding agreement, if you could theoretically have your funding withheld for not complying with your funding agreement which requires you to provide CW then that theoretically is a stronger weapon – I don’t like using that word but can’t find



	another one at the moment – but it's only theoretical as I understand as I think the interpretation of what CW is by schools is incredibly loose, and I would make an exception for schools with a religious character but, I don't think many secondary schools take it seriously.
CKM	St. A's in SW is an academy and from what I understand, they do CW but not a daily basis?
NICOLA	I don't know, I don't know the specific arrangements in that school but it is a school with a religious character and there will be other pressures on them from the diocese which, of course, the other academies, whether they are sponsored or converted, they won't have that pressure. They will only have what their governors and school leadership actually get together and think about. They probably haven't even thought about it, probably is just one of the lines of small print that they really ignore... umm, maybe they are very unaware of the legal requirements.
CKM	If they are unaware, whose responsibility is it do you think? The HT's? The governors? Or? Because if there was any other law, for example, over racism, or something, they would make sure that they were aware...
NICOLA	It's a shared responsibility but also I think schools are very much aware of what OFSTED is looking for and because OFSTED doesn't look at it, they're not really bothered. I think there are schools that are doing some creative things as assembly but an assembly is not a legal requirement and I don't know if they are intentionally allowing opportunities for spiritual development and they are certainly not fulfilling other elements of the legal requirements, in particular the interpretation of the law and the guidance in Circular 1/94 which is still relevant for this.
CKM	You mentioned that many schools do not comply, yet SACRE offer so much support...
NICOLA	There are lots of reasons why schools do not comply. I've been talking to a governor of one of the secondary schools recently, and it is the only one which is not an academy. It's trying to be an academy but it's a PFI building and they've got issues about who owns the land and stuff. They've made a deliberate decision not to offer CW even though they know they are flaunting the law because they believe their school population is largely irreligious and certainly not Christian and not from any other religious background either. They have actually discussed in governor body meetings, which is unusual in my experience, and they believe that if they did have CW which complied with the law they would have about 60% withdrawal, parental withdrawal and then they would be in a bit of pickle about what to do at that time. Now, I think, that they haven't tested it and it is unsubstantiated but I think there is, amongst some Swindon schools, a feeling just from informal conversations with people that people are not

	interested in, as they would put it, religion and certainly not interested in in something which has the word worship in it. Whereas in primary schools, there is much more openness and I think most primary schools are going through the motions of what they believe to be CW whether or not you could identify any elements that are actually recognisable as worship in any form of the Christian tradition.
CKM	Regarding determinations, do you hold numbers of determinations applied for 2010-2013? Any of these academies?
NICOLA	No, we do not have any determinations in Swindon... which is, you haven't got evidence, but I think it is interesting as I think rather than people saying we're fine with it, it actually shows they're not taking it seriously so they're not providing CW and they're not bothered about whether they need to do something more formally or not. That's my impression.
CKM	I would like to discuss briefly the SW development plan, there seems to be a discrepancy between the draft and the actual....
NICOLA	Yes, I agree, here is one. At the time of writing the development plan, one was in the process of converting but technical reasons held it up. But I think our remit is clear. I think we're quite clear that as a majority of primary schools are still under local authority control, we have a legal responsibility to support and monitor their RE and CW and we do that through limited means, we don't have a lot of funding, we only have a very part-time advisor to support us but we do that by running cluster groups where teachers can come and share expertise and we some input into CW in those. The other thing we have done recently is the advisor has provided governor training on SMSC and CW and RE for any schools in Swindon that subscribe to the governors support service, which is most schools, including academies but we don't differentiate in our provision between LA schools and academies and we've found the academies have been just as ready to participate in the cluster groups. None of them, as far as we aware, we don't have many schools so it's easy to have some intelligence about them, have adopted a syllabus for RE other than the local agreed syllabus. So, in many ways for us, things have not changed for SACRE. I think we're quite clear, as far as funding allows, we will continue to support schools in the way we have done previously but being very alert to the needs they are expressing and the needs they are expressing are the needs to have some sort of CPD for teachers as there is quite a high number of non-specialists teachers in Swindon, as in most parts of the country, in particular in primary. I think other SACREs' have different stories as some of have no support at all.
	Recording ran out.

## Appendix 8: Transcribed guided discussion with HAZEL

Skype Guided discussion with HAZEL – Religious leader – 30 <sup>th</sup> May 2014	<b>Beginning of guided discussion confirmed that HAZEL agreed to be recorded and gave informed consent to guided discussion. Also informed HAZEL of anonymity and that a copy of guided discussion transcript would be emailed to her.</b>
<b>Basic information</b>	
CKM	I would like to begin by discussing your views on the role of SACRE in regards to Collective Worship.
HAZEL	I think... do you want a personal view or an understanding of some of the frustrations for SACREs' in the middle of all of this?
CKM	Both, which is one of the reasons I wanted to get hold of SACRE members because I want individual points of view but I also want to understand how the Academies Act has impacted on the work that you do.
HAZEL	I think the biggest impact that I am aware of with our local SACRE is that the onward march of academies, we are now at the point where all of our secondary schools are or will be academies by the end of this academic year, I think that is correct for Swindon. That means that they are not financially buying into SACRE. The local authority is funding SACRE but is funding it for the benefit of those schools that remain, which are primarily the infant to primary or key stage 1 and 2, and therefore there is a concern for the local authority about how they are going to fund this. I think the other thing is that it then takes, I haven't read the Act myself or understand the fundamentals of the funding agreements particularly, but my understanding is that then SACRE does not have a legal jurisdiction over academies for CW and RE so we move from the stick to the carrot, which is how I've described it locally. And that's really, umm, it's positive in one sense – it's good to invite schools together but I don't think the funding agreement arrangements have properly worked out. If you are going to do SACREs properly, it does cost to have an advisor who works with the council and the like, so, the Academies Act has placed SACREs in an invidious situation – for though they are seen to have a legal role, as far as academies are concerned, they actually don't. And it's one of those things where you get the feeling that this has been rushed through and has not been properly thought out in advance and policy seems to be have been made on the hoof. Umm, so that's it in terms of the local SACREs struggle. In terms of CW... what did you want to know again?
CKM	Your views on the role of SACRE in regards to Collective Worship.
HAZEL	Um, that's' where the future could be recognition that mutual

	co-operation is positive and to have a local group, such as SACRE, that seeks to reflect the religious views of the community is a positive thing. In terms of the future of CW, umm... I think, I think it's so much, it feels like, down to the individual schools to how much they actually decide to do. The thing is, under the old system, some schools would look at very legally and say, well, the phrase from the 1988 Act or is 1996?
CKM	1988.
HAZEL	'CW should be wholly or mainly broadly Christian in character' and so many schools have said that means 51% can be Christian and the rest we can do anything. And the fact is I don't know any secondary schools that have had a daily act of worship, even those schools which follow the act and have sought to give opportunity for other faiths or the Christian faith to be spoken about, they are very rarely an act of CW. I don't think the government has ever really taken on the fact that in a multicultural society you cannot actually have CW without it being some terribly <i>anaesthetised</i> general let's think about how you can do good in two minutes and quiet, which is not a bad thing by itself, it's very good to encourage reflection and to encourage children and young people to begin to explore their spirituality. I am all for that as I believe spirituality is a fundamental part of human beings and our existence, but I do wonder where CW will be in 10 years' time. Who knows? Some Secretary of State might put their foot down and say yes, we want to return to the old system and like the public schools and expecting a hymn and a prayer and a reading... but it just isn't like that on the ground at the moment and hasn't been for years. I speak because I also used to be director for Youth for Christ here in Swindon from 1980-1996 and we were strictly doing assemblies, well we call them assemblies but CW technically, and my experience then is that I would follow five minutes of haranguing from the head over the litter and then be asked to take the assembly with three minutes left before the bell went, which effectively you were seeking to enable people to allow themselves a moment for their spirituality to be reflected on, opened up and thought about. Sorry, long answer!
CKM	No, that's absolutely perfect because I wanted to get different perspectives so to have somebody, to come across somebody from a religious perspective and also from somebody who has actually experienced what schools do, because I have seen what schools do, which is one of the reasons I got into it, was because I, as a teacher, I was like where is the CW? I've been a teacher for 16 years and I don't think I have ever experienced CW... so, sometimes I think it's just me, though I have taught in five schools... so, for you to say actually it does tend to be about telling the students how to behave and how not to behave and what they should be doing, you know...
HAZEL	The nearest I ever came to what I regard as in a sense a moment

	<p>of CW was I was chaplain in the local 6<sup>th</sup> form college, tertiary education, and the principal had a heart attack and died in the college refectory. He went to the same church I did, and I knew his family very well and I was asked to take a service in the college, for the whole college, so it had to be, it had to honour his own Christian faith, so there was a hymn, there was a prayer where I said I would be praying and invited people who wished to join in they could but if they wished to use it just to reflect, they could. For me, that was probably the closest I have been to a real sense of CW with a small c and a small w. What you normally have in assemblies is nothing like that.</p>
CKM	<p>So, do you think CW would exist without legislation?</p>
HAZEL	<p>I think it actually will. I think the... what I tend to hear as I listen to various debates and things is that there is no... there isn't any move in government to change the basic understanding that CW and RE should be 'wholly or mainly broadly Christian in character' even given our sort of multi-ethnic society and in a sense a multi-faith community, I still think actually, I think that at heart, politicians still think it's a good thing and I don't think they would actually move to remove it. But there are some strong voices these days, particularly amongst the atheists as it were, especially wanting to see less of the six major faiths being represented. I am not akin to the idea to recognising that for some people their faith is simply is in human beings, full stop. And a lot of people argue that faith is simply a pawn in the whole capitalist society, which in some sense the crash of 2008 challenged. But I love, you must have come across the Bishop Graham Craze phrase, rewriting Descartes for the modern day, 'Tesco ergo sum – I shop, therefore I am'</p>
CKM	<p>I haven't but it's brilliant... it has become very commercial... I live in Luxembourg which is incredibly materialistic and I think, spiritually empty, but that's... I could write a whole thesis on Luxembourg and its lack of spirituality despite being a Catholic country... but, that's, you know...</p>
HAZEL	<p>Short answer, I don't think, at the moment, there is the political desire to rock the boat. Not until, I think, things really change, in terms of public opinion, which, of course, is the driver for change. At the moment, the majority in this country still put themselves down as Christian, albeit that they don't turn up at church so... I think it's safe for the time being...</p>
CKM	<p>Given that you have just said that you don't think there is any political desire to rock the boat, do you think the law be amended i.e. is daily worship still appropriate for the 21<sup>st</sup> century or do you think it is more realistic, that if we are going to have CW, let's have weekly, and then maybe schools/academies would comply with the law.</p>
HAZEL	<p>Like I said, I think there are far too many other issues around for politicians; I don't think they will fiddle with it for the time being. I think they will just leave it and let it run. The problem being, of course, is that now because SACRE's don't have any</p>

	legal position in relation to academies there is no-one apart from the Educational Funding Agency, which are doing any checks. I know... I don't think Ofsted don't do CW anymore do they?
CKM	They do for elements of SMSC...
HAZEL	In a sense, if the government are going to write it into a funding agreement, then in some sense, there should be some way that it is monitored and reported on... Personally, I would prefer if that monitoring and reporting was actually a local activity; I would love to see that academies were required to report to the local SACRE. I don't like Ofsted anyway... It just feels like, looking from the outside that it is, using the stick and carrot thing again, it just feels like a huge amount of stick and precious little carrot to encourage schools to want to improve. Having said that, personally I think it would be good if local SACREs were required to monitor it. I think it would be... It would make CW accountability to the local community, which are, in theory, are supposed to be helping form the local agreed syllabus.
CKM	I think I agree with you actually because that makes sense as SACRE, who are, in theory, made up from people who are from the local community... so schools are accountable to those people... that never crossed my mind before, so thanks very much for that!
HAZEL	I do think SACRE is the most unbelievably truly elite organised body that exists as you've got four core groups: Church of England, Other faiths which includes anyone not Church of England, Councillors and teaching representatives. You each have to agree in that group and each group has a single vote... you can't imagine a more complex way of doing it. We rarely come to formal votes, and when we do, we follow the system.
CKM	SACRE offers guidance etc to schools – what are your views on why schools do not comply?
HAZEL	I think it's unrealistic. Given the way schools have been designed physically in that, obviously initially when schools were running at say 500 pupils, you probably could have a hall where you could get them all in and you could do a collective activity. But, with the increase in the size of schools for financial reasons to a much bigger set-up, there is no way you can get everyone in one place at one time, plus the sheer logistics of doing it. So, in a sense, the drive in terms of size has removed the possibility and I think, also, there are such huge pressures on schools to meet all of the academic requirements placed upon them by the Secretary of State and monitored through Ofsted, that to try to organise to get everyone together for one act of worship, even if meant you had five – one for each of the years 7 to 11 – the sheer mechanics of doing that in a day, you can't do it these days and do everything the government requires you to do in terms of the whole curriculum. I think the government have not actually realised the impact of their legalisation on how schools actually run and how you make them run, so personally, I would rather much

	prefer to see it as more realistic answer that happens once a week with a cohort, whatever that cohort can be described as, which can actually meet together. I think, at the same time, to build in an understanding of reflective practice in schools, to actually enable pupils to have space to think and to reflect and be given ways to do that, I think we don't actually teach them enough of. We cram them in a didactic feed the information in so they can churn it out for exams, but actually, you know as well as I do, that people learn in different ways, and to actually to have space for people to think is really important thing.
CKM	One of the things I used to really enjoy, because I used to teach RE, was teaching the students to basically be still. And we used to have reflection time, I never used to call it meditation because there are too many connotations with 'meditation' but I used to put on some music and teach them basically how to relax, close their eyes and listen to the music, emptying their minds and to just be. I did a lesson like that for Ofsted once and I got outstanding and I was so pleased because I knew I was taking a big risk doing a stilling exercise with Ofsted there as it could go terribly wrong, they might hate it etc. but they loved it as the kids were exploring the spiritual, moral, social, cultural side of the course which Ofsted were like 'tick' but for me, it was about getting the kids to realise they didn't have to be rushing around everywhere and part of me doesn't want to see this disappear, and that is why I don't want to see CW disappear, perhaps not daily but it is a really nice, perhaps a traditional and old fashioned idea, but it should be more than just haranguing the kids.
HAZEL	Have you come across 'Prayer spaces in schools'?
CKM	No, I haven't... let me take a note...
HAZEL	I will send you a link for them... what they do is they set up, sometimes they do it for a week, where every class in the school can use their RE time to go in and there are number of different activities they can do within that prayer space. It has really caught on like crazy. Lots of schools are really keen on it because it does provide opportunities for individuals to find ways which works for them. For some it might be creating something, writing something, to sit and be still but the space is created and you are allowed to respond to it. It does tick boxes for SMSC...
	Following on from this was a conversation regarding his work at a university and my husband's work on same campus regarding the chaplaincy... and how I suggested the chaplaincy was renamed 'space to be' as this is what I thought worship should be about and this linked in nicely with the 'Prayer Spaces' above.  End of guided discussion.

## Appendix 9: Transcribed guided discussion with BORIS

Skype Guided discussion with BORIS – retired HMI Ofsted inspector – 2 <sup>nd</sup> June 2014	Beginning of guided discussion confirmed that BORIS agreed to be recorded and gave informed consent to guided discussion. Also informed BORIS of anonymity and that a copy of guided discussion transcript would be emailed to him.
Basic information	Ofsted Inspector since 1994 and HMI inspector since 2001, National Advisor for Religious Education since 2001.
CKM	NICOLA said that you did a little bit of your own research where you put in all the inspections of schools and put them into a data programme to find out how many times...
Boris	What I did... obviously you have Section 5 inspection reports and you could do a word search... every now and then, I didn't do it for everyone or every year, but every now and then I would take a term's worth, which is usually about upwards from 2-3, 000 inspection reports and I did a word-search for every single reference for RE and CW and that enabled me to get some picture of what was going on in the Section 5 reports.
CKM	Is there any possibility you could send me your research?
BORIS	Are you interested in CW or RE?
CKM	I am interested in CW
BORIS	I mean, the stuff on CW is very limited...
CKM	That is absolutely fine!
BORIS	That in itself is interesting...
CKM	I briefly described the two part of my thesis – the impact of the Academy Act 2010 on SACRE and the role of Ofsted in inspecting CW... so, basically if your research reveals that even before when Ofsted had to inspect CW there was still very little going on that's perfect, if there is, that's perfect too!
BORIS	I would say Ofsted has been significant in terms of how schools perceive CW and in a way, a little history of it... I mean when we started Ofsted back in the 1990's, we had these very big teams and we looked at everything. You would have 10-15 people in for a week, trawling over everything. And in those days, we would check quite carefully the different statutory arrangements. And what emerged was that in the majority of secondary schools, the statutory arrangements were not being met, most obviously they were not providing a daily act of CW and all sorts of reasons were given why that was the case. Right until about 2004, I guess, Ofsted tended to make some reference to this in its report, indeed, it would even make a point of improvement for schools that they should meet their statutory requirements. But this was becoming an absurdity, because for two reasons, one it was turning up in nearly every report, with nearly every school failing in this regard, but also it wasn't being addressed even though the schools were told to improve it, they didn't do it. I think it would be fair to say that though



	<p>Ofsted never said it publicly, Ofsted was aware that there was a widespread concern about the legal requirement, but in some political words it would be described as 'bad law' so therefore they chose to, as the Ofsted inspections became much more streamlined with much smaller teams and much shorter periods of time to, effectively the requirement to CW was basically ignored. So, I think, from somewhere about 2006 onwards, effectively we started to ignore the issue and the only thing we would look at would what the quality of the experience the pupils were getting in relationship to SMSC. If there were references towards CW in reports, they would always, always be positive, as it always would be a reference to CW as a reference to something, in other words, we weren't reporting on CW, or inspecting CW and making a judgement on its quality, rather if you came across something good in the school that occurred in CW or an assembly that you would refer to it in the report, so you would say something like, 'provisions for SMSC is good and this is reflected in the assemblies where a variety of faiths are valued' or something. So that was the sort of phrase that would be used. Effectively schools realised by the mid, by about mid-2005, that Ofsted really wasn't going to check this rigorously at all and so I suspect what happened is whether or not schools provided CW assemblies to a large extent depended on whether the school itself thought they were of value. Reality is, I would say, though I don't know this, we don't have actual statistics, but certainly our experience suggests that the majority of primary schools offered it as a very rich and positive part of school life and they were highly valued by pupils and teachers and are a part of the ethos of the schools. I would say, the picture in secondary schools is much, much more varied, so some schools do make a big deal of it, but a lot of secondary schools we go to, they lack lustre and lacking in any meaningful engagement by the pupils so you get much more variety in secondary schools.</p>
CKM	Have you done any research since, your word searches...
BORIS	I stopped checking references to RE and CW, which is not really part of my brief... I am basically RE and I don't perceive me as having a particular relationship to CW... I stopped checking CW references in 2010. I wouldn't call it research, I would just call it retrieval. I can certainly send every single reference in one particular term in 2010.
CKM	That would be excellent, just for me to give an example of what is going on in schools. Now, can I ask you, do you think Ofsted should inspect CW? You have given me why, you know, the history of it, but do you think they should?
BORIS	I think the difficulty is that there is a widespread view that it is an outdated law. And I think there lies our problem. I think Ofsted should certainly look at the ethos and life of the school. It should certainly look at the quality of personal development

	<p>of pupils and the academic achievements.</p> <p>And I certainly think we should be looking at issues the health and safety of children at school... all those issues we look at now. Whether we should actually inspect CW as checking its provision as a statutory requirement, I think the answer is probably no.</p>
CKM	<p>Do you think, therefore, you obviously just told me that primary schools, most primary schools do it well and most secondary schools don't do it...</p>
BORIS	<p>I would say most schools hold assemblies, usually in year groups or house groups as they can't fit the whole school together. The quality of those occasions is, I would say, very, very mixed indeed. Pupils don't like them, are not enthusiastic, they certainly won't sing, I can't think the last time I heard singing in secondary school, and they would be fairly resistant to any attempt to involve them in any type of prayer so therefore, they are not much more than an administrative or an extension to PSHE. In the better cases, there is really good planning put in to them and there is real quality, something genuine to reflect upon but as I said, the quality is very variable. Should Ofsted inspect CW? The question is how much of a school do you want Ofsted to inspect? Ofsted now has a tendency towards a focus quite specific on things which are central to the life of school, rather than try to check on every single thing...<i>(inaudible about 3-4 words on tape)</i></p> <p>I think the question is not whether should Ofsted inspect CW but should Ofsted not? There has been very little discussion inside Ofsted about this legal requirement, virtually none I would say, I can't recall...<i>(inaudible about 3-4 words on tape)</i></p> <p>I think what has happened is our attention to it has withered because it was proving practically unhelpful to inspect.</p> <p>So, the main pressure to change the law has come, I suppose, from the wider RE community, from RE bodies and associations and groups like that because our exercise is, the fact that we have a piece of legislation is out of kilter really with the times.</p> <p>In church schools or faith schools, Ofsted doesn't look at CW at all, that is the responsibility of Section 42, so in about a third of primary schools, Ofsted may well attend an assembly... Ofsted will always attend an assembly just to see what it can tell you about what it can tell you about the feel of the school, the ethos, behaviour, and how well pupils are valued those kinds of things, but what they would never do in a faith school, they would never inspect the quality of the worship as that would be the responsibility of the faith inspection. They may have, the faith providers, may have much more information about quality and issues around CW than Ofsted would.</p>
CKM	<p>That's a very good point, so thank you for that. So, what are your views on CW, do you think it is still appropriate?</p>
BORIS	<p>This is me now talking not as an Ofsted inspector, but as me. But from an Ofsted perspective, in most secondary schools, it is</p>

	extremely impractical, the daily bit, the practicality of daily is a non-starter in secondary. It is possible in primary, lots of primaries do it, but an impossibility in secondary. If you really want to press the button and ask what do you mean by worship, that becomes the real critical issue. What do you mean by worship? There have been all sorts of attempts have made to define it but we are still saddled with Circular 1/94 which is the only... of course, the department refused to revise that. They revised all the sections relating to RE and produced the RE guidance in 2010 which replaces all of 1/94 in relation to RE, but leaves 1/94 in relation to CW there cause no-one to touch it.
CKM	Why do you think no one will touch it?
BORIS	Because there is not a consensus around this. If there were one area where the Church of England really sticks its heels in the ground and says it does not want this, it's really a benchmark of their position in education, they won't accept the change in the legislation. I think if they were to... it is interesting to why we need the guidance as there is a difference between the Bill of Education and the legalities, Circular 1/94 could be changed without a necessity to change in the law... but the moment they try to unpick the guidance, they say very quickly the direction of the law should not change. And every government for 70 or however many years it is, have refused, of course, to change the law.
CKM	I have been told that a lot of governments won't touch it, it's too, in one way, too political and in another way, it's not their priority. Why do you think?
BORIS	I think it's those two.
CKM	You think it's both?
BORIS	Certainly, the problem is it is variety of issues, in a sense it is not a core issue for them but it would generate a huge amount of heat in an area which, as far as they are concerned, does not matter. They are perfectly happy for the law to be basically ignored, they are happy that the law is being ignored, they are not worried about it, they don't come to us saying they are really worried that schools are not fulfilling requirements. They don't care about the fact the law is being ignored, so therefore, we can ignore it and don't have to do have anything about the law. It is interesting as we are inching towards statutory... we can avoid having to change the law by simply allowing it to default.
CKM	And yet, on one hand it still exists, doesn't it?
BORIS	Yes, it does still exist.
CKM	It's a very strange one...
BORIS	Yes it is...
CKM	Because, sometimes I think if it was any other law for schools, schools would have to, they would obliged to follow it...
BORIS	That is probably true, but there are other areas where we turn a blind eye for example we are also beginning to turn a blind eye to statutory RE itself so, though this is not really your brief, I

	have just done a retrieval on all of last year's terms references to RE and found 108 references to RE in 1600 reports. Of those 108 references to RE, all but one are positive as again it is RE being chosen to exemplify something else, it is not reporting on RE, it is the reporting of RE being an example of something, good SMSC, good literacy and there are very, very few negative references to RE, even though we know that actually many schools do not fulfil their statutory requirements for RE but Ofsted ignore it.
CKM	So, who do you think is, and I don't want to use the word 'blame' but I think I have been teaching too long today and so can't think of another word, but who do you think is to actually to blame for Ofsted ignoring CW? Is it the government?
BORIS	Blame?
CKM	In the fact that...
BORIS	What explains it, do you mean?
CKM	Yes, because you have said... is it the government for not enforcing it or is just that Ofsted have basically...
BORIS	The government has not pressed any button to suggest they support it. I think it is pretty clear, that the reality on the ground is, that it is simply a bad law. The idea of asking pupils to worship where for the vast majority of pupils in many schools the concept of worship is alien to them and the idea of CW, rather than corporate worship, what does on earth does CW mean? It is mundane to say what it is about as any policy provided by a school, to celebrate something which is of worth, and some groups try to get around it by saying it's about some notion of 'worthship' so it is a time when the school can come together and celebrate the things that the school feels are of worth. It is unlikely, in most cases, to include anything particular related to religion. But this does not follow the guidance of 1/94 which says it should be about the origins of God and it should mainly be holy ideas which is, as the phrase goes, 'of wholly and mainly Christian in character' but this is very uncomfortable for many, many schools. I genuinely do think it is a bad legislation when you have something is being ignored so consistently, especially in secondary schools. It is almost meaningless to start reporting on it as the actual inspection becomes meaningless as school after school would be asked for improvement in CW and you would go back three years later and every single school has ignored it. Ofsted's own inspection process is drawn into disrepute.
CKM	That is a very interesting point.
BORIS	You see what happens, it just become a joke. The more we ignore it... we want them to take points of improvement seriously. One of the evidence to show it is bad law is Ofsted's own behaviour, I think. Ofsted knows it can't, it would be foolish to try persistently report on every school which is breaching the statutory requirements.
CKM	That is perfect for what I want as a lot of people have said, yes,

	of course Ofsted should inspect CW and some people have said no, they shouldn't, so to actually receive Ofsted's point of view, that actually...
BORIS	The question is, why don't they? That is the associated question and they don't do it, not because we are careless but we don't do it because it is just bad law.
CKM	I get the impression from what I have done so far the law is just really not relevant, it is not appropriate for the 21 <sup>st</sup> century...
BORIS	It raises an interesting question, what would happen if the law was ignored completely? How many schools would continue to have some sort of gathering that might include song, and some sort of meaningful, provocative input in terms of a story or something which would include an opportunity for reflection? I think some schools would continue to do it, but I think it would quite quickly become quite secularised.
CKM	Which it is anyway in schools which aren't faith in character, in most schools which are not faith in schools.
BORIS	Ah right, it could be that at the end of day it could become a real demarcation line between faith and non-faith schools. In the whole time I am saying this, there is a whole raft of schools where we don't inspect it, it's not part of our remit but it would be taken much, much more seriously by the inspection team, the section 48 team. Have you got hold of the requirements for judging church schools?
CKM	Yes.
BORIS	They make very alternative reading to Ofsted reports...
CKM	Indeed...
BORIS	The comparison to the two types of schools is very interesting for me personally. Then there is the other extreme... I advise you to read the report to the Trojan Horse allegations, you know, the schools in Birmingham. I can't say too much but the report is due out in the next week or so. Look out for it.
	In line with confidentiality, the rest of the guided discussion was not transcribed as BORIS gave me some information about what was in the not yet published report.
	End of guided discussion.

## Appendix 10 - Draft [REDACTED] SACRE Development Plan 2012 – 14

### Context

This plan reflects the current context that [REDACTED] SACRE finds itself in: –

- a) affected by national education curriculum decisions (EBACC and 2015 plans for major public examination changes at KS4)
- b) local responses to the Academies Act 2010 which has meant that the majority of Secondary Schools are no longer under [REDACTED] local authority control, some primary schools have become Academies too and therefore SACRE's remit as funded by [REDACTED] LA towards them is unclear
- c) SACRE's role in challenging [REDACTED] LA about RE is reduced and the powers SACRE has in ensuring standards and entitlement in RE and Collective Worship in Academies are uncertain.
- d) this development plan has been written in the light of [REDACTED] SACRE having undertaken a self-evaluation of its current effectiveness.

### Key Priorities

1. To raise the standards and quality of the teaching and learning in Religious Education within Swindon
2. To ensure that Swindon SACRE is effectively managed and has good partnerships with the LA and other key stakeholders
3. To ensure the effectiveness of the locally agreed syllabus
4. To effectively fulfil SACRE's responsibility for the provision and practice of Collective worship.
5. To ensure that SACRE seeks to contribute to the wider social and community cohesion agenda.

### Key Priorities

1. To raise the standards and quality of the teaching and learning in Religious Education within [REDACTED]
2. To ensure that [REDACTED] SACRE is effectively managed and has good partnerships with the LA and other key stakeholders
3. To ensure the effectiveness of the locally agreed syllabus
4. To effectively fulfil SACRE's responsibility for the provision and practice of Collective worship.
5. To ensure that SACRE seeks to contribute to the wider social and community cohesion agenda.

Priority	Action	Person(s) responsible	Review date	Cost
1a) Raising the standards of Teaching and Learning in RE Survey schools to identify needs and compliance	Survey schools to identify needs and compliance	SACRE Adviser	January 2013	£200
1b) Raising the standards of Teaching and Learning in RE	Analyse [REDACTED] public examination results in RE to identify trends and training needs	[REDACTED]	Spring 2013	
1c) Offer CPD to RE teachers to encourage raised standards of teaching and learning in RE	SACRE Adviser to lead 3 Primary Cluster meetings and attend 2 Secondary Academy RE Teaching and Learning Hubs to offer best practice in RE. Signpost other good CPD in the region	SACRE Adviser	June 2013	£1,250
2a) To ensure effectiveness of the management of SACRE and its relationship with [REDACTED] LA	Bi-annual meetings with the [REDACTED] link officer to evaluate effectiveness	Chair, Vice-Chair, SACRE Adviser	2 meetings	£250

2b) To establish relationships with Academy providers within the [REDACTED] area.	Write to seek a commitment to local RE from local Academy providers and support and guidance from SACRE.	Chair, Vice-Chair, SACRE Adviser	April 2013	£500
3a) To continue to ensure the effectiveness of the locally agreed syllabus	To ensure that teachers understand and can access and share good practice for the locally agreed syllabus – through cluster/ network meetings	SACRE Adviser	June 2012	
3b) To develop and strengthen the local element of the locally agreed syllabus	i) To compile an effective directory of local people and places of faith useful to support RE in schools ii) To write local materials about [REDACTED] specific issues / examples of faith	Volunteers from SACRE, Local teachers, SACRE Adviser	January 2014	£ 1,000
4a) Provide guidance for and encourage schools to raise the quality of Collective Worship to enhance pupil's spiritual, moral,	Promote the recently written guidance on Collective worship - signpost good training to enhance the quality of Collective Worship in [REDACTED] Schools	SACRE ADVISER All members of SACRE	September 2013	



social and cultural development				
4b) To ensure local people of faith can play a part in leading and encouraging good collective worship within their local communities	Provide training for SACRE members and local people of faith to be able to lead/visit and observe collective worship in schools	██████████ ██████████ ██████████ ██████████ ██████████	January 2014	£200
5) To ensure the contribution of SACRE to the social and community cohesion agenda	Make sure that all voices of SACRE members have an opportunity to be heard – by the style of debate and the tone of encouragement	Chair, Vice-Chair, All Members	On going (January 2014)	