"It's all about making choices": Paradigms of moral practice in a Catholic Primary School

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Karol Franciszek-Maria Grabowski,
BSc, MSc, MEd, C.Chem., MRSC

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University of Nottingham School of Education

Abstract

The research undertaken for this investigation took place at a time when social media gave greater exposure to morally questionable actions by prominent politicians and celebrities. At the same time, faith schools underwent a major change in their structure as Multi-Academy Trusts were set up across diocesan regions. The social milieu that existed leads to serious concerns about the moral atmosphere that exists in the so-called "meta-verse" and its impact on both the well-being of children and their moral development.

This research was an ethnographic study of a single Roman Catholic primary school and explored the perceptions of various actors, consisting of children and adults, and their interactions as a community of faith that strives to negotiate this moral maze in a period of societal and educational upheaval.

The study works at an interface between a range of psychological theories, the moral doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, and the Ecological Theory of Bronfenbrenner which posits the interaction of multiple factors that influence the final outcomes in the moral development of the children concerned. The findings from observations, field notes, and a series of interviews with teachers and pupils at the school are explored through these three lenses.

Findings suggest that the school is in a strong position to resist the onslaught of secularisation and academisation. Children are offered a range of experiences which enable moral growth to take place in a supportive environment which interprets the teachings of the Catholic Church in terms of the many ecologies which the children inhabit.

Implications suggest an ongoing need for adult formation, both in parishes and in the teaching profession, if a truly Catholic moral environment is to be sustained in homes and schools.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

The journey that this thesis represents is the culmination of the life's work which I have undertaken as a student, a teacher, a parent and now a researcher. For me, it began when I was a child and struggled with learning the rules and behaviours which were expected in a strict, religiously-observant Catholic immigrant family; what comes out of that period is reflected in one of the questions underpinning this current work – what is it like to be a child who is trying to navigate a moral maze in a world that is changing rapidly? The world that children face today includes much that I did not have to face as a child in the late 1950's and early 60's: a pervasive atmosphere of cyberbullying, the early raising of sexual issues (such as the sharing of intimate pictures on phones and computers) and so-called 'fake news', where truth is at risk of being permanently undermined, all contribute to a world of questionable morality. How is the idea of morality interpreted by the young people that experience it in these ways on a daily basis? To my mind this is a good starting point for a study of moral development in children of the 21st century, and a consideration of the school environment in which they partially develop their sense of right and wrong.

My background and positionality

My professional life was as a teacher of Science, having studied Chemistry and then chosen Biology as a second subject when I moved on for my Post-Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE). After a few years of teaching, my credentials as a scientist were further confirmed when I took a Master's degree in Applied Physics, focussing on Radiation Science. However, the remainder of my career has been varied and I have experience of teaching Religious Education in the Catholic schools that employed me, since I had also taken a parallel course for the Catholic Teachers' Certificate while at teacher-training college, in addition to acting as a

Parish Catechist for nearly 15 years, a role which involved teaching groups of young people after school hours for Sacramental preparation and running discussions. When I moved on to the role of a senior leader, and latterly as a university teacher education tutor, I had the chance to stand back and think about some of the wider impacts that education in the state and the Catholic sectors had on the way that children were socialised and developed on their moral journeys. In many ways my beliefs about these matters were shaped by my involvement in bringing up my own three children and finding ways to normalise their behaviours without recourse to serious disputes when we disagreed about matters of moral significance. For me as a professional teacher, headteacher and parish catechist, the journey is reflected in the second aspect of the research questions. I have seen teenagers take a stand on issues where I have held a polar perspective, believing that the decisions they were making would inevitably lead to tragic consequences, yet at the same time I also believed that it was correct for them to learn from their own mistakes by experiencing their own path in life and giving them the latitude in the same way that, as a parent, I would give to my own children if they had to face the same issue. The dichotomy was that institutional conditioning, both in schools and in my parish, meant I had often to uphold rules which reflected the cultural and religious mores of a bygone era, and which did not allow the same latitude that I could operate as a parent. The second part of my research is therefore about the general influences - cultural, religious, and educational – which affect the lives and decision-making of young people in a world that is not of their making.

As I mentioned above, I was baptised and brought up as a "cradle Catholic" with both my parents coming from countries where Catholicism was the national religion. I did all the usual things that such a child would do. I went to a Catholic primary school, received the three sacraments of initiation for that age – confession, now called Reconciliation, Holy Communion and Confirmation – by the

time I was in the top junior class, and assisted on the altar at my local church. While at a Catholic grammar school, I continued my involvement in altar serving and other parish affairs and began my lifelong (secondary) career as a church music minister in my late teens. Being a Catholic was a way of life and felt like an extension to my natural family, because everything I did was somehow linked to church – friends, my social life - so when I left home for university, the security that had surrounded me at home was more tenuous and I drifted away from practising my faith during that time. It was only when a period of severe sickness gave me time for deeper reflection, that I realised that my involvement as a liturgical musician gave solace and a deeper meaning to my life, brought through the scriptural references in the hymns and songs. I determined, after that period of reflection and discernment, that I would go to a Catholic college to train for my profession and, when the chance came, chose to learn more about the nature of my beliefs and faith by undertaking the Catholic Teachers' course. The influences of the student body and the lecturers I encountered at college have lasted throughout my career and have shaped my view of how the practice of my Catholic faith makes a difference to my moral outlook. In the famous words of St Paul, "When I was a child, I used to … think like a child, … but now I am a man, all childish ways are put behind me" (1 Cor. 13:11) and particularly when I reflect on what rules apply in my life, I have moved away from the punishments emphasised in confessions of my childhood towards a view of being in harmony with others around me and understanding that "Christian living is inescapably moral … [so] we are to love as God loved us in Christ" (MacNamara, 2010, p. 86).

The Catholic Church, education and some challenges

The Catholic Church has always had much to say about education, particularly how, in the light of faith, the practice of education should be seen to contribute to the way that the human race lives out its calling to a good life and happiness. It

contends that Catholicism is both a *teaching* about the world and human beings, and their relationship to God, and also a "*way-of-life*" (Tresmontant, 1965, p. 386) flowing from, informed by and according with this teaching. The Church lets each school draw its modus operandi from the local, secular, institutions which govern education. However, it does have a strong set of principles, aims and values for education, which are stated in papal documents from across the early twentieth century and in statements which arose from Vatican II and subsequent post-conciliar documents, that drive and define a distinctively Catholic school. Catholic education is based on a set of theological, anthropological and pedagogical foundations which underline the rules of *natural law* through which "it is possible to construct a platform of shared values around which can be developed a constructive dialogue with all people of good will and, more generally, with secular society" (John Paul II, 2004, para. 5). Fundamentally, the Catholic Church believes that each person has a natural inclination to the truth and the good, which assists in the development of personal, moral and social development through encompassing both the affective and emotional domains and contributing an ethical dimension by "knowing how to do things and what we want to do, daring to change in society and the world, and serving the community" (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 2014, sec. III). To achieve this, the Church has two broad goals which are promoted through the family, through preaching the Word and through both the formal and informal education which happens in schools, essentially focussing on the value of human work in supporting the development of our civilisation, and the role of every individual in promoting a "humane, just social environment" (Donohue, 1973, p. 116). Thus, the Catholic Church sees schools as places where young "people learn how to live out their lives, achieve cultural growth, receive vocational training for their future life, and engage in pursuing the common good" (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 2014, sec. II); in doing this, schools afford the opportunity for young people to understand the present and to imagine the future because "youth

… are the hope of the Church" (Second Vatican Council, 1965d, sec. 2). Central to every Catholic school lie the values lived out through three key propositions: the interpersonal interactions between teachers and students, and between students themselves; through care for the needs of their local community, demonstrated by teachers and students; and through the living testimonies of all members of that school community.

The history of Catholic education in England and Wales is fraught with issues and, as a religious minority, the Catholic community has jealously guarded its right to create a distinctive character in its schools, despite the heavy financial burden incurred in paying for them. Successive generations have placed schools in areas of economic challenge with much of the financial burden met by local parishes, but an atmosphere of pragmatism has been adopted in recent years when other demands arose. The landscape has been affected by policy changes, from Grant Maintained status to the current debate over academisation, and Catholic schools have responded to these challenges in different ways though there are fears that some of these changes have led schools to become "practically indistinguishable from those under LEA control" (Arthur, 1995, p. 253). All schools within the local diocese have now been constituted into four Catholic Multi-Academy Trusts (CMATs) which, it is hoped, will bring some stability and economies of scale. As we reflect on recent changes, it is worrying that Arthur's concerns of a "dominant external schooling culture" (Grace, 2002, p. 101) are coming to reality, through the trend of academisation which has been driving a sense of "pluralism and utilitarianism" (ibid, p. 101). The challenge for a 21st century Catholic primary school, such as the research site for this study, is to retain its Catholic distinctiveness and still enable children to develop morally in the way that our forebears envisaged.

Approach to this study

This project has taken an ethnographic approach to the exploration of moral development in St Boniface primary school (a pseudonym for the purpose of this study) which is geographically located in Central England and was chosen because I have a long-standing relationship with it. It is the "parish school" where my youngest child attended school and, in the past, I have served as a Foundation Governor representing the interests of the parish and diocese; over the last ten years, I have also been attending "Time Out To Worship" (TOTW) as part of my parish Music Ministry outreach. My familiarity with the school gives me a unique perspective but, with care, I anticipate that I can still marshal the "authority to report on it truthfully" (Seale, 1999, p. 146). By the very nature of being a small project, this investigation is a snapshot of how the school's community operates where I have only managed to "tangle with the facts" (Arbus, 2005) through my observations and interactions at the school, hopefully taking note of the everyday and mundane by focussing my researcher lens on what appears to be routine so that what is observed is seen afresh, "building a credible argument that what one learned should be believed by others who were not present" (Agar, 1996, p. 1). This kind of approach is uncommon practice for me because of my scientific background. The methodology and epistemology of science is very different from that of ethnography or social science since science takes a positivist view and rationalises the world through empirical observation, measurement, and deduction which follow the scientific method, seeking validity in largely quantitative methods and repeatability, whereas ethnography takes a more interpretivist view that sees the complexities of the various agents being investigated and seeks to gain an empathetic understanding of their actions, sacrificing absolute reliability and repeatability for greater interaction with these agents. I revisit ideas about the nature of the school, my relationship with it and how this role impacts on issues of

reflexivity, and aspects of epistemology in greater depth as part of the Methodology Chapter.

Research Questions

This research aims to further an understanding of how pupils in a Catholic primary school are assisted and supported to develop the skill of moral reasoning and especially how moral development is supported by the community within that school. I looked at a typical Catholic primary school, located in Central England, to explore how moral development is supported by the daily life of the school, through its significant celebrations and events, together with the school policies and Religious Education programme. The research questions relate to these broad aims in the following interlinked ways:

1. Although there has been much written about the ways in which adults and children develop moral reasoning, I would like to revisit this in terms of the kind of reasoning being used in this specific school, particularly when the children are faced with moral problems in their own experiences or as contributors to a discussion. The first research question therefore asks, "**What kind of reasoning do children use when faced with moral problems?**". Within this question are two key sub-questions which are "How do children think they learn about moral reasoning?" and "How do teachers teach moral reasoning?".

2. In order to gain insights into the thinking that children use, I also want to know more about the attitudes that children adopt, in particular whether they develop traits such as empathy which may contribute to their moral position. The second research question is therefore "**How do children look at moral problems from other people's viewpoints?**". Bearing in mind that these children invariably

come from a wide variety of economic and social backgrounds, as a secondary aspect to this question, I would like to focus on "How does the school environment affect the moral education of primary school children?". This research question links into the research on prosocial behaviours that has been described briefly in the literature review chapter through exploring "How do children help each other and what motives lie behind this?".

3. Thirdly, since this research is set in the much wider context of the 2016 White Paper on wellness, mindfulness and positive education (Department for Education [DfE], 2016) I would like to examine the contribution of the school curriculum to their on-going moral development. The third research question is therefore "**How is the development of children's personal and inter-personal skills related to their moral development?**" and following on from this is a further sub-question, "How does the curriculum contribute to children's moral development?".

4. Finally, in carrying out these inquiries, some other general areas also need to be considered. Primarily these are about the Catholic nature of the school and its impact. The fourth research question is therefore "**How does the Catholic nature of this school impact on the moral development of the children?**" and following on from this are a further three sub-questions, "How is the nature of the school promoted and supported?", "How is a moral perspective brought into different aspects of the education experience across the school?" and "How is this school a distinctively Catholic Christian institution that is rooted in the moral teachings of the Catholic Church?"

The study is of importance because we are living in times where society's understanding of what it means to be a moral and upright person is being challenged and, in many instances, the recent news has carried examples of immoral or questionable behaviour by leading politicians and people in the public

eye as well as individuals whose attitudes to social media suggest an "anything goes" attitude to life. These leave us with a debate on how children are affected by what they see and hear around them and whose influence carries most impact on their lives. Few studies have considered primary schools since most psychological theory studies deal with older participants, and studies on Catholic schools have largely focussed on the secondary sector (for example, Gleeson and O'Flaherty, 2016; O'Flaherty, Liddy and McCormack, 2018) or the distinctive nature of Catholic schools (Sullivan, 2001; Sullivan and McKinney, 2013); this investigation therefore occupies a niche that is under-represented in the literature.

Organising the research data

The book, "The Moral Life of Schools" (Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen, 1998), has been a very handy *vade mecum* as I undertook my study, and it has subsequently given much food for thought in terms of the overall structure and organisation that could be applied to my research and the evidence I have collected. In their studies of American schools of the mid-1990's, Jackson, Boostrom, and Hansen recognised that there needed to be a structure for gathering their data and they have listed eight categories for observation:

1. Moral instruction as a formal part of the curriculum

2. Moral instruction within the regular curriculum

3. Rituals and ceremonies

4. Visual displays with a moral content

5. Spontaneous moral commentary in ongoing activity

6. Classroom rules and regulations

7. The morality of curricular substructure

8. Expressive morality within the classroom

(ibid., p. 42)

Whilst these categories are a good starting point, the American study did not involve some of the documentation that was available to me and, on coding the interview transcripts, I found that some elements of the conversations I had with both the children and the adults led me to think about the impact that the teaching of moral development had on these participants. Likewise, when referring to the research questions set out above, there are some aspects which are not explicitly covered by the categories, and I have therefore had to extend the model to accommodate these aspects to draw meaningful conclusions about the relevance of those data.

Structure of the thesis

In this chapter, I have addressed the background reasons for undertaking the study and have set out my credentials for investigating this topic, considering positionality issues carefully since so many of my experiences and beliefs impinge directly on my ability to carry out this work as a novice qualitative researcher (Bourke, 2014; Holmes, 2020). Chapter Two will consider the literature from a range of research that impacts on this study. I will consider psychological theories about the development of morality and explore the understandings of the Catholic Church regarding morality. The chapter will close with a discussion about the relevance of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory which I intend to use as a lens through which to investigate the connectedness of both the formal psychological theories and the views of the Catholic Church, giving due consideration to the many aspects of both which may impact on the moral development of the children in the school chosen for this study. Chapter Three will present the methodology used for the investigation, exploring aspects of ethnographic methodology and considering the ethical implications of working with children of primary school age. Chapter Four then draws together the range of observations made in the school

and refers to the interviews which were carried out, using the framework from Jackson, Boostrom, and Hansen (op. cit.) as a starting point. Chapter Five further explores the links between theory and the findings from chapter Four, in the light of the research questions, and using the three main areas covered in the literature review as lenses for analysis. Finally, Chapter Six will consider some implications of these findings, for the school where the study was undertaken, and for the Catholic education sector in general, in addition to some wider issues related to formation in parishes.

Chapter 2 – Literature review

Theories of Moral Development

"Morality is essential for societal functioning and central to human flourishing" (Smetana, 2018, p. 209) but definitions of morality are often disputed and presented from different perspectives although, at the core, most researchers take the view that it covers issues such as "harm, welfare, fairness, and equitable distribution" (Turiel, 2018, p. 298) with some making connections to cooperation, respect and obligation (e.g., Hamlin and Wynn, 2011; Tomasello, 2018; van de Vondervoort *et al.*, 2018). Moral principles are generally based on the widespread notion, as summarised in the so-called *Golden Rule*, that one should always "treat others as you want others to treat you" (DeVries and Zan, 1994, p. 27). With such a wide scope of definitions to consider, it is unsurprising that the field of moral development research ranges across a number of paradigms and traditions. A variety of substantive theories about moral development have relevance to this study. I do not intend to give a full account of each one, but to focus mainly on those areas which pertain to the development of children in the Primary phase of schooling (5-11 years of age). I will present the selected theoretical frameworks in a broadly historical sequence to demonstrate how they have themselves developed over time. This chapter will consider a selection of theories to present a basis for analysis of the responses from the interviewees and the other data gathered during my time at the research site. Additionally, some consideration must be given to the moral perspective of the Roman Catholic Church, which has developed a specific model of morality based on its core teachings, since one of the research questions considers their potential role in, and impact on, the outcomes of moral development for the school being researched. Finally, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory is considered as an analytical lens

through which the social interactions which may support moral development can be examined.

Psychoanalytical approaches

Freud and Enlightened Self-interest

Although Freud is not the obvious place to begin to review moral development theory, since his work on a theory of morality is often more submerged than his other work, much of it, at least in the early parts of the 20th century, was very influential on later developments and theories. Freud contends that his contributions on psychoanalysis are most appropriate when considering the developmental stages of early childhood. According to Freud, at birth every child is amoral (Freud, 1961a, 1961b, 1961c) but develops towards adult morality through two qualitatively different moral stages, under the influence of its environment and the consequences of heredity (Freud, 1961a). At the earliest point in a child's life the "Id", those animal and instinctive impulses of humanity, predominates and in essence it represents all that we might do if there were no constraints to our behaviour. As the child develops, its "Ego", the rational and conscious elements of our nature, begins to take hold but it is largely refined at a slow pace; its role in moral development is to reconcile the instincts and the restrictions of an external reality. In Freud's theory, the child has achieved the first stage of moral development when the Ego begins to recognise these conditions. Eventually, the "Superego" presides in the psyche and its inhibiting, restraining actions, which Freud maintained are learned from parents, teachers, and authority figures, guide the burgeoning conscience of the child. Freud saw the conscience as a type of "social glue" which prevented social chaos, but which riddled the child with conflict as moral behaviours became more developed. At this point the child has resolved its Oedipus complex issues, has developed an internal

authority, and thus has achieved the second stage of moral development. In summary, Freud maintained that the development of morality is a progressive sublimation of the erotic and instinctual motives which lie at the heart of all human thought and values. It is this suppression or repression of the desires of the Id which maintain the sense of social cohesion and thus, if a child is to fit into social norms, it must develop a sense of "enlightened self-interest" to achieve this. Feminists, as we will discuss later, took issue with some of Freud's ideas, to a certain extent because they felt that his ideas were largely male-oriented but mainly because of his assertions that girls would find it difficult to develop a strong sense of morality due to their perceived (by him) weaker development of the Superego and their unconscious incorporation of their mothers' value systems (Nye, 1981).

Jung – Fantasy and Reality

Jung's views on moral growth and development suggest that he saw this as a life-long process which will ultimately result in "self-actualisation" for a small number of individuals by the time that they reach their middle age and beyond. In terms of how children's moral development is viewed, his writings reflect the inner struggle that children undergo in attempting to resolve the ideas of collectivity and individuality. Since Jung concluded that all human forces are derived from a collective base and that all humans share certain components of that condition, he viewed the task of moral development as a means of differentiating the unconscious components which will yield a balanced psychic life and which will, in turn, enable the personality to become self-regulating and unified. In his scheme for moral development, children will move from fantasy (for him, the inner psyche) to reality (the outer world), by separating themselves from the land of childhood (i.e., fantasy) through the application of reason. Jung's vision of a slowly unfolding personality lets us see the way in which divergent types of

thinking, which may be crucial to moral development, can mature. This would allow the child to see how people have lived and acted in the past and thus learn to discern similarities and differences in humanity. These should lead to an integrated view of how social life can be beneficial.

Jung saw schools as places which refined and tamed childhood instincts to make children more compatible with civilised existence. Thus, he recommends education by example, collective education, and individualised education, but his core idea of "contagion" (Jung, 1928, p. 384) through experience was primal. Jung also supported a child-rearing regime that would expose the child to both life's good side and its evils, doing so gradually and carefully to avoid precipitate over-exposure.

Behaviourist approaches

Skinner

Behaviourist theories usually perceive learning as the acquisition of content and/or procedures which result from environmental consequences that are experienced as reinforcement or punishment (Skinner, 1971; Nucci, 2001). In this sense, morality was seen by Skinner as no different from other subjects that would be learned at school, such as writing or arithmetic, so moral education was viewed simply as learning sets of socially characterised and preferred behaviours. Skinner was an avowed humanist (Bufford, 1999) whose ideas about morality were antithetical to those of Christianity, claiming that humans do not have a special moral sense – for him it was solely the environment that affects the way that a person behaves. Skinner's outlook was at odds with Christian beliefs because he excluded the possibility of a 'moral good', arguing that ethical dilemmas of the sort that Kohlberg and others used to develop their theories were simply cultural

constructs that reflected competition between different reinforcers; thus, for him, "morality is cultural conditioning" (Llewellyn, 1973, p. 3) and constitutes a reflection of the child's past conditioning. Skinner viewed 'good' as things that are either aesthetically pleasing or intrinsically good, things that act as reinforcers of behaviour, where "*good* is personally reinforcing and *right* is socially reinforced" (Hocutt, 2013, p. 241); examples of this might be "pleasant-tasting food, an attractive sexual partner, power, or money" (Hocutt, 1977, p. 321) because humans are likely to repeat the actions that help us to gain these things. Similarly, he thought that ethics was a branch of behavioural science and argued that scientific method could enable us to resolve moral problems – "instead of going to the priests to find out what we ought to do, we can go to the experts in human behaviour" as Hocutt (ibid, p. 321) puts it. Skinner also had a particular leaning towards an evolutionary explanation for these behaviours and adopted sociobiology's theory (Wilson, 1978, 1980) that "we value the things we do because evolution by natural selection has predisposed us to value them" (Hocutt, 2009, p. 173). When it comes to rules and how we learn them, Peters (1978) suggested that Skinner's interpretation only considered the ways in which the environment could be controlled or where socially acceptable and useful forms of behaviour would be engendered and that humans learn the rules by noticing what is rewarded or what is punished, thus selecting only those practices which are designed for social survival. It is these practices which Skinner wanted to be instilled in young people as part of his moral education programme. Turiel puts this another way: morality is reflected in the reinforced behaviours based on value judgements associated with cultural norms, and certain contingencies pertaining to relationships with others are governed by verbal reinforcers such as 'good', 'bad', 'right' and 'wrong' (Turiel, 2008b). As children internalise these standards and values of society, they achieve a state where these norms are maintained without a need for external guidance or surveillance (Aronfreed, 1964, 1968; Helwig and Turiel, 2002). Approval and disparagement are first experienced by a

child through the way it sees its parents' actions and later it sees them reflected in the major social institutions such as school, religion and legal bodies.

Bandura

From a different perspective, Bandura's work on social learning (e.g., Bandura and McDonald, 1963) suggests that children's moral judgements can be influenced by adults who gave responses that were counter to a child's predominant moral orientation; children whose judgments were made on the basis of objective consequences were exposed to adults who gave their judgements based on subjective intentions and motives, and vice versa. Bandura's research suggested that the children changed their responses to match what the adults had just modelled and through the application of a social learning critique to Piaget's work one would be led to the conclusion that moral judgements are learned in the same way that many other behaviours are learned. Unlike the "pure" behaviourists, Bandura proposes that environmental influences are not the only factors affecting or influencing learning. To him, the internal state of mind and one's motivation to learn were equally important. His Social Learning Theory, also referred to as Social Cognitive Theory, had three main strands:

> a) *Observational Learning*, where the child notices what is happening and learns from it, though this learning may not be reflected in new forms of behaviour; in his theory of observational learning, Bandura mentions several motives, among which is *vicarious reinforcement* where one sees and recalls the model being reinforced, thus learning from other people's behaviours, and the more commonalities and attachments there are with the modeller, the more chance there is of the child learning the behaviour.
>
> b) *Intrinsic Reinforcement*, which is an internal reward system from which the individual derives internal satisfaction – one feels happy with

the achievement, and this reinforces the behaviour, so the behaviour becomes a habit in time; this creates a link between cognitive and behavioural processes which was one of the unique features of Bandura's approach; thus, internal psychology is an important factor in gaining a sense of achievement, success, and pride.

c) *Learning is independent of behavioural change*; Bandura was clear that learning a behaviour does not automatically mean that the behaviour will be implemented, and his focus was on how valuable such a behaviour was to the person.

Although this summary appears to replicate some of the stage theories that others have proposed, Bandura was not suggesting formal stages (Bandura, 1991) because he felt that stage theories generally presented discontinuations and that people "hardly ever fit them" (p. 51) as a result of the large variations of circumstances behind the process of making a moral judgement. Rather, he saw his theory as proposing a series of steps towards achieving new behaviour, summarised as *attention*, where the model's behaviour will attract the learner, *retention*, which reflects the capacity of the learner to remember the behaviour, *reproduction*, which reflects the learner's ability to achieve the behaviour, and *motivation*, which reflects the learner's deep desire to reproduce the behaviour.

When applied to moral issues, Social Learning Theory takes a different perspective from the more traditional cognitive-developmental and psychoanalytical approaches. It is far more concerned with the motivational elements, in particular a moral agent's motivation for acting in a particular fashion to achieve social approval (Bandura, 1989, 1999, 2001, 2004). It draws on aspects of psychoanalytical theory because it considers the acquisition of other people's norms, and moral development is seen as a smooth "transition in the person's feelings, affects and behaviours" (Wren, 1982, p. 411). Bandura argues that

moral thinking requires a multidimensional approach, which will involve carefully sifting the information about an issue, and he recognised that this required some skill in uncovering the key elements before making a decision since "when faced with complexities most people probably fall back on judgemental heuristics that give too much weight to a few moral factors while ignoring other relevant ones" (Bandura, 1991, p. 66). Developed over many iterations (Bandura, 1989, 1999, 2001, 2004), Bandura's views on moral agency, on moral acts carried out intentionally, boil down to two main aspects: those which inhibit an action and those which are proactive. The inhibitive form prevents a person from behaving callously and the proactive form enables compassionate behaviour. Driven by reflection and self-monitoring, these two allow for the continuous development of moral perspectives throughout a person's life and enable the agent to optimise their impact on society for the benefit of all.

Cognitive and socio-cognitive approaches

Piaget

Since the publication of Piaget's ground-breaking work in his book "The Moral Judgement of the Child" (Piaget, 1932), the study of moral psychology has been at the heart of much subsequent research. In this work, which presents a very thoroughly researched model, Piaget's stage theory makes clear that cognitive development and moral development take place contemporaneously and his later writings on cognition form a largely consistent basis for this argument. His main assertion is that a child's morality "must be constructed out of the entirety of its social experience" (DeVries and Zan, 1994, p. 27) with children's experiences developing as a consequence of constraints set by parents and other adults who wish to socialise them. This idea and other major concepts that he puts forward suggest that children consider such rules to be natural, innate, and universal; the

later work of Kohlberg (see later) develops this much further. Piaget's method was to interview each child subject and to note how he (and it was predominantly a selection of boys who were interviewed) responded so that Piaget could further probe the child's knowledge, thus delving into cognitive structures rather than relying on behaviours. The boys with whom the study was carried out were between the ages of five and thirteen, and the subject matter focussed on i) the rules of a game of marbles and ii) some moral stories and vignettes which Piaget related to the children. For some commentators, e.g., De Vitis (1984), this leaves Piaget open to criticism that he was not actually assessing Moral Development at all because so many inferences were required by the children and, at this age, inference drawing is very difficult.

One saving grace of this Piagetian theory is that it has its roots in observed data, rather than in the speculations of Freud and Jung. Piaget believed that "all morality consists in a system of rules and the essence of all morality is to be sought for in the respect which the individual acquires for those rules." (Piaget, 1932, p. 1). He found that children up to 8 years of age think that rules are immutable, though these were often governed by whatever the child's logic made them. This was how the "moral realism of small children corresponded to the cognitive realism of the pre-operational child" (Cohen, 1983, p. 61). Piaget also saw moral development as an evolution: before 8 years old, children moved from no rules to strict and rigid rules; after 8 years of age, they underwent a development of understanding motive, reason, excuses, and intentions thus reaching a far more nuanced interpretation of the world around them in the way that most adults see it. He referred to the first experience of morality as a morality of obedience to authority, what he referred to as *heteronomous morality*, which was observable in the youngest children as egocentric behaviour (Davidson and Youniss, 1991, p. 107). However, by the second stage, children adopt a morality through development of self-rule, referred to as *autonomous morality*,

and this develops further as the child matures. Piaget also contends that children develop their moral judgements according to their already set stage of cognitive development and he thought that they benefitted from making mistakes or experiencing perturbations because these reinforced the processes of assimilation and accommodation which in turn refined the child's logic. Like Freud, Piaget sees moral cooperation as being good for social life and it has been described as "the key to both moral development and personality formation" (ibid. 1991, p. 105). As the child becomes more autonomous, the egocentricity of early life becomes less prominent and is replaced, as suggested by Tomasello (2018), by mutual cooperation when building social relations, thus giving rise to a new source of agency that provides a discrete perspective for judgement and action where the child's outlook is generally more impartial.

Piaget had recognised that children's egocentrism gives rise to their moral realism, that is, the tendency to view moral duty as external to themselves and leading to what he referred to as *immanent justice* in which, for example, a punishment would inevitably follow a transgression such as a lie. As he described it, the physical world exacted a retribution even when adults failed to notice the wrongdoing. He concluded that children have faith in a natural justice in which Nature can take its revenge. For example, the children were told a story about a person who stole from an orchard but was caught *in flagrante* and ran away; subsequently, as the thief ran over a bridge, the bridge collapsed, and this resulted in the thief drowning in the raging river. The children who had been interviewed generally thought that the thief had received his just rewards, and Piaget maintained that they had a liking for harsh punishments. He also discovered that, in the heteronomous stage, children were either unaware of or oblivious to motivation and intention and it was only once they had reached the autonomous stage that intent was a factor worthy of consideration. Much of this concern with justice in children's thinking links to questions about what justice is

in this context. For many heteronomous stage children, justice is a breach of the established rules and regulations and, in an attempt to heal the breach and reconcile the offender, society must inevitably mete out a punishment. In these children's minds, the natural consequence is that a punishment is deemed to be right if it is exactly proportionate to the disobedience; equally it is deemed to be wrong if it does not match the offence. Thus, in the natural world, there cannot be any concession made to a person's motives or intentions and the responses that Piaget was given by younger children seem to bear this out (Kay, 1968). These ideas were viewed as commands from adults and the heteronomous child makes its decision on justice based on the authority of the adult. When decisions about just outcomes are based on reciprocity and equality, the child moves away from immanent justice and will then favour social justice, with the morality of constraint giving way to a morality of cooperation (Lapsley, 1996). In the final analysis, when the child has a more mature outlook, moral cooperation inevitably involves consideration of justice and "the sense of justice… requires nothing more than mutual respect and solidarity which holds among children themselves" (Piaget, 1932, p. 196).

Piaget's work, though ground-breaking in its day, is not without critics and, when his work was republished on several occasions, a flurry of research came out demonstrating attempts by others to disprove his contentions. One such critic (Karniol, 1980) argues that Piaget's views on immanent justice simply reflected the children's inability to link the various causal chains from the vignettes which had been presented to them. Jose (1990) suggests that although many children possess a basic understanding of causality, they have not yet developed the kind of sophisticated view of such events that many older children have established and would creatively alter the meaning of the story to suit their own judgement; in the case of the boy who stole fruit, they might distort the story so that he fell in the river as a result of being heavy from eating the apples and thus causing the

bridge to break with his additional weight. The tipping point for making valid moral judgments seems to be around the ages of 9 or 10, after which motives and intentions appeared to play a larger part in the judgment and the level of sophistication of the thinker takes into account experiences of the real world, potentially including such adult ideas as principles of physics which would deny the outcomes in the creative scenario above. Turiel (1983) has also offered a critique based on empirical grounds. He contrasted moral knowledge made up of prescriptive, immutable rules and obligations with social-conventional knowledge which is fundamental to the organisation of societies but is largely arbitrary and agreed by consensus. Turiel's research claims that children are keenly aware of the subtle differences between moral and social-conventional rules. They recognise that adults do sometimes violate moral rules and can be judged as wrong, with the consequence that children do not see adult rules as being immutable. Whilst the earlier example from Piaget's work suggests that children advocated severe punishments for all transgressions, Smetana (1981) shows that this only applies to moral transgressions. Thus, it would appear from these findings, some elements of discrimination are made by children who may have internalised moral criteria in mind when they make their judgement. These critiques, and other research which followed and developed his ideas, have contributed to the waning of Piaget's star and the prevalence of other theories which are more generally applied in recent years. However, the nature of Piaget's work cannot be underestimated as it forms the basis of much of modern moral psychology.

Kohlberg

In a similar way that Piaget had cogitated over some of his adolescent ideas about the structures of living things and the way that they were organised, so too Kohlberg drew on aspects of his own childhood and late adolescence. He also

recognised the significance of Piaget's work, which was not well-known in the USA at the time since it had been published in French and there were few available translations to unlock its obscurities. Kohlberg's theory is thus rooted in both the traditions of moral theory and the cognitive domain represented by Piaget. He wished to demonstrate that there were ontogenetic variations (i.e., variations based on the development of the individual) in the ways that children created their own moral knowledge, and that these could be placed on a continuum over the individual's lifespan. He saw children as "naïve moral philosophers" (Lapsley, 1996, p. 43) whose philosophical positions on what *justice* and *moral* might mean changed with their development. He thus advanced a sequence of moral structures which were transformed across six stages, with each stage being better articulated and making use of more stable cognitive operations than the preceding stage. His final stage was always seen by him as an ideal, rooted as it is in Kantian deontological formalism which requires reasons and rationality. At the highest level, then, Kohlberg claims that moral reasoning has the ability to evolve a universal intent and requires both "consensus and agreement" in moral discourse, according to Lapsley (2006, p. 47).

Kohlberg's theory updates Piaget by consideration of Dewey's philosophy of development, where "Growth itself is the 'moral end'." (Dewey, 1920, p. 141). There are similarities between Piaget's and Kohlberg's methods of investigating moral phenomena because they both involved the recounting of stories which concerned moral dilemmas, the best known of these being what is referred to by Kohlberg as "The Heinz Dilemma". However, the main difference was that, while Piaget had focussed on quite young children in his sample, Kohlberg chose to work with boys aged between 10 and 16, with some of these followed up across several years into their adulthood. Out of his findings came the proposition that moral development proceeds at three levels of development, with each of these levels being further split into two stages; this is the six-stage theory that is usually

referred to. The first level, the *Pre-conventional*, begins around the age of 9 and

at this point the child has no code of personal morality, with the consequence that

all moral decisions are based on the standards that adults hold or on the breaking

of rules. The level is broken down into two stages: a) *Obedience and Punishment*,

where the child is good so as to avoid punishment; and b) *Individualism and*

Exchange, in which the child is prepared to accept that there may be multiple

viewpoints when considering a moral dilemma. The second level is the

Conventional, in which there is acceptance of social rules that govern right and

wrong. Authority is internalised by the child, but it is not questioned. The child's

reasoning is based on norms of the group to which it belongs, and it is this social

order which influences the notion of right and wrong. This level is broken down

into two stages: a) *Good Interpersonal Relationships*, where the child wants to be

seen as a good person by others and gives answers about moral dilemmas which

relate to the approval of others; and b) *Maintain Social Order*, in which the child is

aware of wider rules in society and its judgements are made in relation to

upholding the law and avoiding guilt. The final level is the *Post-Conventional*,

where now there is a level of understanding of universal ethical principles which

are ill-defined and often abstract. The individual's judgement is now made on self-

chosen principles and the reasoning behind them is based on rights and justice.

Kohlberg commented that this is as far as most people get in their moral

development, with only about 10-15% achieving the ultimate final stage. Within

the Post-Conventional level there are again two stages: a) *Social Contract and*

Individual Rights, where some rules seem to work against particular individuals

and issues are not always clearly articulated; and b) *Universal Principles*, where

the individual has their own set of moral guidelines that apply to all, even though

they may not always fit with the law. As can be seen from figures 2.1 and 2.2,

different researchers formulate the naming of each level in different styles, though

inherently the meaning is identical.

STAGE 6

Universal Ethical Principles
[What if everybody did that?]

Heinz: "Human life has supreme inherent value. I couldn't live with myself if I let her die."

STAGE 5

Social Contract Orientation
[It's the consensus of thoughtful men.]

Heinz: "Society has a right to insure its own survival. I couldn't hold my head up in public if I let her die."

STAGE 4

Law and Order Orientation
[Do your duty.]

"Saving a human life is more important than protecting property."

STAGE 3

Good Boy, Nice Girl
[Do it for me.]

"He should do it because he loves his wife."

STAGE 2

Instrumental-Relativist Orientation
[If it feels good, do it.]

"If his wife is nice and pretty, he should do it."

STAGE 1

Punishment and Obedience Orientation
[It's O.K. to do it if you don't get caught.]

"It depends on who he knows on the police force."

POSTCONVENTIONAL MORALITY

CONVENTIONAL MORALITY

PRECONVENTIONAL MORALITY

Figure 2.1 A model of psychology for moral development by Lawrence Kohlberg

Redrawn, by CMG Lee, from

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kohlberg_Model_of_Moral_Development.png

Level and Stage	Age Range	Examples
Preconventional Stage 1: Avoidance of punishment Stage 2: Exchange of favours	Pre-school, primary school; some early secondary students; a few upper secondary students	Stage 1: "I would cheat if I knew I wouldn't get caught." Stage 2: I'll let you copy mine if you do my homework."
Conventional Stage 3: Good child Stage 4: Law and Order	Few older primary children; some lower secondary and many upper secondary students. (Stage 4 does not typically appear until secondary school)	Stage 3: "I'm not going to tell because I want her to like me." Stage 4: "You can't do that because the teacher said no."
Postconventional Stage 5: Social contract Stage 6: Universal Principle	Rarely seen before post-16 and stage 6 is extremely rare, according to Kohlberg.	Stage 5: "In this case, the rule may be wrong." Stage 6: "You shouldn't lie because it violates the Golden Rule."

Figure 2.2 A model of Kohlberg's stages of moral development, with some examples of implementation.

The preconventional level reflects the heteronomous and egocentric sociomoral perspective initially and then moves to one which values pragmatic exchanges with others. Across this stage, selfish and individualistic goals are satisfied by the exchange of "favours goods and sanctions" (Lapsley, 2006, p. 46) but as moral development proceeds towards the conventional level, the individual is more aware of group membership and how relationships matter in social agency. Here, individual needs are subordinated to the collective needs of the group and of society in general. In the final, postconventional, level rules are no longer the ultimate guide because the individual now has understood that general moral principles motivate actions and decisions. At this level, the individual can differentiate between moral and legal considerations, with moral perspectives being given priority over social conventions or legal positions such that a moral stance trumps a legal one. This is where most adults find themselves because Kohlberg felt that only a small proportion would ever be able to formalise this position in terms of universal moral obligations. In a simpler, more teacher- and student-friendly diagram, the six stages can now be presented as below:

Stage 1	Avoid punishment
Stage 2	Self-benefit
Stage 3	Acceptance by others
Stage 4	Maintain the social
Stage 5	Contract fulfilment
Stage 6	Ethical principle

Figure 2.3 Simplified version of Kohlberg's stages (after Mattox, 1975)

As this core theory became accepted, Kohlberg's later work broadened into the field of moral education, with a three-pronged approach through moral exemplars, moral dilemma discussions and his "Just Community" schools. His methods of approaching moral education furnish us with a rich pedagogical insight into his ideas on morality by delivering learning experiences that are in line with cultural learning theory (see, for example, Tomasello, Kruger and Ratner, 1993).

Critiques of Kohlberg's theory

Despite Kohlberg being lauded as a giant in the field of moral psychology (Turiel, 2008a), critiques of Kohlberg's work abound. For example, Vitz (1994) elaborates sixteen areas which are considered to pose "grave weaknesses" (p. 29) in the arguments that Kohlberg set out his theory. Whilst this gives a broad appreciation that, despite the widespread acceptance of the theory, there were many perceived flaws in it, it is not relevant to consider all of them here. I will therefore attempt to summarise those which may have some bearing on the investigation in hand, retaining those elements which form a usable core and rejecting those which do not (Puka, 1991). The principal areas of dispute, which are of interest for this study, centre around how stages represent the best model of moral development, gender variations, the impact of religious belief on moral judgement, cultural variations, the role of emotions (the affective nature of humans) in moral development, and the question of whether virtues should be considered. Clearly, Vitz's 1994 summary extends beyond these six areas but the remaining critiques he mentions largely cover empirical issues or philosophical and ideological matters which are beyond the scope of a small-scale study such as this.

The Neo-Kohlbergian approach – an alternative stage model

Concerns about the relationship between theory and data arose from studies by Rest and others who came together to form the so-called Minnesota group (Rest, 1999). The group accepted that moral judgements were both cognitive and developmental in nature, but they raised many questions about the validity and application of Kohlberg's six-stage model. Rest's work used comprehension as the tool for determining moral positions, using a multiple-choice test that focussed on a person's preference for principled (postconventional, in Kohlberg's terms) reasoning and became known as the Defining Issue Test (DIT). He found that,

while his results still followed an order of ranking, this was not the same sequence as Kohlberg's. The Complex Stage Model (henceforth CSM) which developed from these results "described development as a shifting distribution of responses using Kohlberg's stages as the developmental markers" (Thoma, 2002, p. 231) with responses moving up the scale at the expense of those at the lower end. The CSM consists of three broad structures:

> the **Personal Interest Schema** (which derives from
> Kohlberg's Stage 2 and 3, referred to as "S23");
> the **Maintaining Norms Schema** (deriving from
> Kohlberg's Stage 4, referred to as "S4"); and
> the **Postconventional Schema** (deriving from Kohlberg's
> Stage 5 and 6, referred to as "S56")
>
> (Rest *et al.*, 2000, p. 386)

The Personal Interest schema develops in childhood, but once the child has sufficient skill to read the DIT materials (usually assumed to be a reading age of 12) the schema no longer applies. In this schema, children are considered to take a "micro-moral" perspective, that is, they do not see a need to co-operate on a wider societal basis and the actor only makes a moral decision based on what is at stake for themselves or for those with whom they have a close and affectionate relationship. In Kohlberg's terms, this schema covers stages 2 and 3 where only primitive moral thinking is taking place and the DIT is not a good tool for examining children's moral motivations or decisions. The Maintaining Norms schema requires the actor to consider a wider range of people – generally those who are not friends or family – and expects that rules and roles can also be recognised. It is the first stage at which the person begins to conceptualise co-operation at a society level, where reciprocity (all obeying the rules and expectations that others do so too) is a key element, and hierarchies are recognised. Obedience to the rules follows because the actor has respect for the

social system in which they find themselves. Interestingly, "for this schema, no further rationale for defining morality is necessary beyond simply asserting that an act is prescribed by the law, is the established way of doing things, or is the established Will of God" (Rest *et al.*, 2000, p. 388). The ultimate level, called the Postconventional schema and very much like that of Kohlberg, is where moral obligations are based on shared ideals; however, the group that drew up this schema accepted that not all moral theories would necessarily fit their criteria for moral ideals. At this highest level of moral thinking, the adolescents and young adults are concerned with society, rather than themselves, and what is good for that society. In these later stages, the focus is on "macro-moral" thinking, where the bigger picture is appreciated in preference to the personal outcome.

The Neo-Kohlbergian approach also recognises that some moral issues are typified by their emotional content, unlike Kohlberg's model which considered the affective realm as a by-product or secondary effect of the cognitive realm. The original stage model explicitly accounted for both "cognitive and affective processes which operated within and across components" (Thoma, 2002, p. 237) and affirms that other systems, such as care, may play an important role in determining the process of moral thinking. In the real world, then, this model allows that moral judgement can be influenced by emotions, for example in the case of a jury that bases its verdict on a defendant's character rather than just on the facts of the case (Fleming, 2020).

Gender Variation - Gilligan and female moral behaviour

Gilligan claims that women have a different view of social reality from men and that this is reflected in their approach to, and understanding of, morality (Gilligan, 1977). Whilst she saw validity in both Piaget's and Kohlberg's work on the development of Kant's assertions about how knowledge is constructed, she took

issue with the manner in which conflict between individuals was resolved. From her perspective, both Piaget and Kohlberg appeared to suggest that making moral judgements was "a statement of priority" (ibid, p. 483) and a rational act. To refute this, Gilligan refers to Freud's views on the sensibility of women; although he explained the gender differences by considering girls' and boys' resolution of the Oedipal problem, it was clear that he felt women to be more guided by their emotional sides than men were. Gilligan's own findings suggest that this emotional-sensitivity aspect of women's character is what predominates when considering conflict and that it pushes women towards decisions which avoid injury to others. She also mentions the vulnerability that some of her respondents expressed in being dependent on their male partners, though this very traditional outlook on women's social status may no longer necessarily stand up to scrutiny the same way in modern, 21st century, settings.

The question of "how women develop morally" was pursued through interviews about an abortion dilemma narrative. Gilligan asserts that her findings show women going through three levels of moral development. In the first, there is a focus on self but this transitions to a stage where there is responsibility for others. In the second level, "good is equated with caring for others" (p. 492) and "responsibility to others" (p. 499) whilst still feeling some conflicts concerning looking after self and considering self-worth. By the third level, the subjects in this research had found ways to reconcile their selfishness and responsibility by raising 'care for others' to be the principal motivation for morality and primarily viewing their decisions through the question "who is going to be hurt more?" (p. 507). In a later paper, Gilligan and Attanucci (1988) assert that the relationship between moral orientation and gender is not symmetrical because in their three studies, 30 out of the 46 male participants showed a justice focus whereas only 11 of the 34 female participants did so; and only one man out of the 46 male participants showed a care focus whereas 22 of the 34 female participants did so; they

suggest that this is a significant discrepancy. However, despite these figures, roughly equal numbers of male and female participants chose both as a focus and, on this basis, Gilligan determines that there is a common human concern for both genders. Therefore, she declares, her "different voice" is more a function of the theme being presented, i.e., a focus on care or a focus on justice. Lyons (1983) contrasts men's views of morality as reason-based but women's views as sensitivity and connectedness to others, reflecting two distinct modes of making moral choices. She suggests that there is a need to revise the Kantian outlook on morality, from his rational agency approach to one that is more subjective and "mysterious" (p. 126). The main issue was always with the bias of researchers towards choosing all-male samples, suggesting (in Gilligan's eyes, certainly) some blindness (or misogyny) towards females which was reflective of the prevailing social and ideological attitudes at the time, whilst women felt that these omissions were non-trivial and not politically neutral.

All of this suggests an alternative way of seeing morality, no longer in Kohlberg's morality of rights and justice but through the lens of maternal care. In terms of my own study, this critique raises a number of questions about the state of the school and how the exemplification of the moral life is understood by the children in it. With a predominantly female staff (the only permanent male role model in the school at the time of my investigation was the caretaker, though the local priest and I were frequent visitors who had opportunities to make some contributions during our visits) and all senior posts being held by female staff, Gilligan's research potentially takes on an importance that I would not have previously given to it.

Religion and moral behaviour

The idea of a "good self" was thought to be an intrinsic part of human nature, with its roots in Rousseau (1903), Raths (Raths, Harmin and Simon, 1978) and Simon (Simon, Howe and Kirschenbaum, 1995) for example, with the view that only one's parents or society could drive a person into corruption. It is clear that Kohlberg also subscribed to this general view based on his acceptance of Plato's and Socrates' vision of 'the Good as justice' (Kohlberg, 1970), ignoring the theories of Freud, the clinical evidence that revealed sadism, narcissism and destructiveness as a part of human nature, and the observations of ethologists such as Lorenz and Tinbergen who noted that the unconscious mind has a propensity to violence, envy and deception which can lead to dysfunctional behaviours that may warp human judgement (Campbell, 1975). In contrast, the Catholic Church teaches that all human beings have a "natural inclination toward truth and goodness" [which is the] "work of God" (Pinckaers, 2001, p. 70) and this inbuilt goodness directs us "toward specific aspects of human well-being and flourishing" (May, 2003, p. 75) where "evils are to be avoided" (Aquinas, 1947, secs 1–2, 94, 2). Kohlberg maintained that there was no direct link between moral judgement and religious orientation, according to Getz (1984), even though he acknowledged that religion had some complementary relationship with moral judgment (Kohlberg, 1981). His denial of strong links and his "explicitly atheistic understanding of the moral life" (Vitz, 1994, p. 13) came about despite reports that some people with strong religious backgrounds had shown a propensity for higher moral judgement on both the Kohlberg scale and the DIT scale (Killeen, 1978; O'Gorman, 1979; Harris, 1981; Clouse, 1985, 1991; Nelson, 2004). There are some suggestions that these results could be accounted for when taking consideration of socio-economic status and IQ (Rest, 1986) because many of the sample sites were private schools with students from affluent backgrounds and, as a consequence, the conclusions are not as clear-cut as appears at first. In terms

of my study, there are aspects of these critiques and findings that have some bearing, particularly because the site chosen is a Roman Catholic primary school, though its location in a relatively stressed economic area of England does not communicate a background that some of these American studies enjoyed; likewise, a number of the studies quoted above deal with students of much higher ages than those I have interviewed and observed, so caution will be needed in applying any of these to my investigation.

Cultural variations

Colby et al. (1983) and Colby and Kohlberg (1987) claim that the stage model of morality would apply consistently across different cultures and societies. Rest, Narvaez, Bibeau and Thoma (1999) felt this was too broad and strong a claim, despite there being some evidence in its support from other studies which Rest (1986) had considered in his wide-ranging cross-cultural study of 20 projects from 15 cultures, in which he found that "similarities were more striking than differences" (p. 110). Kohlberg always maintained that, although these cultural factors may alter the *rate* of development, they do not affect the sequence. In many of the cultures mentioned by Rest, the collective in society, i.e., membership of groups and attachment to them (Hofstede, 1981), outstrips the Western individualistic approach which arose out of the Renaissance and is manifested in Kant's philosophy. The concern for others, which characterises the "collective" in non-Western cultures, extends through belief systems, ideologies and actions so will have some impact on the nature of decisions and their implications. In some cultures (notably Asian ones) the family is paramount with the consequence that what is beneficial for the family is permitted but what is not beneficial is prohibited. In general, these research findings suggest that communalistic principles and ways of resolving differences, often stressed in

traditional folk culture, may be either absent from, or misinterpreted in, Kohlberg's postconventional stage descriptors and Snarey (1985) suggests that they should have drawn on more cultural worldviews to develop a "more pluralistic stage theory" (ibid., p. 229). Through the culture of the school, the children and staff will be able to make sense of how this institution fits into the local (parish and secular) community, the wider diocesan community, the national educational community, and the global Roman Catholic community, each of which will have moral outlooks that pull them in different directions and make different demands on their moral reasoning. By addressing their moral reality through their culture, the school provides a means of helping children to make sense of these tensions.

Affective and emotion-based considerations

Kohlberg's theory does not deal with or account for affective aspects of development (Peters, 1978) because when considering justice, someone else's welfare is often at stake but Kohlberg takes no account of it. This raises questions about how the affective domain plays its part in moral development. The affective domain, and the emotions associated with it, is considered to be one of the most confusing and baffling aspects of psychology (Plutchik, 2001), giving rise to a range of definitions and understandings of what it entails. However, psychologists generally agree that the affective domain refers to both the emotions and to the way that they are expressed outwardly, and that emotions are expressed through feeling, cognition, and behaviour. It also covers how we discern our own and others' emotions, and our ability to control our own emotions. In terms of how these relate to moral development, Hoffmann (2000, 2008) suggests that there are five moral affects based on empathy – empathetic distress, sympathetic distress, guilt, empathetic anger, and empathetic injustice – which all play some part in forming the level of caring and seeking justice. He further contends that when somebody distressed is encountered, the *empathetic distress affect* is

aroused and consequently "*empathetic… moral principles…* are activated" (Hoffman, 2000, p. 238). These principles lead, in turn, to the idea of reciprocity (being treated fairly and treating others as you would wish them to treat you) which again might lead to altruism when a distressed person is encountered (Trivers, 1971).

Hoffman (1994) offers some deeper insights into a developmental theory of altruism. He starts from the basis that although most religions encourage some form of altruism, the prevailing culture in modern society precludes this as being the norm. Sometimes altruism is seen as a suspect action with the casual observer wondering what is to be gained by the altruistic actor. Psychology and socio-biology suggest that altruism is a complex action (Campbell, 1972; Campbell and Specht, 1985), based in potential egoistic tendencies that link to evolutionary survival drives and are thus genetically programmed into all human beings. Culturally, however, Eastern traditions favour and encourage altruism as an element of their communalistic outlook. In primary aged children, altruism plays a part in their peer interactions and some studies (Staub, 1970, 1971; Severy and Davis, 1971) suggested that about 50% would react empathetically to another child crying in the next room. Eisenberg (2000) asserts that higher-order emotions like guilt and sympathy can also affect moral behaviour and play a significant part in the development of moral character. Hoffmann (1998) also states that empathy-based guilt is also thought to be a powerful factor which leads to reparative actions to reduce those feelings of guilt (Regan, 1971; Regan, Williams and Sparling, 1972). These examples show how the affective domain develops and changes across a lifespan and highlight how emotions play their part in moral decision making.

This fundamental idea of altruism, and the role of emotions in determining it, contributes to how children develop prosocial tendencies, indicating tendencies

where the subject "gave up more than he would gain" (Wispé, 1972, p. 3) which could also be seen as "voluntary behaviour intended to benefit another" (Eisenberg, Spinrad and Knafo-Noam, 2015, p. 610), and how these are reflected in prosocial moral reasoning, which is the child's ability to think about conflicts in which they have to choose between their own needs or those of another person (Eisenberg, Lennon and Roth, 1983). Eisenberg and her colleagues also considered the development of these prosocial aspects of moral reasoning (Eisenberg-Berg and Neal, 1979) by considering similar scenarios to those used in Kohlberg's original investigations but using stories that were age-appropriate. The results from these investigations gave a strong indication that there is a developmental progression in prosocial moral reasoning which mirrors some of the stages suggested by Kohlberg, but in these cases, there was a greater number of selfish responses reflecting a more hedonistic outlook. As children got older, further studies (for example, Eisenberg, Lennon and Roth, 1983; Eisenberg and Miller, 1987) indicated that more sophisticated approaches were taken by the children, including reasoning that included empathy. However, the data from Eisenberg's studies, when put alongside some anecdotal evidence from Hoffman (1975), supports the opinion that empathy and sympathy often play a role in prosocial or altruistic behaviour (Eisenberg-Berg and Hand, 1979; Eisenberg and Miller, 1987) as the child becomes more aware of its concern for the welfare of others (Zahn-Waxler et al., 1992; Hastings, Zahn-Waxler and McShane, 2006).

This may not be the whole picture for prosocial moral behaviour. Whereas Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (1976) stress that in late childhood or adolescence moral actions arise out of obedience to authority, fear of punishment or because of anticipated rewards, more recent studies have shown that younger children "spontaneously engage in prosocial and moral actions because they genuinely care about others' well-being and they want to do what they consider right" (Sengsavang, Willemsen and Krettenauer, 2015, p. 1). This appears to be

supported by Social Domain Theory which views children's actions through a number of different social perspectives, with morality as only one of a number of strands within children's developing social knowledge (Smetana, 2013). Within this theory, morality refers to "conceptions of welfare, justice and rights" (Nucci, 2001, p. 7) which are inherent in interpersonal relations. These conceptions are different from social conventions which are arbitrary standards; for example, addressing an adult or teacher as 'Sir' or 'Miss'. The two, morality and social convention, work together in harmony to regulate society but are understood as two separate conceptual frameworks (domains) which emerge at a very early age and are subject to developmental changes with age (for example, Helwig, Tisak and Turiel, 1990; Tisak, 1995). Moral issues, such as harm and injustice, can be generalised to many settings but social conventions tend to hold only within the social system where the rule applies. The key difference from previous theories which define morality in terms of emotional processes, such as Haidt's social intuitionist model (2001), is that in social domain theory morality is seen as an integrated entity that draws on both emotions and rationality (Turiel and Killen, 2010), enables the notions of morality and social convention to coexist (Nucci, 2015), is developed as children engage in reciprocal relationships with both adults and their peers (Turiel, 2013), and thus provides a "rich, compelling, and generative approach to studying children's thinking about a range of important social and developmental issues" (Smetana, Jambon and Ball, 2013, p. 24). One implication of this theory for a primary school includes maintaining clear behavioural boundaries in the classroom, using statements of rules that are referred to by the teacher when any violation or disturbance occurs and drawing on considerations of the implications of the offender's actions on the welfare of the others in the class (Killen et al., 1994; Nucci, 2001). Children appeared to prefer to 'know where they stood' and responded more favourably when the message about transgressions was consistent, whether that message applied to the moral domain or to social convention. Turiel (2002) also reports on a huge body of

research about children's understanding of authority, such as that of the teacher. The findings concluded that "children do not regard adults as the only sources of legitimate authority; they do not regard adults in positions of authority as all-knowing or their dictates and rules as synonymous with the good or right; and they do not believe, when justice is in conflict with authority, that authority is right, and justice is wrong" (p. 107). This suggests that children themselves set boundaries on the influence of an authority figure and will, on occasion, acquiesce to the authority of their peers especially if an adult's command seems to be counter to the well-being of another.

People who live religious lives have strong emotional attachments to their religious rules and authorities. It cannot be taken for granted, though, that these precepts and the people's faith will necessarily determine the courses of action undertaken by religious people and research with various religious groups supports the contention that more complex processes are involved (Nucci, 1985, 1991; Nucci and Turiel, 1993). In terms of a Catholic outlook, McKay, Herold and Whitehouse (2013) suggest that prosocial behaviours are more likely when people feel guilty and their study on the Sacrament of Reconciliation and its impact on such behaviour concluded that two possible effects might be explained by absolution. One of these is the possibility of positive emotions being elicited in the subjects, though they do not offer a psychological mechanism to fully understand what happens. The other is what they refer to as "a religious prime" (p. 206), suggesting that the act of absolution during the Sacrament triggers a deeper response which in turn promotes the reparative prosocial behaviour. In their commentary about guilt felt by Catholics, Fischer and Richards report the perception that guilt acts as a "checkpoint" (Fischer and Richards, 1998, p. 148) which aids self-evaluation and offers an opportunity to rethink and evaluate prior actions. As children grow, it is a combination of parenting and learning in the school environment which both socialises children and enables the first shoots of

their moral development to flourish. Parental and teacher inductions (for example, "Now you've upset your little sister") are associated with development of children's empathy and prosocial behaviours (Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow and King, 1979) which are further reinforced by disciplinary actions (Kochanska, 1993) and appropriate adult modelling (Eisenberg and Mussen, 1989), with some actions potentially mirrored by children through dyadic mimicry which is strongly linked to affective, cognitive and behavioural prosociality (Duffy and Chartrand, 2017). Thus, a strong Catholic ethos should promote some of these prosocial behaviours as long as the ethos is shared and enacted by all who have a part to play in this socialisation of the children.

Virtues and character education – the Neo-Aristotelian perspective

The topic of virtue and character is one that has a long history, beginning with Aristotle in the Ancient World, and continuing to Abu al-Ghazali, a Sufi mystic (see, for example, Umaruddin, 1996), St. Thomas Aquinas and Sir Thomas More in Mediaeval times (Lovat, 2011) all of whom mixed theology, morality and philosophy to differing degrees. However, as the eighteenth century arrived, the influence of Aristotelian and Thomistic values, and their absorption into Christian moral thought and theory (Arthur *et al.*, 2015), diminished in Western culture with the coming of the Enlightenment when it was thought that all things could be explained through human reasoning, testing, and subjecting them to rational analysis. Despite this side-lining, European philosophers came back to Aristotle in the 20th Century with Anscombe (1958) leading the revival in Britain. The move away from duty and obligation (deontological ethics) gave rise to ethical theories based on naturalistic notions such as "character", "virtue" and "happiness". In the United States, the revival of interest in character education began in the 1990's (Lickona, 1993) partly due to a lack of character and moral education in schools at the time. In a later paper, Lickona (1999b) lamented that some young people

appeared to be spiritually adrift and lacked an "ennobling vision of human dignity, human destiny and the ultimate meaning of life" (p. 21). The revival was also driven by a broader fear of moral decline and loss of traditional values in the USA as multiculturalism and anti-establishment feelings began to pervade that society. Some authors, e.g., Bennett (1992), think that children do not grasp all the aspects of right and wrong, so there is a need for deliberate instruction to ensure that they fully appreciate and absorb into their lives the full implications of these ideas. Among others, Dewey (1915) was called on as the root of this return to character education because of his insistence that moral instruction forms a core element of a teacher's vocation. In England, developments to minimise the potential radicalisation of young people through social media and internet sites have led to two initiatives that the Government hopes will address these issues. One is the introduction of fundamental British Values to the curriculum in direct response to the Prevent Strategy, which has been controversial since its implementation in 2014-15 (Eaude, 2018). The other is the Framework for Character Education (Department for Education [DfE], 2019) which further supports this initiative and builds on some of the work of Arthur and his colleagues at Birmingham (Arthur *et al.*, 2015).

Since the 1980's there have been a number of papers on virtue and character which have revisited character education practices of the early 20th Century as well as those of the classical writers (see Atherton, 1988; Nash, 1988; Nucci, 1989). The moral philosophies developed by MacIntyre (1981) and Nussbaum (1986) and their use in educational philosophies (Curren, 2000; Kristjánsson, 2007; Sanderse, 2012) and general ideas about good education (Nucci, 1989; Lickona, 1991; Arthur, 2003) have meant greater exposure to virtue-based moral education in recent times. However, according to Steutel (1997), there was no clear and definitive account of what entailed a virtues approach to moral education. This paper became a key cornerstone in the development of a

systematic approach by defining important concepts and linking their value to Kohlberg's main views to justify using virtues in place of such a well-established theory. Steutel argues, based on Frankena (1973), that many of the aims of moral education should be referred to as 'dispositions', with virtues being seen as positive dispositions and grouped together under character traits. He also demonstrated how some of Kohlberg's theory could be considered a virtue approach by citing examples of where judgment and action are linked by ego strength (Kohlberg, 1971, 1976), a disposition related to willpower, which Steutel reports as a virtue. Nevertheless, based on Kohlberg's leanings towards a Kantian tradition, he argues that Kohlberg's theory as originally presented cannot in itself be considered a virtue approach because of its central aim of justice which is composed of deontic concepts and judgements (i.e., concepts of right).

As has been shown in earlier sections, Kohlberg's deontologically-inspired theory of moral development has been the predominant way of looking at developing children, but the various critiques chosen earlier suggest strongly that care (Gilligan, 1977; Noddings, 1984), moral sensitivity and motivation (Rest, 1986; Rest *et al.*, 1999) play more of a role. In the absence of a definitive link between moral reasoning and moral action (Blasi, 1980) a new model of moral development that aligned more with Aristotelian principles (Sanderse, 2015) of virtue and character was considered. Sanderse is of the opinion that a virtue-oriented moral development model is complementary to the psychological one because it addresses other elements of the moral domain and links ideas between moral reasoning and moral affect, drawing on the Neo-Kohlbergian approach (Rest, 1986, 1999; Rest *et al.*, 1999). He emphasises the multi-dispositional nature of Aristotelian ethics and speculates how virtue might change with moral maturity. In educational terms, this translates into many character education programmes, but he argues that these require a considered approach if a suitable developmental (stage?) model is to be worthwhile and practical. Based on

Aristotle's four groups (*hoi polloi*, *akrates*, *enkrates* and *phronimos*) he concludes that it is possible to interpret them in a developmental way because this aids understanding of what constitutes moral character. There is some discussion in the literature about exactly how many stages would constitute the Aristotelian model – some have argued for 3 stages (Sherman, 1989; Tobin, 1989), others for 4 (Curzer, 1998, 2002, 2012; Kristjánsson, 2007, 2010) and others again for 5 (Garrett, 1993), with Curzer describing 6 in Aristotle's writing (2012, p. 352), though confusingly the chapter heading implies only 4 – but there sems to be a consensus for using 4 as a basic starting point. These are: moral indifference, lack of self-control, self-control and phronesis or "proper virtue". Those who reach or achieve phronesis are "happy" (*eudaimon*) and perform rationality well, are admired for their character and are inspirational ideals for others to emulate. Some of Aristotle's ideas need further development if they are to be applicable for a primary school as they largely refer to adolescents or young adults. Similarly, as with many things today, if these stages cannot be measured empirically then they may be of less value.

Lickona (1999a) suggests that there are links between virtue and character. For him, virtue is an objectively good human quality that leads to a fulfilling life and thus suggests an objective moral truth, i.e., one that is independent of the knower with an objective reality outside the mind. In moral terms, this objectivity suggests that some things are right, and others are wrong, and that some ways to behave are better than others. Lickona says that Aristotle's virtues are "not merely thoughts but habits that we develop by performing virtuous acts" (ibid, p. 78). Within character education there are essentially three goals – to create good people, good schools, and a good society. Good character, in Lickona's view, leads to "being fully human", an idea that strongly links to Catholic moral theology. The existence of a good society is essential for building a moral society and if virtues

are not in people's minds, hearts and souls then there is no virtuous society. Thus, to lead ethical, productive and fulfilling lives and to create a just, compassionate, and productive society, schools need to develop "good character" (Arthur *et al.*, 2015, p. 4).

Character is reflected in cognitive, affective, and behavioural elements of morality and "young people should be able to judge what is right, care deeply about what is right and do what is right" (Lickona, 1999a, p. 78). The cognitive side includes *moral alertness* and *moral reasoning*; the affective side covers *conscience, empathy, and humility*; the behavioural side (called moral action by Kohlberg) requires *moral competence*, including skill in conflict resolution, *moral will*, including self-control and courage, and *moral habit* which is the disposition to respond in a morally good manner. Lickona's contribution to the development of character education programmes in schools is a set of twelve strategies which work both in classrooms and across the whole school, i.e., beyond school and with parents. Some of these are direct pedagogical approaches (the curriculum, class environment, co-operative learning, reflection, and moral resolution) and others call on teacher modelling (caregiving, mentoring, valuing, and fostering learning) as well as the leadership style of the principal and senior leadership team. Character education will reflect the community from which it emerges, but this diversity presents difficulties if one attempts to create a coherent blueprint that will work across all cultures and communities. However, schooling is only one factor in developing a healthy character; many others are involved such as parents, family members, the environment in which the individual lives and other adults who may act as mentors. The demise of stable family life makes the delivery of character education outside the home problematic, leaving school as one of the few stable influences that many children experience.

Kohlberg's neglect of affective and motivational dimensions of the moral life has led to some researchers finding that children's moral behaviour contradicts what is expected by Kohlbergian analysis (Wright, 1971). R.S. Peters had also criticised Kohlberg for neglecting the moral importance of acquiring particular dispositions or attributes of character (Peters, 1978, 1981). While Kohlberg (1963) saw moral development as central to human growth, Dewey (1964) viewed education as producing moral judiciousness. Peters' rejoinder to this (1981) was that if it was "of value" then moral development should be implemented in a morally acceptable way. Lovat, Clement, Dally and Toomey (2011) see the learner as a "whole person, impelled by cognitive, emotional and social drives [which are] in holistic connection with each other" (p. 166-7). In the USA, attempts to produce programmes that would meet these criteria have largely come and gone over the last twenty-five years. One such programme, Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE), was widely trumpeted as a way of dealing with the growing drugs and social problems of urban areas, with 26 million children enrolled in it across the USA. Many police forces in England supported it in areas where there were high levels of underprivileged "at risk" families. Across the area where the research site is found, this programme still underpins some of the character education given in primary schools, despite the findings of objective studies which have demonstrated it to be largely ineffective in its aims (Clayton, Cattarello and Johnstone, 1996; Lynam *et al.*, 1999).

Evolutionary/biological approaches

As we have seen, in previous sections, morality is a complex and much debated concept. With biological evidence from DNA analysis showing that humans share about 95% of their genes with chimps and bonobos, there has been recent

research to suggest that morality may have its roots in those aspects of our

nature which is shared with our ape ancestors (de Waal, 2008, 2011), with

particular reference to some of the emotions and behaviours that were discussed

in one of the previous sections. The interest in how human morality evolved has

its roots long before this evidence became available and much has been made, in

both biological and philosophical circles, of Darwin's revolutionary approach to

morality being innate (Darwin, 1874):

> *The following proposition seems to me in a high degree*
> *probable – namely that any animal whatever, endowed with*
> *well-marked social instincts, the parental and filial affections*
> *being here included, would inevitably acquire a moral sense*
> *or conscience, as soon as its intellectual powers became as*
> *well developed, or nearly as well developed, as in man. For*
> *firstly, the social instincts lead an animal to take pleasure in*
> *the society of its fellows, to feel a certain amount of*
> *sympathy for them, and to perform various services for them*

(p. 71-2)

Darwin argues that animals feel sympathy for each other and, as we have seen,

this is thought to have a role in some prosocial moral actions. A number of studies

by primatologists suggest that these sympathetic feelings can be demonstrated

through issues of equity/non-equity in several species, including chimpanzees and

capuchin monkeys (Brosnan and de Waal, 2003; Brosnan, 2006, 2008). Setting

aside the arguments that animals cannot be moral *agents* because they do not

possess some of the cognitive abilities which determine this position, even though

they may be considered as moral *subjects* (see Monsó, Benz-Schwarzburg and

Bremhorst, 2018), the evidence shows many of these species acting on the basis

of moral emotions and thus giving some credence to Darwin's proposition.

In the study of the evolution of human morality, a number of strands have been

followed. Evolutionary anthropologist Boehm (1999) discusses how cooperation

and altruistic behaviour are thought to have evolved to help family members and

those inclined to return the favour (see also Hamilton, 1964a, 1964b; Trivers,

1971), suggesting that the driving forces behind these behaviours are nepotistic and selfish. This is difficult to reconcile with the many generous behaviours of humans and other explanations have been explored. He concludes that the only way for individuals to survive and thrive in hunter-gatherer groups is to develop a sophisticated defence mechanism which enables altruists to get along with others in the group (Boehm, 2012) and this is what he equates to morality. Narvaez has followed up this route with her references to small-band hunter-gatherer societies (SBHG) such as the San bushmen of Southern Africa and the Semai of Malaysia (Narvaez, 2011) who live in peaceful communities.

Narvaez has also considered aspects of neurobiology (Narvaez, 2013, 2014, 2018a, 2018b) and linked them to notions of flourishing and the state of Aristotelian eudaemonia which, in current education circles, feed into international and government policies on well-being and resilience (Adamson *et al.*, 2007; Weare, 2015; Department for Education [DfE], 2018). She considers how the brain develops, especially in early life, and how experiences and habits gained in those early years from interactions between mother and child will influence the development of the moral sense: "Each individual constructs a moral universe based on experience, particularly in early life when the foundations for implicit or tacit knowledge begin" (Narvaez, 2014, p. 6). Her main arguments are that morality does not exist in one dimension but relates many aspects of human nature – physical and mental health, flourishing and culture all play a part in determining our individual morality and arise as a consequence of the brain's plasticity in the early stages of human growth (see Narvaez, 2008). She also argues strongly for a more ecological sense of our place in the world, as groups who treat our earthly companions respectfully and cooperate in families and communities (Narvaez, 2015, 2017) with a fundamental "understanding of where humans are - embedded in a cooperating natural world" (Narvaez, 2014, p. xxvi) if we are to succeed in achieving human flourishing as a race.

The Catholic Church and Morality

Some theological background

Whilst many of the psychological theories referred to above are compatible with Christian ethics, the Catholic Church does not have a similar theory of how a person develops as a moral being. The Church acknowledges that consideration of the psychological stages of development can shed some light on how personality develops in a human being, but it insists that "moral experience, which is already present in the young" (Pinckaers, 2001, p. 51) requires a different approach because the differences in methodology of moral theology and behavioural-psychological science lead to different outcomes. Instead of developing a theory, it describes an *age of reason*, which is usually seen as the age of 7, after which a child is deemed to be culpable for the "serious sins" (Titus, 2012, p. 64) that may be committed. Traditionally, sins have been confessed as part of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the roots of this custom lie in two practices – firstly, the early Church's need to welcome back someone who has carried out a wicked event that flies in the face of all that is worthy of Christian living, and secondly in the practice of mentoring younger monks by a spiritual director, to whom they would confidentially admit their failings. As the monastic tradition drew in more of the faithful, lay people appear to have adopted these practices willingly and they merged into the rites of the Church as Christianity spread across the world. In the monastic life, these failings could be revisited on many occasions, so a system of penances in line with the grievousness of the failing began to emerge, giving rise to the 'penitentials' which consisted of guidebooks for confessors (Keenan, 2001; O'Collins and Farrugia, 2014). We should remember, of course, that traditional moral theology was designed for training priests and not for determining how a lay person should attempt to live an ethical, good life. In time, these guidebooks became the foundations for moral theology, until the appearance of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae* (Aquinas, 1947) which included a section about human action

and its consequences for the Christian life. This segment of the *Summa* sets out what is meant by 'intention' (ibid., pp. 855-859), thus giving moral character to a human act (Selling, 2018) and describing which acts are fundamentally 'good' or 'bad', using virtues as the basis for this work. Aquinas defines three theological virtues (faith, hope and charity) based on St. Paul's writings, and four cardinal virtues (prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance) which were inherited from ancient Greek philosophy, notably that of Aristotle (Aristotle and Irwin, 1985; Doig, 2012; Ceunfin, 2017). Unfortunately, the practical usage of *Summa* was highly varied and misinterpreted, and abuses in its intent were widespread. Despite calls to rein in the abuses (for example in the case of indulgences, which led to the Protestant Reformation), the Roman Catholic Church's response, through the Council of Trent which was a part of the Counter-Reformation moves, was to publish a Catechism. This Catechism was deliberately simplistic in its approach, so it was easy for illiterate laity of that period to grasp but made clear that the bishops who constructed it understood moral living to mean 'following the commandments'. Moral development or speculation on how or why an act had been carried out was not considered and this led to the Catechism being seen as a set of laws which governed the moral life. Moral theology in this post-Tridentine era was thus rendered 'act-centred' and "simply at the service of auricular confessions" (Titus, 2012, p. 64), with certain acts (especially many of a sexual nature) being deemed as intrinsically evil. This situation lasted from the close of the Council of Trent in 1563 up to the start of the Second Vatican Council in 1962, when the calls for renewal in the Church became loud enough to stimulate discussions about a way into the future. This project of renewal was broadly embarked on with enthusiasm at first but rapidly descended into an argument about authority in the Church, usually referred to as the *Magisterium*, with the publication of *Humanae Vitae* (Paul VI, 1968) and reverberations from this argument still sound in the ongoing disagreements between traditionalist and revisionist theologians (Abram, 2020). However, out of the Council came two

significant documents, *Dignitatis Humanae* (Second Vatican Council, 1965a) and *Gaudium et Spes* (Second Vatican Council, 1965e), both of which influenced developments in moral theology (Selling, 2016). Along with these two documents, a third one, *Dei Verbum* (Second Vatican Council, 1965c), brought the importance of Scripture to the fore once more and reinforced the idea that the Bible contains the story of a relationship between God and His people, "not some cold-blooded contract, but an intimate and very personal reality" (O'Connell, 1978, p. 21), thus sealing modern moral theology's bond with Scripture.

The Church of the modern world is built on the foundation of human dignity which brings with it rights as well as duties, demanding personal and social responsibility which in turn requires the moral agent to keep in mind the common good so that all people can live their lives according to the truth "to which all human persons are called" (Selling, 2016, p. 114). *Gaudium et Spes* reaffirms this dignity and then addresses human activity, and its consequent ethical challenges, "in the light of the Gospel and human experience" (Second Vatican Council, 1965e, para. 46), rather than natural law, which is a very different stance to traditional Tridentine moral theology and brings a much more dynamic vision of morality that can better respond to the modern age. *Gaudium et Spes* does not lay down any laws or pass judgement but requires all people to reflect on the context of their lives from both spiritual and social perspectives. *Gaudium et Spes* asserts that all human beings are made in the 'Image of God' (*Imago Dei*), a doctrine developed from creation accounts in Genesis (Cessario, 2001; Weinandy, 2003), and that, being social entities, we rely on companionship and community so that, "far from understanding the human person as a mere individual, the anthropology worked out by many moral theologians stresses the interconnectedness of persons that flows from the many dimensions of being human that are weaved (*sic*) together to form a realistic and integral notion of what it means to be human persons" (Selling, 2017, p. 4). Despite these assertions, it took until 1988 for women to be

recognised as having equal dignity to men and divine likeness in the image of God. *Gaudium et Spes* also stresses Jesus' injunction to "love God and your neighbour" (Mark 12: 30-31). When we turn away from God - in other words, we diminish the holiness of our creation by failing to love God or our neighbour - we are affected by sin which creates in us a tension between good and evil; the Church teaches that only Jesus Christ's saving power can liberate us from this tension. We should always seek to do good things because "the good, after all, is where God is finally to be found" (O'Connell, 1978, p. 195).

In the years following Vatican II, the publication of *Veritatis Splendor* (John Paul II, 1993) gave rise to a renewed interest in how morality affected doctrine, since some see it as the "touchstone of Catholic theological inquiry" (Clark, 2014, p. 59), and the closing meditation of the first chapter of the encyclical renews the view that moral doctrine is founded on four sound principles - "Scripture, Tradition, the Magisterium and *recta ratio* or right thinking" (McNamara, 2008, p. 187) – through which the successors to the Apostles still interpret "God's moral prescriptions" (Healy, 1994, p. 17) and determine the manner of human activity. At the same time, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (The Vatican, 1994) was organised with a lengthy section devoted to 'The Virtues' (ibid., paragraphs 1803-1845) where virtue was upheld as a "firm disposition to do good" (ibid., 1833) and linked to "the New Law and the gifts of the Holy Spirit that perfect the virtues" (Pinckaers and Noble, 1996, p. 363). This period in the 1990s was fruitful in terms of how the Church viewed the moral life and several significant developments in moral theology took place; notable among them was the work done by Fr. Servais Pinckaers O.P. on the understanding of morality as a whole and specifically on a virtue perspective of morality (Pinckaers and Noble, 1995, 1996; Cloutier and Mattison, 2014). His insights on Aristotelian ethics suggested that "the introduction of the concept of virtue offers many opportunities for the shaping of a morality that takes the human person into account. Virtue is a dynamic human

quality acquired through education and personal effort. It forms character and assures continuity in action. Furthermore, it is set within the framework of community and a strong tradition, to whose development it contributes" (Pinckaers and Noble, 1996, p. 362). This link to the Thomistic view of virtue was not meant to replace the traditional laws of the Church, bound up in the Ten Commandments, but rather to enhance and modernise them, taking account of the Conciliar documents that stressed the sanctity and dignity of humanity. Aquinas's links between virtue ethics and personal moral development offer a way forward for moral theology (Titus, 2008) that enables interchange between psychology, biology (including neuroscience) and theology as each offers a different understanding into the complex nature of human growth and development as each person makes their journey towards Jesus who is "the face of the Father's mercy" (Francis, 2015b, para. 1).

The approach of the Roman Catholic Church to morality in the 21st century requires us to consider the difference made to the way we live our lives by possession of a Christian Catholic faith, demanding that we discern the type of person we wish to be and the kinds of actions which will enable us to be that person (Gula, 1989). This requires consideration of matters pertaining to both the head and the heart: in matters of the head, we call on our rational abilities to determine reasons for our beliefs and our actions, but these are driven by affective experiences that are founded upon our ability to care, show empathy and recognise the intrinsic value of another person so that "we live and reflect morally in the first place not because we have reason but because we have an affective commitment to what we care about" (ibid., p.15). In other words, we 'do morality' because we wish to be in harmony with others in society and in 'doing morality' we are asking important questions about how we should live (MacNamara, 2010). These questions require us to understand deeper truths about the world around us and the reality of our moral selves, which raise further questions about whether

we fully know our reality and how reliable that knowledge might be. To answer these questions, some theologians (notably, Lonergan, 1957, 1964) call on critical realism as a tool for exploring how one experiences the world, judges it and understands it. When we experience the world, we begin to learn that "the knowledge we have is based on something that is really out there" (Gula, 1989, p. 17) and on that basis we can take decisions and then act appropriately. To assist with determining the reality we experience, the Church offers us insights from Scripture to give us a context for our understanding, background from the Traditions of the Old and New Testament stories, the authority of the Magisterium, and the Catechism of the Catholic Church which draws together all these elements in one place. Part 3 of the Catechism, entitled "Life in Christ", shows us what the moral life can be. Through understanding that the people of God were always intended to be moral, demonstrated in the giving of the Law to Moses, through putting into action Jesus' great commandment that we love God and our neighbour, through our development of the virtues based on the Sermon on the Mount which make clear the "actions and attitudes that should characterise the Christian moral life" (May, 2003, p. 299), and with the guidance of the Magisterium of the Church, whose God-given responsibility it is to "teach the saving truths of faith and morals" (ibid., p.301), we should be able to discern "not, *What is God's will for me?* but rather, *What is God requiring and enabling me to be and to do?*" (Gula, 1989, p. 319).

One may validly ask, "why this preoccupation with the history of morality in the Church?", and the question is partly answered by Abram (2020) and O'Connell (1978) who are clear that unless we appreciate what has gone before, in the Catholic Church's history, we are not able to fully grasp the richness of its tradition nor recognise the lacunae that exist for developing Catholic morality further. Catholics look to the Gospels for their inspiration and guidance about how to behave and find the New Testament replete with moral directions but there has

been no systematic moral system laid out in any of these sources. Indeed, different authors across the ages place emphasis on different elements of the moral life. Today, we find that moral theology has reached a crossroads in its development (McNamara, 2008; Abram, 2020) because a wide range of ethical approaches in all walks of life now demonstrates that lay men and women are more astute in their reflections about the moral life and have an independence of mind which echoes the post-modern, pluralist age in which we live. Unless the Magisterium responds in a more collegial manner and engages with people in the contexts of their current lives, the minds and hearts of the faithful will be lost to the institutional Church, a trend already seen in the empty pews of many Western churches, especially among the young. Since his ascent to the papacy, Pope Francis has begun the process of rehabilitating some of the faithful who had been ostracised and marginalised in earlier generations through his emphasis on charity and mercy (Francis, 2016a), particularly in sexual matters (Francis, 2016b), and we can only hope that this helps the laity to see the big picture of morality within the Catholic Faith, rather than seeing the Church as condemnatory and law-driven, so that there can be "further exploration and real dialogue within theological ethics in the twenty-first century" (O'Reilly-Gindhart, 2018, p. 36).

Application to Catholic education

How does all of this relate to Catholic education and its approach to moral development? As seen in Chapter 1, the chief aim of a Catholic school is to develop the character of Christ in pupils. This includes both the natural moral virtues taught in all schools, but also aspects of spiritual virtues such as faith, prayer, love for others, sorrow, gratitude and obedience to God's will (Lickona, 1999a). With the decline in young people's attendance at church, even for the main feasts like Christmas and Easter, and the concern among them that the Church does not know how to counter the temptations of the external world

around them, such approaches are becoming more untenable and unachievable unless greater emphasis is placed on this kind of character development. At the conceptual level, character education is at the heart of all education, both Christian and secular. Two main ideas on character and moral development stand out: a) the notion of goodness, which will always lead to an exemplary outcome that is good for society; and b) that character is not just a theoretical or esoteric concept - it yields observable behaviours that students can demonstrate every day (Wilhelm and Firmin, 2008). Although there may be disputes about what virtues should be taught, most would agree that the core philosophy of character education is embedded in the Judeo-Christian ethical systems which are found in the Bible. This Christian worldview pervades even the most secular attempts to define character, virtue and morality with their basis in doctrines about the nature of humankind and the nature of God (Wilhelm and Firmin, 2008). Arthur, Harrison and Davison (2015) found that the teaching of character is very patchy in non-faith and Church of England (CE) schools but there was a more deliberate attempt to deliver it in Catholic schools, partly because "Catholic head teachers saw it as part of their role to promote the moral formation of their students as good people" (p. 181).

It could be argued that Catholic schools need to engage in serious reflection on the values underpinning their work and to ensure that they fit with contemporary needs (Halstead, 2014) to benefit students. Despite many questions that exist around how their distinctiveness relates to moral beliefs, they are in a unique position because "their aims, their curriculum, and the example set by their teachers combine to provide a comparatively harmonious moral influence" (ibid, p. 67). Different denominations may not have widely differing core values and "religion does at least take morality seriously" (Halstead and McLaughlin, 2000, p. 276). Thus, Catholic schools are well-placed to help children understand what morality is and why it is important, because of their clearly defined values and

close community, by presenting a set of life principles to which the children are

encouraged to conform in an atmosphere and ethos that blends home and school

values well. In this way, they can learn the moral principles, reflect on their own

and others' actions, are open to extending their own moral horizons, respect

differences and the rights of others, and develop skills for making mature moral

judgements and how to act on them, at all times remaining faithful to the

teachings and developments of the Catholic Church.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Since 1991, successive popes have developed the concept of "human ecology" as a core teaching which sits within and alongside Catholic Social Teaching. The first appearance of the term came with *Centesimus Annus* (John Paul II, 1991) which talks of respecting "the natural and moral structure with which he [man (sic)] has been endowed" (para. 38) and the idea of human ecology being founded in the family, whence one learns "what it actually means to be a person" (para. 39); this theme is further developed through *Evangelium Vitae* (John Paul II, 1995) to take on the meaning of "an ethics of life" (Vogt, 2017, p. 245). In *Laudato Si* (Francis, 2015a), this is again advanced in terms of a "normative approach to thinking and acting in the light of the social, ecological and spiritual relatedness of all human beings" (Vogt, 2017, p. 246). What becomes clear is that a thread of morality runs through the Church's views on all matters ecological from those connected with the multitude of inter-human interactions to the more tangible human interactions with the surroundings in which we live. Thus by thinking of human society in terms of "complex moving systems" (Glendon, 2007, p. 268) and an "interconnected relationality … to ethics" (Taylor, 2011, p. 589), not just stewardship of the Earth's environment, we can begin to explore what Dyball and Newell (2015) see as a moral dimension to human ecology by looking for "what it would take to live well in a humane world" (p. 205).

Based on these ideas of interconnectedness between morality and ecology, I wish to invoke Bronfenbrenner's theory as a reference point and theoretical lens because he perceives ecology as a conceptual heuristic by which he means "to analyse systematically the nature of the existing accommodation between the person and the surrounding milieu" (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 517). In other words, Bronfenbrenner embraces ecology for its universal approach to inquiry, rather than as a focus on the earth or environmental matters as such. His

approach is to take the *notion* of ecology – regarding its study of relationships and interactions among organisms and their environment - and refocus it on human development. By using this ecological lens, he imagines human development as the study of humans interacting with their social and material environments, considering how human beings both form, and are formed by, the social, political, cultural, and, even, environmental settings they occupy. His approach is thus not the study of ecology *per se*, but it is an ecological approach to human development which is very much in keeping with philosophical and pedagogical traditions in Germany where ecology was seen as "a methodological approach that … places great value on the everyday context of social relationships" (Vogt, 2017, p. 238).

In its most basic terms, Bronfenbrenner's ecological model is a reconceptualization of human development in terms of the developing person, their environment, and the relation between them - together described by Bronfenbrenner as, interchangeably, *development-in-context* (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 529) or the *ecology of human development* (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 518; 1979, p. 12). Disdaining traditional approaches to human development that highlight age levels or internal, psychological processes – for example, in the typical classic stage theories of development from Freud through to Kohlberg - Bronfenbrenner stresses that development is a relationship between the developing person and the settings and systems that embody the ecological environment for that person. Such a relationship will be characterised by three features: first of all, that "the developing person is a dynamic entity… not merely a *tabula rasa*" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 21), with the ability to manage and change their environment; secondly, that the relationship between an individual and their surroundings requires "mutual accommodation" and "reciprocity" (ibid., 1979, p. 22) because he felt that they influenced each other; and thirdly, that the environment is not limited to the immediate settings that surround the individual.

Bronfenbrenner's model embodies a unique understanding of the environment in ecological terms. He describes this ecological environment as a "set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 3). The original model explained in his seminal book imagined four nested structures: he called these the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems (ibid 1979, pp. 7–8); later, he added another layer which he referred to as the chronosphere (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, p. 724) that refers to the passage of time but for the purposes of this research the time frame is too small to make this a relevant consideration and the transitions which Bronfenbrenner conceives for the chronosphere do not apply to the students or staff who were interviewed. Each of the systems progressively moves further away from the individual's immediate setting, encompassing more expansive domains of human activity. Bronfenbrenner's main hypothesis concerns an iteration between a developing person and the environment, which he defined in the following manner:

> *The ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded.*
>
> (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 21)

This definition recognises that the individual is a dynamic and thriving entity, capable of restructuring milieu in which he/she resides, but also is someone on whom the environment exerts an influence, characterised by reciprocity. In the case of my study, the individual is a child and the mutual accommodation which is reflected in Bronfenbrenner's theory occurs as they progress through school and interact with significant others – their parents, their teachers, other education professionals, and their peers. The child's development arises from interactions in both the physical environment (the school) and the psychological environment as

well as from influences of those environments. Bronfenbrenner's theory recruited elements of Lewin's rationale, in particular ideas about his construct of the "life space" or "psychological field" (Lewin, 1931, 1935, 1951). In this metatheory, Lewin stresses that the individual is a complex organism interacting in a cultural or social environment. The idea of the "life space" encompasses learning that happens when a person and their psychological environment come together in a "psychological field" (Bigge and Shermis, 1999). Bronfenbrenner indicates that to understand development one must understand in what way an individual perceives and operates within such a formalised ecology. How does this individual make sense of a world that "extends beyond the immediate situation to include a picture of other settings in which he has actively participated, the relations among those settings, the nature and influence of external contexts with which he has had no face-to-face contact"? (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 28). The ecological model additionally accounts for conflicts among settings or systems, i.e., what goes on in a microsystem and how it relates to the values or ideologies that comprise the macrosystem beyond it, and Bronfenbrenner believes that communication between systems will be a key factor in explaining human development. For example, behaviour within a microsystem may be altered because individuals come into conflict with information from another system that challenges them to rethink how they perceive that information and subsequently act upon it. Learning and, by extension, moral development are thus complex processes whereby a person gains new insights by being in mutual interaction with their environment.

I intend to explore how moral development is linked to gradual awareness of moral positions as these children go through school. The idea of Bronfenbrenner's nested environments is apposite here because it can encompass the various levels of influence that bear on the child, from peers to diocesan and national policy. Settings for the children include:

The MICRO level: at this level, settings include a) the classroom, which is important by virtue of same age peers and friendship groups playing a part; b) the whole school community (which might include differently aged peers), the house groups to which the children belong, or the School Council (in particular because some of the children who offered to assist were School Council members); and c) their home and other significant social settings – however for the purposes of this study, it is not intended to focus on the home even though the influences from this source may be highly significant in the moral development of the children.

The MESO level: In this level, the relations between home and school are significant, mainly because the Church and the school assert that parents are vital partners in education and have shared or agreed to certain policies such as the School Rules. Drawing on the questions which have been used in the field work, there are several other significant internal aspects of the school's life which may impact on this level. The children in the interview groups have been drawn from two main groups, the Chaplaincy Group and the School Council, both of which provide a lead in the way that some moral issues are seen. At certain times of the year, these groups feed back to their peers through assemblies, Circle time (where children in a class gather for reflection), and during whole school focus weeks (for example, during Anti-Bullying Week) and are thus important agents in the development of the issues. Finally, within the meso level, the local priest, who comes in to celebrate Mass with classes or the whole school, may well offer moral themes which can further explored during RE lessons and extra-curricular activities. Thus, examination of the meso level is a very important tool for analysis.

The EXO level: This level relates to the "big ideas" which may impact on the children's development. In the main, these are settings where the child is not involved as "an active participant, but in which events occur that

affect, or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Such influences have a vital role in defining the meaning of the immediate situation; for example, parental employment or unemployment could affect how the child understands its role in the family. For the purposes of this study, the exo system includes both general educational policies and those specifically relating to moral education which have been generated at national, diocesan and school level. As a further example, the National Curriculum has references to moral development and there is further commentary on this topic in the Ofsted inspection documentation, both of which then influence the diocesan and school policies. Likewise, the Catholic Church has doctrinal views on morality and moral development which also play into the diocesan and school policies and even into the hidden curriculum.

The MACRO level: This level involves generalised patterns of ideology and institutional structure which are characteristic of a particular culture or subculture. Public social policy is part of the macro system which determines the properties of the micro, meso and exo systems that occur in everyday school life.

Bronfenbrenner's model is, unquestionably, an abstract and analytical understanding of the places and spaces in which human beings act and interact and offers some tangible insights into these various spheres of school activity. However, although in many ways Bronfenbrenner's Ecology Theory is very tidy and shows relevance to the study being undertaken here, it is very static and there is a need to account for tensions which arise in society at this point in the 21st Century. For example, children in this school often come from different [Catholic] cultural settings; indeed, when I undertook my field work, there were substantial numbers of children from Eastern Europe (mainly Poland, Slovakia, and Lithuania) and from Africa (mainly Nigerian and Ghanaian children). The issue

with having such children in the school, even if not in the sample that was interviewed, is that sometimes these cultures have different interpretations of Catholic morality, some of which appear quite old-fashioned when compared to the liberal outlook that some Western countries embrace, and which may differ significantly from those espoused by the school. In addition to the problem of these differences within the Catholic faith, the school also welcomes children from a diverse range of other World Faiths where specific moral interpretations may also create tension.
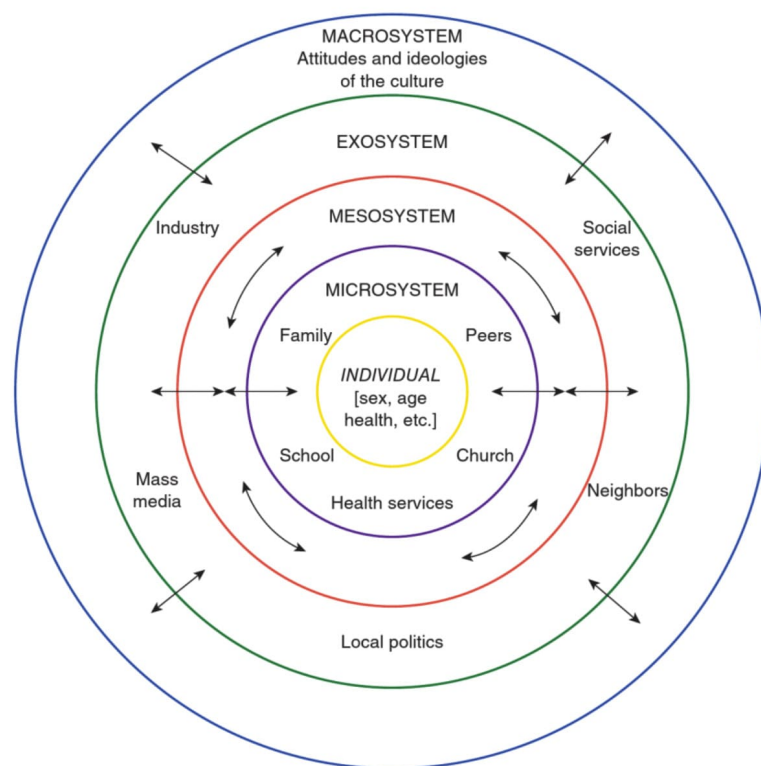
Figure 2.4 Bronfenbrenner's nested model for the Ecological Systems Theory

To summarise, then, in Bronfenbrenner's model of human development the environments within which the various actors live, play, and work become key study sites for development. A researcher, who enters this environment with an ecological orientation, must therefore understand the idiosyncrasies of the environment if they hope to understand human development taking place within it. Perhaps most importantly - both in a practical sense and for the purposes of

this investigation - Bronfenbrenner's context-sensitive model attaches importance to research that takes seriously the experience of those being studied. In other words, to understand this school as an ecological environment does not simply imply an understanding of its discernible features, it also demands an understanding of how the various actors make sense of and experience the specific school environment.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to review some of the theoretical perspectives which have been considered for this research, in particular and more generally, to set out clearly the background for the choice of methodology which applies to the principal and ancillary research questions. Since social science research draws on a wide range of approaches and methods, it was necessary to determine which of these would enable me to gather good and appropriate data as methodology is considered to be "the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes" (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). My discussion here is mainly centred around a justification of my choice of methodology drawing on the commentary in Chapter 1 where the research questions are presented. The remainder of this chapter therefore focuses on the methodological framework of this research; a brief discussion of qualitative research as it pertains to this study; epistemological and ontological considerations; the research design; a commentary on the specific methods and techniques used; ethical and methodological concerns; and the range of participants whose work and views inform this study.

Choosing and justifying a methodology

As noted above, Crotty considers that the methodology is a vehicle for explicating clearly the critical justification behind the enquiry and to demonstrate to a reader what the framework of that enquiry consists of. Bronfenbrenner's theoretical perspectives, which I use to interrogate some outcomes of this enquiry, concern the ways in which an individual interacts with the environment. The overlapping strands of social experience (in the micro-, meso-, exo- and macro-levels), which are explained in more detail in chapter 2, offer a way to understand the pupils'

perspectives on the moral climate in the school from the context in which they operate.

Based on these perspectives, it became clear that an ethnographic approach, using qualitative techniques, would be the most appropriate technique to adopt, given the kinds of questions I wished to investigate in this study, since it permitted me to "get under the skin" of the community which I wished to study. As Sikes puts it in the introduction to *Ethnography for Education*, "essentially, ethnography seeks to make sense of social settings and social behaviours from inside, privileging the perspectives of the people involved in the situation that is the focus of the investigation. Interview, observation and documentary analysis are, not surprisingly, key research methods within the methodology" (Pole and Morrison, 2003, p. xiii). Thus, I have undertaken a wide variety of approaches which fall under the general umbrella of ethnography to help gather my data. This ranged from participant observation, group interviews with children and individual interviews with key adults, the scrutiny of school documents and the collection of photographic evidence focused on the spaces within the school.

The main objective of collecting such a wide variety of evidence was to seek to find themes in all of these data that point to an underlying philosophy of the school – What is the nature of the school and how is the school's philosophy promoted? How is a moral perspective brought into different aspects of the education experience across the school? How is this school a distinctively Catholic Christian institution that is rooted in the moral teachings of the Catholic Church?

The abstract nature of these questions means that I need to use an ethnographic approach to uncover meanings and perceptions of the children and adults involved. My aim is to approach the study in the spirit of symbolic interactionism, considering how staff and students at the school understand moral education in

the light of their own specific Catholic culture. The methodology of ethnography is rooted in Constructivism or Interpretivism (Blaikie, 2010) and requires an abductive research strategy in which the overall account is drawn from the social actors' accounts (i.e., from those accounts given by participants in the study). Through this set of accounts, it should be possible to hypothesise about meanings and motives for the actions which arise from the social life of this institution. For example, what leads members of this Catholic community to practice moral education in a particular fashion? The relationship between belonging to the Catholic faith and holding particular moral views which are then passed on in a particular manner can then be interpreted in terms of the motives of the various actors concerned. Interpretivism seeks out the "meanings and interpretations, the motives and intentions" (ibid 2010, p. 115) that drive the members of a community and raises those motives to an important position in social theory and research. Their world is interpreted by the various members of the community; my task as researcher is to unravel this 'insider' view rather than impose my own external, 'outsider', view on it. This approach means that I need to see things from the perspective of the participants and not my own (necessarily biased) perspective. An important part of my role has been to articulate the everyday beliefs and practices, which may well be taken for granted, but which help provide an understanding of those actions.

The meanings for which I was searching were embedded in the language used by these social actors/participants, as well as their day-to-day practice. Because of this, I have chosen to use a series of relatively unstructured interviews which contain non-directive forms of questioning within them as I need the participants, the social actors, to express the narrative in their own terms and not be guided too much by my own interpretations or preconceptions. The members of this group share common meanings and interpretations - they are intersubjective meanings - and are sustained by the interactions between members of the group.

The explanations and interpretations that I am seeking need to go beyond what the individuals ascribe to their actions, and I have had to use approximations and abstractions to understand what has happened. This approach reflects on my ontological assumptions - that the reality of this community is socially constructed by the participants; it is created by them and can only exist because of their activities as a community, and is a complex mixture of meanings, cultural symbols, practices and the artefacts and infrastructure of the social institution itself. The ontological implication is that this social reality is 'real' to its inhabitants, and if I am to interpret it I will need to move from the description of the participants to more technical descriptions, with the process of abduction being applied, using a logic which is "based on drawing out possible analytic ideas from in situ observation, comparing and contrasting them with other research settings to allow the researcher to refine ideas and to do justice to, and certainly not reduce, the complexity of everyday life" (Ridley, 2015). Through this a series of postulates can be derived and relations between variables can be tested. It may be then possible to bring some existing theory or perspectives to bear on them or to generate an explanation of those relationships using the methods of grounded theory.

The gateway into this deeper understanding is discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is all about theorising how language is used "to say things, do things and be things" (Gee, 2014a, p. 3). When language is used, either in speaking or writing, there is always a possibility that the speaker/writer is seen as the winner or loser in a social game. Discourse analysis can be approached from either the descriptive or a critical approach; the descriptive approach looks at how language works so that it can be understood, but the critical attempts to apply to the world some political or social perspective. One goal of discourse analysis is to uncover and bring to conscious awareness what is normally taken for granted knowledge. This requires seeing the old as brand-new, taking all the unsaid assumptions and

information that have been left unsaid. Under the tip of this iceberg, there is much more to be known or inferred from the context in which the utterance is taking place. In other words, "what the speaker says + context = what the speaker means" (Gee, 2014b, p. 18).

Philosophical considerations

Researchers generally work within two broad traditions: the positivist, or scientific, paradigm and the naturalistic, or anti-positivist, paradigm. Qualitative approaches to research are generally rooted in the naturalistic or interpretive paradigm where concepts and theories arise as a consequence of the research, with hypotheses generated as a result of the data collection and analysis. When the data is being analysed, theory is developed using inductive principles such as those of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Strauss and Corbin, 1994; Charmaz, 2014, 2015). As a Chemist by training, I initially struggled to understand this approach and to reconcile it with my science background, having been inculcated with the positivist notion that research is all about using existing theory to test hypotheses through experiments and using the results to corroborate, refute or refashion the theory, but above all having a "belief in a knowable world" (Gergen, 1990, p. 25); I spent a considerable part of my professional life passing on these perceptions to the students to whom I taught that objectivity, generalisability and replicability were the epitome of good logical science. However, as I became less involved with the day-to-day rigours of teaching Chemistry, my interests as a novice social sciences researcher were refocussed onto the people with whom I came into contact and my curiosity about what motivates or drives them took precedence over the more logico-rational approaches of experimental Chemistry. Although I perhaps did not realise it at the time, I was evolving into a naturalistic researcher, seeking to understand my place as an "insider and outsider to reveal and describe how our representations

of the world and those who live there are indeed positionally organized" (Macbeth, 2001, p. 38). This epistemological epiphany has taken years to unravel but has been an important step in realising that I can make a valuable contribution to the education research community and in helping me to discover what constitutes my identity as a researcher. Despite the introductions to epistemology and ontology which we received as part of our induction to doctoral research, these ideas never sat comfortably, and it was only at the stage of devising a strategy for generating and analysing my data that some clarity began to emerge in my mind. An account of a similar journey in the field of nursing (Ward, Hoare and Gott, 2015) captures my own attitudes, misgivings and reticence and I take comfort from the conclusion that it is possible to start off as a positivist and end up as a naturalistic researcher, seeking to understand "the social basis of what we take to be knowledge" (Gergen, 1990, p. 23).

Qualitative research methods

The links between the naturalistic, anti-positivist, paradigm and qualitative research have already been briefly commented on above, but characteristically, qualitative methodologies begin with the collection of some data and an initial analysis, which then presents opportunities for further data collection and analysis, leading the researcher through a cycle which can be revisited as many times as necessary. My intention was to build on Charmaz's invocation:

> *Let the world appear anew through your data. Gathering rich data will give you solid material for building a significant analysis. Rich data are detailed, focused, and full. They reveal participants' views, feelings, intentions, and actions as well as the contexts and structures of their lives.*

> (2014, p. 23)

The use of a grounded theory (GT) *approach* allowed me to generate theory from research that is "grounded" in the data. Since I wished to remain as unbiased as

possible, it seemed logical that the principled and analytical approach of grounded theory lends itself well to generating links between the layers of complexity which would inevitably arise from the various strands of my data and an analysis that drew on Bronfenbrenner's theoretical perspectives. Further, more detailed, comment with regard to the nature of identification and application of categories which transpired using this method are made in my comments on data collection and analysis, where I will also explain how I have attempted to keep aspects of subjectivity under control.

My GT approach

In further developing my method, I thought it was good practice to draw theory directly from the data itself as it is conceivable that such theory will better fit the data than any preconceived notions I might bring to the arena of a faith-based primary school. The ensuing theory is then likely to be more usable in practical situations, thus further assisting me to achieve one of the aims/objectives of the research which was to help the school to identify ways in which it might improve its delivery of moral education in the future.

A serious concern, which has been mentioned previously in the section on reflexivity in the introduction, was that I might be too closely entwined with the research, potentially bringing many preconceptions to bear and thus unduly influencing the outcomes. Corbin and Strauss (2008) recognise that the personal involvement which qualitative researchers bring to bear on their subject can be beneficial, and they refer to "credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness" (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 182–183) among other attributes which can enhance the research. Further benefits of a GT approach are that it offers a useful strategy for integrating understanding of the various facets of the teachers' knowledge (Brown and McIntyre, 1993) and potentially for establishing relationships between the

various components of the data; it also opens up opportunities for a deeper investigation of the role of pupil voice (Flutter and Rudduck, 2004; Rudduck and McIntyre, 2008).

Bringing together Method and Data Analysis

As mentioned previously, key elements of the data collection process within the school involved: a) the documents which set out frameworks from which the moral life of the school emerges; b) conversations with key actors in the school, both teachers and pupils; c) my own observations of both how these frameworks are enacted and described through the events, celebrations, assemblies and worship sessions which are intrinsically linked to the school's Catholicity; d) some sense of how the fabric of the school itself was used as a means of emphasising and reinforcing the messages captured in those frameworks, using photographic evidence as the chief resource. It is worth noting that after May 2018, with the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), all schools were advised that the use of cameras and mobile phones needed to be very carefully monitored if they were to remain compliant, so some adjustment to my planning had to take place as a consequence.

There were three distinct phases to the data gathering. The first was an embedding phase, where I became familiar with the daily discourse of the school and where, reciprocally, the children came to see me as another accepted part of their school. The second phase was a substantive data collection phase where documents were collected and examined to highlight potential areas for inclusion later. The final phase covered the period of interviewing where time was set aside to discuss matters in detail with the teachers and the pupils and to sharpen the focus on phenomena identified in phase 2.

Initial embedding phase

The principal rationale at this time was that I needed to learn the daily habits and operational customs of the school, develop relationships with as many participants as possible and with the wider school community, negotiate a researcher role within the school and learn how to effectively collect and record data within the field location (Barley and Bath, 2014; Merewether and Fleet, 2014) since my experience of being in a primary school environment has been very limited. I needed some time to practise the role of ethnographer, also unfamiliar, and to understand the many different nuances of a primary school which had not appeared in the context of my previous work environments. My underlying motivation for doing this was to establish trust across the whole community so that the eventual data collection would be as reliable as possible. Clark (2005) recommends that "a familiar person spending extended periods of time in a setting" (p. 492) is a good way to gain useful information through observation and Punch (2002) appears to favour the participant observation approach within ethnographic settings to get to know the children outside of one-off encounters and so better understand their perspectives.

Over the last 9 years, I have been periodically involved with the school through my role as Music Minister at church. This has usually entailed playing for school Masses and sacramental celebrations (First Communion preparation) but has developed into a more formal arrangement since the appointment, in 2013, of the current Headteacher who identified an opportunity in the School Effectiveness Form (SEF), firstly through developing a school Liturgy committee made up of parents, governors, teachers, clergy and myself and most recently through fortnightly "Time Out To Worship" (TOTW) sessions on a Thursday morning. Thus, as far as the children and staff are concerned, I have "been a fixture" for some

time and I believe I am seen as having a direct professional and vocational interest in the development of the school and its community.

The embedding phase began informally in November 2016, following discussions with the Headteacher, Mrs Topps (pseudonym), who usually leads the TOTW sessions; on those occasions when she is not available the RE curriculum Leader, Mrs Morrell (pseudonym), or one of the other more experienced teachers leads the session. The sessions consist of a welcoming song, followed by a linked commentary and then this pattern is repeated for the remainder of the session. They were always a good opportunity to quietly make a mental note of how the community functions and how the values of the school were developed and to then follow up any significant thoughts by writing a comment in my field notes. Opportunities were also offered to attend Collective Worship (not TOTW sessions, but specific celebrations related to Catholicity, such as Lenten reflections and Christmas services), to join with teacher colleagues on duty at break or lunch, RE Lessons for different year groups, and "Golden Time", which is time on a Friday afternoon where pupils are encouraged to reflect on their misdemeanours with a member of staff. I placed particular emphasis on visiting the reflection space when children were willing to allow me access there. The practicalities of Participant Observation in this primary school thus involved me sitting in on lessons, paying attention to what was said during TOTW sessions, watching children's interactions at break times and during the lunch hour, paying attention to the myriad adult-child interactions taking place and noting the tone of those interactions. Much of this was recorded as field notes, alongside which reflections on those incidents and observations were made.

First data collection phase

The first set of data to be collected was the school documentation. The Headteacher arranged for a comprehensive pack to be assembled, consisting of materials from school policies (in particular the Behaviour Policy, the school's "Statements to Live By", RE Curriculum documents, Equality Policy, Spirituality statement and policy, British Values policy); diocesan inspection materials (copy of the last inspection report and a copy of the diocesan inspection framework) and Ofsted reports (from the last two inspections, also available from the school's website and the main Ofsted website), especially in relation to the sections which refer to Catholicity, conflict and disagreements between children and the manner in which these conflicts are managed during unstructured time. Since my first approach to the school, the governance arrangements underwent a change, along with all the other diocesan schools, and it became a member of a local Academy Trust; policy documents for this Trust, which might be pertinent to my investigation, were also furnished. In September 2018, the diocese once again changed the governance of its schools and all schools joined one of four Catholic Multi-Academy Trusts (CMATs) which related to the county geographical areas bounding each set of schools.

Interview phase

Following a first trawl of the documentation provided, a set of questions was devised to cover the two groups with whom I intended to hold more detailed discussions. The questions for the teachers were drawn up to triangulate with data from the initial analysis of documentation (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2013, p. 195) for corroboration purposes, to help with enrichment and general credibility of the investigation, and to "capture a holistic view of the phenomenon being studied" (Curtin and Fossey, 2007, p. 90) as well as a "broader understanding of

the research question" (Farmer *et al.*, 2006, p. 388). Fetterman describes the purpose of triangulation as being

> *… at the heart of ethnographic validity, testing one source of information against another to strip away alternative explanations and prove a hypothesis. Typically, the ethnographer compares information sources to test the quality of the information (and the person sharing it), to understand more completely the part an actor plays in the social drama, and ultimately to put the whole situation into perspective.*

(2015, p. 189)

In this context, it was important I gained access to key personnel who could provide reliable and deeply contextualised understandings of the nature of the school and those aspects of it which feed into the moral development of the children (and staff).

The first meeting was with Mrs Topps and nearly half of the questions were covered from the interview schedule in Appendix G. On transcribing this session, I noted that there was a great deal of hesitation on the part of the respondent, making me realise that I had perhaps approached the interviews from the wrong perspective and should really have ensured that, even though I was dealing with an adult, these were more "casual conversations" (Fetterman, 2015, p. 184) than interrogations. Accordingly, when I began the sessions with the children, and later with Mrs Morrell, I revised the order of the questions to make sure that initial questions settled the respondents into the rhythm of the interviews rather than pushed them hard to think about the more difficult concepts first. There is much literature on what might constitute the optimal approaches when interviewing children (for example, see Docherty and Sandelowski, 1999) but little consensus on actual procedures which will enable the children to transmit their thoughts effectively. Subsequent reflections after these sessions suggested that the

children were very happy to chatter freely and that the revised order for the children (see Appendix H) assisted in procuring a set of valuable data.

Photographic evidence

Photographs are a form of data that supports ethnographic description because they enable us to read the people and situations in the photograph. Although the images do not tell the whole story, they do provide interesting starting points for describing and understanding multiple modes of representation in a variety of cultural situations. The images captured my perspective, albeit a subjective one, at a particular moment in time and reflected thoughts and interesting artefacts, mainly display boards, that were transient and needed to be captured before they were lost. Through this kind of visual ethnography, we can explore "how all our ways of thinking, believing, doing and interacting are shaped by the world we see" (Cleghorn and Prochner, 2012, p. 278) and to establish how "visual representations bear an important relationship… to words in theoretical discussion" (Pink, 2007). In particular, I was interested to see how corridor space and wall space in classrooms were utilised in reinforcing the explicit messages from direct teaching and from role modelling by adults and how it might be organised in such a way as to highlight to the children what the school community considers important and how the school community works with the children (Prochner, Cleghorn and Green, 2008). What happens inside a classroom is potentially linked to what happens outside that classroom; indeed, how the building is designed, the materials within it and the furnishings distributed inside it each play an important role in the pedagogic practices of that school and, in turn, point to social meanings about the school (McGregor, 2004).

Access to the site and sample size

The school

The school, which I have anonymised as St Boniface RC Primary School, was selected as the research site for several reasons. I had a long-standing connection to the school, through my role as a governor for 7 years (including a 4-year term as governor with responsibility for Special Needs), as the parent of a child who attended the school and most recently as a volunteer who supported the spiritual life of the school through my music ministry. The school is also very local to my home, so access is not an issue; it is well-known locally as a school with a high reputation for both achievement and for the quality of the spiritual experience gained by the children. This had been recognised in the school's most recent Ofsted and Section 48 (denominational) inspections. Through my initial discussions with the Headteacher, it was clear that she felt my proposal offered her an opportunity to engage with some more objective insights that might assist in the school's planning for future inspections and in the development of the school's spiritual and moral life. Even though the school had made some strides in involving children in both of these activities, she felt that the project offered some potential analysis which might be valuable since the last diocesan report (2013) mentioned the term "moral" only once and the Ofsted short report (2016) did not mention it at all. Perhaps these omissions are due in large part to the refocussing of both diocesan and Ofsted reports onto pupil attainment, despite the continued emphasis placed on children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) in the latest documents for inspections (The Office for Standards in Education Children's Services and Skills [Ofsted], 2018) and the Primary National Curriculum (Department for Education [DfE], 2013).

St Boniface is an average-sized primary school which serves the families within a parish on the north-east of Northtown (anonymised for this study), which is a

town situated in a former coalfield area. At the time of the research the school's website reported that it had 241 children on roll (a slight fall from the 259 at the last inspection point), between the ages of 3 and 11; the last inspection report suggested that approximately 51% of the children were baptised Catholics, with a further 30% coming from other Christian denominations, 2% from other faiths and 17% with no declared religious affiliation. At the time of the Ofsted and Section 48 inspections in 2013, the proportions of students with minority ethnic backgrounds or who had English as an Additional Language (EAL) were average compared to the national picture, but an influx of Eastern European families had changed slightly this by 2018. There were relatively few children with serious learning difficulties and data suggested that there were few from disadvantaged backgrounds, though this may reflect either an unwillingness to claim rightful benefits or lack of knowledge of that process since the catchment area is considered to be of mixed Socioeconomic Status (National Statistics, 2019), broadly reflected in the intake. The school is some distance from the patronal church, but the parish priest visited regularly and was involved with the school's governance. The school was rated "Good" in terms of Ofsted grading and was rated "Outstanding" for overall effectiveness in terms of the Section 48 denominational grading. Staffing had tended to be stable, though promotions had meant some key players have moved on within the local Trust; the current Headteacher was appointed on a temporary basis in April 2013, and the appointment made permanent in June 2013.

The sample

Following discussions with the Headteacher and the RE Curriculum Leader about who might be appropriate to speak to in addition to themselves, it was decided that a range of Key Stage 2 (KS2) students would be best placed to help me address the general areas covered by my research questions. I requested that

those involved were drawn from subsets of the year groups so that a spectrum of views could be incorporated. The subsets chosen were a) children who were active or had been involved in the School Council or b) children who were active and current members of the Chaplaincy Group. The decision about which children would be approached was left in the hands of the RE Curriculum Leader who worked with class teachers to create the final list of 16 individuals, shown in Appendix B, with a strong request to ensure a gender balance if at all possible. The original intention was to interview the children in groups of four, but when the time arrived to be interviewed, two children withdrew and were not replaced, whilst one was on holiday when I returned for the second part of his group's interview, and another was "on reflection" for the second part of his group's interview. The consequences of these losses are dealt with in the section on ethics, below.

Minimising bias

Agar (1996) poses a fundamental question about the way in which ethnographic studies are carried out, by asking "Who are you to do this?" (p.91). The question is meant to drive the researcher to think about the baggage that is carried into the study - as Thomson (2003) implies, we all have a virtual knapsack which we carry around with us, containing aspects of the culture(s) in which we have grown up, our personal life and professional experiences, all of which shape the person we have become and mould the biases that we bring to the study. Besides these items in our knapsack, the groups with which an ethnographer engages will also assign their own perceptions of the researcher; in my case, the nature of my working life and my attachment to the religious beliefs held by the Catholic Church meant that as I began my investigation there was already an assumption that I had some knowledge of and empathy for the school's mission, that I valued Catholic education, that I understood the vernacular of Catholic education and had

some appreciation of the potential obstacles which Catholic educators encounter.

My concerns, noted on several occasions in my field notes, were always about

assumptions that I might make and that I might tend to see only what I wanted

rather than being an objective observer. Thus, as Agar (ibid.) argues, the only

way to deal with such biases is to acknowledge them at the outset and then

return to them when drawing conclusions about the data.

Bias is a highly charged term, often weighed down with negative connotations for

the researcher, with some authors suggesting prejudice or a personal view that is

not in keeping with research paradigms (for example, Schwandt, 1997, p. 147).

Ogden (2008, p. 61) contends that "the real imperative is for researchers to be

aware of their values and predispositions and to acknowledge them as inseparable

from the research process". Throughout my research I was aware of four forms of

potential bias (reported in Roulston and Shelton, 2015) that might affect my

outcomes: "selection bias" which could have arisen from the manner in which the

children were selected for interview; "experimenter bias" where I may have

infected the interview responses through over-zealous reactions to my

interviewees; "observer bias" where I might view the events I observed by

bringing my particular baggage to bear on the comments I made in my field

notes; and "confirmation bias" where I may have contaminated the data by

overlaying a number of personal interpretations based on my beliefs or chosen

theoretical framework (Nickerson, 1998). With the selection bias, I had little

choice but to accept that I had asked for children with a range of backgrounds and

whose previous input into the moral life of the school meant their responses were

likely to be loaded towards the kinds of answers I was seeking. In terms of

experimenter bias, it was very hard not to make the interviews conversational as

that intimacy had potential benefits in terms of the yield of my data (Mercer,

2007), but I was sufficiently an "outsider" that I could ask some awkward

questions without fear in order to gain truthful and reliable responses. To

minimise observer bias, I made notes contemporaneously and then returned to them after some time when I believed I could take a more objective view of the events being described. Where the data analysis was concerned, I made every effort to consider all the evidence carefully in order to avoid "unwitting selectivity" (Nickerson, 1998, p. 175).

Approaches to coding the data

When I reviewed my methods of analysing the data, I realised that undertaking a full grounded theory approach was too complex a task and I ended up using a "grounded theory lite" approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 81) rather than an approach which required full-blown theory development, which Braun and Clarke argue is a legitimate approach for novice researchers. However, a further set issues of issues now pertained: firstly, whether to analyse the data inductively or deductively – if carried out inductively then this suited the approaches I had originally planned since the analysis would be "bottom up" and help me to develop codes and themes from the data without imposing a pre-determined framework of codes or themes onto them (Patton, 1990); secondly, to decide whether to consider the themes at a semantic or a latent level (Boyatzis, 1998) – with a semantic approach, the researcher looks only at what has been said in the interviews and develops the themes at a surface level, though the literatures stress this does not mean that they are superficial or purely descriptive, and the significance of the patterns, their broader meanings and implications are thus theorised (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Overall, the analysis involved looking at the data set to see where the semantic, realist themes could be drawn out.

I followed 5 steps in my analysis of the raw data, which broadly follow the model proposed in undertaking thematic analysis (Terry *et al.*, 2017):

1. Braun & Clarke (2006) and Nowell et al. (2017) advocate deep familiarity with the data, with the latter advocating good organisation of materials. I spent a great deal of time familiarizing myself with the data – transcribing it myself, rather than asking a third party to do it because this would enable me to note initial ideas and carry out a preliminary coding. Each transcription was carefully logged and saved systematically for future reference.

2. The second phase was to then begin generating initial codes, systematically allocating codes to interesting parts of the data using NVivo (Bazeley and Richards, 2011) and having a coding framework which enabled labelling of "the single words, phrases, or whole paragraphs that contain information relating to each particular point being made" (Green *et al.*, 2007, p. 548).

3. Following my first sweep of the data, I then revisited them within NVivo which enabled me to search for themes and to collate some of the original codes into more general themes, related to the research questions, by running reports and searches across multiple coded sources of data (i.e., my interview transcripts).

4. As these larger themes emerged and were linked to the research questions, I then created a mind-map – initially on paper and then later using "Coggle", an online tool - to gain a general view of the themes and codes, with snippets of data attached to them as evidence, to see how the data fitted the research questions.

5. The final stage was writing up the findings and explaining my ideas about what they told me about moral education in the school and choosing a selection of compelling extracts which related back to each research question and appropriate literature to produce "a scholarly report of the analysis" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 87) so it then became a strong narrative which contains arguments that relate to my research questions.

Finally, it needs to be recognised that throughout this process there is continual engagement with the data set, that "the researcher is positioned as active in the research process; themes do not just *emerge*" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 96)

and that the methods I adopted are not neutral (Mauthner and Doucet, 2003) because they are imbued with the epistemological, ontological and theoretical assumptions that I bring to this study (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000).

Ethical approval

Gaining consent

Since the publication of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN General Assembly, 1989) there has been some momentum building with recognition that children can act in their own right when considering their lives, their learning and the communities in which they live, and moves away from the idea that children should be passive recipients of research carried out by others. This has led to the adoption of a number of approaches which foster children's participation in research enterprises involving them, giving them a bigger say in consultation and according priority to their views about matters that are relevant to them. Some of these rights have been enshrined in reports and guidelines (Department Of Health, 2001; Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2003) which are underpinned by serious consideration of the ethical implications of working closely with young people and which recognise their rights as active participants by giving them the maximum opportunity to represent their views in an authentic manner. Children are now seen, through a post-modern lens, as having "surprising and extraordinary strengths and capabilities" (Malaguzzi, 1993, p. 73); as "co-constructors of knowledge in relationship with other children and adults … active, competent and eager to engage with the world." (Dahlberg, Moss and Pence, 1999, p. 7); and as knowledgeable, competent, strong and powerful members of society (Bruner, 1996).

At the heart of these developments is an acknowledgement that informed consent plays a vital role, in other words voluntary consent based on their possession of sufficient and appropriate information, including their right to opt out of the research (Dockett, Einarsdóttir and Perry, 2012; Dockett, Perry and Kearney, 2013; Mayne, Howitt and Rennie, 2016). Researchers seek parental permission before undertaking any work with children, but rather than assuming that this is a suitable proxy for engaging children, they have taken the further step of including the children in this process and gaining their consent (Einarsdóttir, 2007). It is generally agreed that when research involves children, there is an additional ethical aspect to consider, namely their ability (or otherwise) to make an informed decision about their participation.

Consequently, as part of the ethics process, sets of information sheets and consent sheets were drawn up to enable the children to undertake their role in the project voluntarily, knowing as much about the nature of the study (its purpose, what is actually involved, what happens and how long it will last), their obligations as participants and the potential dangers that might arise from their contributions, what would happen to the data that is collected and how this would be used, and how they might find out about the outcomes of the project. The children's sheets were drawn up using age-appropriate materials with a particular focus on their 'understandability' and readability (Ford, Sankey and Crisp, 2007), using plain language or pictorial representations (Dockett, Perry and Kearney, 2013) where applicable. These documents were given approval by the University's Research Ethics Committee (see Appendices C and D for samples used with the younger children). The time spent on developing these ideas was time well-spent and the children were familiar with what was expected in the study when I met with them for the first interview.

Ethical Issues

Withdrawals and their impact

Since my study purports to use a grounded theory (GT) approach, if not full adoption of this research methodology, I was concerned to find that some of the potential participants had decided to withdraw from the study or absented themselves for some reason (see above). The basic premise of GT is that data is used inductively and once it has been built into the next phase of analysis, it cannot be undone or completely erased from the researcher's thinking (Thorpe, 2014). The issue here was what to do with partial data, such as that collected during a first interview, when the participant was no longer available for the follow-up. The rules governing ethical research behaviour suggest that the rights of the participant to withdraw are paramount and supersede the researcher's desire to include the data in later analysis. Thorpe identified a number of "messy" (2014, p. 260) impacts on outcomes, and discusses some implications for discontinuing with the collected data including the parameters of the code of conduct under which the research has been sanctioned. In the final analysis, I opted to take a strict line and to remove any references to the conversations that I had with the children who absented themselves, inevitably decreasing my sample and potentially diluting the richness of the data set. Thus, the groups in Appendix B represent all those *invited* to participate, and I have therefore identified those whose inputs were no longer part of my analysis.

Not working alone

A key concern at the ethics approval stage was that perceived unequal power relations (Harcourt and Conroy, 2005) between me and the children would lead to them feeling pressured or that sensitive issues might arise and thus upset an individual. I had considered both of these issues prior to submission and

concluded that working in a child-friendly manner (Einarsdóttir, 2007) that built on the otherwise positive relations I have enjoyed with children at the school would successfully minimise such issues. The final agreed solution was to ensure that I always worked in a public space, within sight of, and earshot of, another adult well-known to the children. In practice, this meant holding the interviews around a table at the back of the Y4 classroom, with Mrs Morell teaching at the other side of the room, though it was not always helpful when the children in her class became animated when doing their classwork. At times, the noise levels grew so loud that it was impossible to hear responses from the interviewees and on a few occasions, I had to stop the recording for a few moments until things settled down before recommencing the interviews. On other occasions, pausing was not a practical solution, so I moved the group outside to the dining area where other adults were able to see us, and this proved to be a good solution which still satisfied the spirit and the letter of the ethics requirements.

Summary

In this chapter, I have explained the background to my choice of methodology and have then developed my philosophical position; I have discussed some of the issues that are pertinent to both the qualitative approaches I followed and the practicalities of collecting my data, as well as some of the ethical concerns that I have had to consider in greater detail. In the chapter which follows, I present an account of the findings from this investigation.

Chapter 4 - Findings

In chapter 3, I have explained the approaches to my research project and how the data was collected. For the purposes of my study, I have adopted the eight categories offered by Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen (1998) to help my understanding of what happens in the school, to give me a structure for thinking about what I have learned from these data, and relate them to my research questions, as I have explained in Chapter 1. It would seem logical for me to explain what I meant by these categories and how I interpreted the original meaning attached to them to re-purpose them for my own study. In this chapter, I will give some examples of how I found the categories to be useful and where I saw them extant in the school. However, there were times when the categories did not satisfy the range of data that I examined. I have therefore added some further categories to cover the scrutiny of documentation which was either provided by the school or available from school assessment websites and some topics covered in the interviews which do not comfortably fit elsewhere.

Exploring the categories

Moral instruction as part of the curriculum

This largely arises when Religious Education (RE) is timetabled. All classes at the school had scheduled RE lessons, usually taken by the class teacher, but occasionally led by the Co-ordinator for RE, Mrs Morrell, whose role in the school seemed, at times, to be as gatekeeper of the religious ethos. It also offered her an opportunity to gauge the progress of those elements of the whole school development plan that related directly to RE, and which linked closely with her broader diocesan role as an adviser on Religious Education where she is able to support less confident colleagues and also to moderate the grading process for the

school. These lessons followed a particular syllabus, "Come and See",

recommended to all primary schools by the local Diocese.

> MRS MORRELL: *it's supported every stage through the religious education curriculum because "Come and See"...[is] completely grounded in that moral code and why we should behave and … act in certain ways driven by the faith, [for example] "Why do you think St. Paul chose to do this instead of going back to his previous ways?" "What was the drive behind them?"*

The syllabus is divided into nine themes which are revisited each year at levels

that correspond with the ability of the different classes to form a coherent

curriculum across the whole school. One theme stands out as relevant for my

study, the one about **Reconciliation and Inter-relating**. In Early Years and

Foundation, this focusses on *Friends* and then moves on to ideas about *Being*

Sorry for Year 1. When it is revisited in Year 2, the idea of *Rules* is introduced,

extending this to why families might require rules to maintain some order. By the

time children reach Year 3, the approach changes slightly, and they consider

Choices, a theme that seemed to be strongly represented in the interviews with

both the adults and the groups of children.

> MRS MORRELL: *we always … think about the way that they made a choice, … to praise the good choices and remind them of anything where they've made the wrong choice or they're about to start thinking about that.*
>
> *The actions and the choices that people make, children and adults make, would be those moral decisions.*

The Y3 children did not say a great deal about their RE lessons, other than to
briefly comment on why they liked it:

> Colm: *I like RE because I go to church a lot and (because) I learn quite a lot in church so it's easier for me in school.*

or to explain the mechanics of why they liked the subject:

> Colm: *We tend to have like a specific chapter [in the Bible] that you work on, and you write a bit about that and then work on another chapter the next time.*

The focus again shifts in Year 4 so that *Admitting wrong and being reconciled to God and each other* forms the bulk of the topic. Underlying the work in Years 2 to 4 is a reflection on the Sacrament of Reconciliation since this is the main age range for receiving this Sacrament and making First Holy Communion. The Y4 children I spoke to liked their RE lessons and found that they helped them; for example:

> Dierdre: *Yes, because I'm Catholic, and when I write down stuff it always helps me a lot. And it might help … people who don't believe in God, to believe in God.*

It was noticeable that their responses to my questions about what they learned in RE were framed in the context of this module:

> Dierdre: *... we're meant to make our own choices because we're getting more grown up and we need to do what we need to make our own choices. It's like you're forgiving them because you need to make your own choices and not wait for them to forgive you.*

As the interview where I mentioned RE to Y4 was chronologically the first session I had held with any of the interview groups, their understanding of the concept of choices was still new to me and I did not appreciate its relevance as a recurring theme. Furthermore, the concept of reconciliation, which may give rise to reparation, came up spontaneously when I was asking about things that the children did not like about their class:

> Donal: *I don't like it because I have arguments sometimes… because it always makes me really sad because I'm making the other person feel sad, so then the teacher comes in, but she helps us to do it.*
>
> Dierdre: *Sometimes if someone falls out then I usually go up to them and ask them what's wrong and then if they get really upset, I would ask them if they wanted to play with*

> *me. Or I'll go to the other person and ask them why they're being mean to them.*

Dierdre's response here shows a deeper knowledge of the meaning of reconciliation and her example goes further than just making peace with the individual who has hurt her; she takes the concept to another level by actively seeking to be a peacemaker. Donal's perceptions still focus on his own feelings to a large extent, but he has begun to show some understanding of empathy when thinking about reconciliation with God or other children.

The Year 5 children then consider *Freedom and Responsibility*, before the Year 6 round off the theme with a topic on *Healing*. At all times, therefore, there is an underlying moral conversation with the children through the formal curriculum, guided by Roman Catholic doctrine, largely drawn from Catholic Social Teaching.

When asked directly about where in the curriculum children are offered opportunities to develop their moral identity, the RE Leader outlined the role of RE in the school:

> MRS MORRELL: *… in the first stages, the children recognise, name, and talk about things, whether that's Jesus, an attitude, a behaviour, or a value. Then they start to deal with and describe how people behave. The next step is where they give reasons why those people … behave in a certain way [and] give reasons why they do that, then make links to other people who might also behave in that way or act in that way, whether it's out of faith or out of just being good people. (From) Year 5 and into Year 6, they've got to then be able to show their own understanding of 'how does that apply to me'?*

The Headteacher's perspectives on the curriculum reflect not only the approaches set out above but a much broader view of its place across the school:

> MRS TOPPS: *RE is our main core subject, we give [it] the greatest priority and the "Come and See" scheme lends itself all the time to that Moral Development; throughout the other*

core subjects we are developing it as well. … I think what we've done is we've focussed a lot more in the cross-curriculum… on the harvest, … [and] anti-bullying and we link it very much back to our religious lessons; but then we're doing it through Art [and] Writing, and also through things like DARE, our enriched part of the curriculum, so all the time moral development is happening [and] throughout the day, [the children are] constantly making [moral] decisions.

Moral instruction within the regular curriculum

There is an implication that moral values are also transmitted through other avenues than religious instruction. All subjects are seen to have an intrinsic opportunity to reinforce the core values that are taught in RE and teachers are encouraged to make the most of any opportunity to build on things that have been taught formally in RE. A good example of this arose during one of my classroom observations and recorded in my field notes. The activity was expressly about spelling and children were asked to adopt a "Look-Say-Cover-Write-Check-Correct" approach. In her preface to the activity the teacher said, "You need to be honest with yourself; there is no reason to cheat." Here, there is a clear example of indirect teaching of morality (honesty, in this case) though the Y4 children sometimes found it difficult to live up to the standard set by their teacher or just do not sufficiently trust themselves to remember the word they have just looked at, because some could not resist the temptation to look again before they finally wrote down their answer. Later in the same lesson, dictionaries were being distributed by the class monitors, but some children decided to snatch the last two off the shelf before the monitors had time to retrieve them. A gentle reminder, by the teacher, that they needed to be nice to each other resulted in apologies and the handing over of the very last dictionary. This reinforcement of the core values of generosity and fairness later led to one of the girls allowing a boy to have her dictionary because she had finished with it.

During her interview, the Headteacher made some relevant comments about how ideas about moral development are picked up in other ways:

> MRS TOPPS: *we have really focussed on the extracurricular and that's where you see a lot of those moral choices being made... that's where I think the moral values are put very much to the test so that they are actually living out what's been taught within the curriculum, giving that opportunity to take responsibility and then apply your sense of morality to it.*

When we discussed the role of other adults in the school she responded:

> MRS TOPPS: *I think that every stakeholder has a part to play in moulding that child as an individual … so that every child feels very valued and is very much unique. It's the time that you spend investing in [each] child and it can be in the most subtle of ways. All the time, we are setting the children scenarios where they have to apply their moral values and, when they make mistakes, it's then that [we] would bring it together. It really comes down to your relationships with them and the time you give to them.*

It was clear from this response that at the heart of everything the school does is a sense of building relationships and that this involves everyone in the school community:

> MRS TOPPS: *It goes back, for me, to my Catholic faith and my relationship with God. And the relationships are key between all the stakeholders; when things aren't quite right in school, you know that it will go back down to that relationship. When a child does make a mistake or an adult needs extra help, in my experience, if you've got that relationship with that person then you can put it right. And that's the crux of it really for me.*

Rituals and ceremonies

Activities such as these are a core part of the Catholic school. Celebrations such as "Time Out To Worship" (an opportunity to sing and learn worship songs in the context of the liturgical season), the frequent School or class Masses and a daily act of Collective Worship allow the children to receive messages about the rich

and varied ways in which the Catholic Church is expressed as a living entity in their lives as well as through the school's Catholicity, a way of "*bringing everybody together as one*", as Mrs Topps described it. There is a regular pattern throughout the week which reinforces messages about community, faith and aspects of the school's Catholicity:

> MRS MORRELL: *On a Monday, the collective worship is led predominantly by the adults but with a team of children from the chaplaincy team that provide the mission for the week; it's to evangelise to those children who aren't from a Catholic or Christian background, and it also provides the focus for the week. So that's different to us singing on a Thursday where we're giving praise to God. When we have Friday collective worship time and the families are invited, then we have that celebration of all the things that they put into practice...*

When asked about her views on the purpose of worship and assemblies, the Headteacher had a number of points to make:

> MRS TOPPS: *it's the coming together of a group of Jesus' disciples. In the same way that Jesus came together with his followers, in essence, we are doing that. We are listening to his Word. And it's the time when you're able to listen and think, "right, ok, so what does that mean for me and my life?" And it's in this coming together as his followers to give thanks and to give praise to God… [that], every time I go, my faith is deepened; it reaffirms my morals and my beliefs.*

She described the ways in which such times were used to reinforce gospel teaching, using a set of "Statements to live by" (see later for more explanation of these):

> MRS TOPPS: *You base your collective worship on a particular gospel or a theme and then send the children away for that week [to work] on how you can live that out. So, for instance, it might be "I can appreciate the beauty of God's environment"; that week, back in class and around school, it should be about focusing on how you are doing that. It's another way of focusing on the gospel.*

And the overall purpose of liturgy, worship and celebration in the school is summed up neatly by the RE Leader:

> MRS MORRELL: *collective worship drives every day, whether that's class-based, whether it's just to start the day with prayer or [considering] a point of reflection, it doesn't matter which lesson it might take place in, staff can pray.*

Each week, during the Collective Worship on a Friday, there is some time set aside to celebrate the achievements of children and staff, leading to the award of "Golden Time" for those children who have been particularly good across the week; the "Golden Time" allows them to choose an activity they enjoy and would like to undertake. This range of activities is seen as essentially moral in nature because of the virtues that they encouraged in the children. They experienced pride and built loyalty when their House or school teams were successful; they understood the need for reverence and piety during the more obviously religious activities; and other virtues were expressed in many ways at these daily or weekly gatherings. The flip side is that, for children who persistently fall foul of the rules and regulations, this time is set aside for them to reflect on their misdemeanours with a member of staff and to think about reparation where appropriate. On some interview days, I was not able to include one of the boys because he had to focus on reflection rather than be with me, a period of time out of lessons which was generally seen by the participating children as a reward.

The children had a wide variety of perceptions and opinions about the Collective Worship sessions. For example, the Y4 children commented about the mechanics and about the attitudes that other children displayed on these occasions:

> Dermot: *We sing hymns. Sometimes we give out certificates at the end of the week so a celebration of what we've done in the week.*
>
> Dierdre: *And some people nominate other people who've, like, been really kind to them to get a certificate.*
>
> Donal: *And some people don't listen, so they don't know what's happening.*

Donal: *The last assembly was Mrs W, and it was about when Jesus told Peter to come and follow him; it was about following him.*

Dierdre: *And that assembly was focussing on Mark and then sometimes in different assemblies for different occasions we have different teachers taking the lead.*

Masses provide a way of celebrating particular feast days and religious occasions. For example, when Year Six are leaving at the end of the Summer Term, there is always a celebration Mass which allows them to say "thank you" to their teachers and the school for the time they have spent there. Often these Masses use a slide show of photographs, taken during events both in and outside school, that demonstrate the wide range of activities that they have enjoyed during their time at the school. The patronal feast day for the school gives the school an excuse, should one be needed, for celebrating the life of this saint and for demonstrating how his life contributed to the spread of the Gospel. Some Masses are a follow-up to celebrations at the local church, usually bringing together the children who have been engaged in a Sacramental course and giving them a chance to show what they have learned during that process. Across the time that I spent in the school, the celebration of Mass was a central event for the school and it, like Collective Worship, presented different classes with both a challenge to interpret the readings so that they meant something special to the class and to demonstrate their active engagement with the prayer life of the school.

The children's involvement in preparation of liturgies is summed up well by the Headteacher:

MRS TOPPS: *We have a liturgy group, and we plan the liturgy time to coincide with what we're doing in school ... when they are accessing that, they are practicing and developing it with their families. We also recognise that children go to other churches and that some children don't go to church at all, so we make sure that the Monday's assembly includes some of what we've done on the Sunday [in church].*

Visual displays with a moral content

Many primary schools cover their walls with pictures, posters and charts of many kinds. The displays here varied a great deal across the school. On the positive side, there were some good displays with a strong moral message attached. For example, the following were visible while I spent time in the school: a poster about the Pope included a quote from his encyclical *Laudato Si* (Francis, 2015a) clearly reinforcing the value of mercy in their dealings with each other; a series of weekly posters picked up on a key value (I took a photo of one about Persistence) and documented aspects of the learning cycle in their classrooms; a set of posters about British Values linked the formal curriculum (SMSC aspects) to wider values such as respect, liberty, tolerance, acceptance, pride, equality and freedom as well as extending them to areas such as law, democracy, community and beliefs. On this poster were some "You said…, We did…" summaries on behalf of the School Council which had taken a lead in disseminating these ideas through Collective Worship sessions. In other parts of the school, classroom displays were purely functional and geared towards helping the children understand the topic that they were covering at that time. There were also good examples of children's work which exemplified creativity or achievement in the topic, though these were more implicit with the nature of the moral messaging that they signalled. Another positive form of poster in the classroom was exemplified by a display entitled "Change your Mindset". This consisted of mostly statements about positive attitudes to learning but some of them could have provided food for reflection on moral issues; for example, the statement "Instead of saying '*I made a mistake*' try thinking '*mistakes help me to learn and improve*'" offers children the opportunity to consider how they might apply this to their behaviours and not just to their learning. A much more explicit moral message was encountered in a small space at the back of a classroom where there was a focus on spirituality. The space contained one of the "Statements to live by" which are programmed into

the weekly work on spirituality. On this particular week, the statement was "Say what is true; do what is right!", a message that is clear enough and simple enough for children to understand and which was reflected in some of the discussions I held with the children during the interviews held that week. I am not saying that all visuals in the school needed to carry an explicit moral message and it is sufficient for the teacher to make comments about why these pieces of work were inspiring or used as exemplars when the display finally appears in the room. One key point to note was that such displays rotated on a regular basis so that the passage of time reflected the work being undertaken; generally, it can be noted, that the change of displays relied very much on the skills and devotion of the Classroom Teaching Assistant assigned to the class – perhaps there is a further moral message about equality to be grasped here? One key question I was left with, and about which I never achieved a satisfactory answer, concerned the transience of these displays and the purposes to which they were put, though the "Statements to live by" were clearly given prominence and regularly updated according to a plan. Despite the many positives, it was not evident during the times that I spent in the school that they were seriously adopted as points for discussion, though this may indeed be the case on days that I did not attend.

Spontaneous moral commentary in ongoing activity

This area forms an interesting category as I suspected from the outset that many of the opportunities for discussion of moral values would arise from unplanned incidents that happened. One such incident occurred on a winter's day when I joined the playground duty team for morning break and recorded the following narrative in my field notes. The children were largely playing as individuals or in very small groups; one group, with whom I had a conversation, were playing with jumbo-sized Lego and were working well together. However, on one corner of the playground I noticed a Teaching Assistant having an animated conversation with a

boy who had been asked to stand at the side because he had taken the football away from one of the groups of smaller (younger) boys. When I edged closer to better hear what was going on, it transpired that the discussion was about the rights and wrongs of doing such a thing. Throughout the discussion the boy was clearly shamefaced and in due course the conversation moved on to the impact that his actions had on the group. This Teaching Assistant enacted the role she had taken upon herself in a clear and level-headed manner, recognising the moral side of this incident and engaging the boy at a level where he could understand the consequences of his actions. It was absolutely clear that she knew the rules and routines of the school well and was familiar with how staff members worked to defuse incidents of this nature. The child, for his part, seemed very aware that his actions had a negative impact and, at the end of the conversation, went off to make amends. This is only one small example of the ways in which morality is encountered in spontaneous situations yet there were other incidents that I observed, some of which were dealt with in a similar fashion and others less successfully. The clear messages from this particular occasion were firstly that the whole staff see it is their duty to act as moral mentors and secondly that they have received sufficient training in the mechanisms for addressing incidents of this kind, a reflection of the staff induction which takes place on a regular basis, not only at the beginning of the person's employment. This was verified by a comment from the Headteacher:

> MRS TOPPS: *We have a monthly staff meeting for our midday supervisors. They're a key part of the school because they are a set of people who spend a lot more unstructured time, so they build up the relationship with the children, and are playing a big part in their moral development.*

Classroom rules and regulations

School and classroom rules are designed to set clear boundaries within which staff and pupils can work. At the heart of this school's rules and regulations lie two key ideas: the "Golden Rules", which are displayed all over the school, and the school's Behaviour Policy, which had been created with input from the School Council, that overarches these rules and adds flesh to the bare bones of the Golden Rules:

> MRS TOPPS: *[children] from across the school, worked with Mrs F [another teacher, but not one I had interviewed]. The old policy was a little bit too woolly; it was like the lines were blurred.... One of the things that the children said was really important to them, was that it was fair and that the same set of values in one class had to be transferred [to the rest] even if it meant that they would lose out or they'd have more sanctions. They like to see that because they do like to know what the standards are.*

Clearly the involvement of the children has underpinned how the school views its approaches to behaviour and how they affect everyone across the school. The RE Leader expressed this succinctly:

> MRS MORRELL: *the behaviour policy which the children have displayed visually around school … visibly links into the mission statement … [which] is about being part of a community that works together for good, driven by Gospel values.*

The policy states that it exists to "enable … pupils to grow in every way to Christian maturity" and to allow "every member of the school community [to feel] safe, happy and valued and … each person is treated fairly and well". The RE Leader had a very interesting interpretation of what the behaviour policy is meant to portray:

> MRS MORRELL: *the behaviour policy reminds us that we are <u>supposed</u> to be good. Not to be good because we don't want to be bad, but we've got a duty and a responsibility to be good and to live as good Christians.*

The Golden Rules (see Table 4.1, below) indirectly draw on scriptural references (Mark 12:29-31, Matthew 22:34-40, Luke 10:25-28), manifested in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (The Vatican, 1994) which refers to Jesus' teachings about loving God and one's neighbour (para. 2196).

> Do be gentle, don't hurt anyone.
>
> Do be kind and helpful, don't hurt others' feelings.
>
> Do be honest, don't cover up the truth.
>
> Do look after property, don't waste or damage things.
>
> Do work hard and play co-operatively, don't spoil people's fun.
>
> Do listen to people, don't interrupt.

Figure 4.1 The Golden Rules

The rules apply throughout the school day, including at lunchtime, during off-site provision and during after-school activities; they also apply not only to all staff directly employed by the school but also external providers. The RE Leader sees it a slightly different way:

> MRS MORRELL: *they're all about the ways we <u>should</u> behave rather than the ways we shouldn't.*

The outcomes and benefits of these rules have their culmination and expression in Golden Time, which is operated in different ways for each Key Stage. Fundamentally the end-product is the same – in negotiation with their class teacher, pupils can choose a Golden Time activity which lasts up to 30 minutes each week and the actual length of this time is determined by how well the pupil concerned consistently follows the rules. Additional rewards can be accrued, such

as "Dojo" points; stickers; praise messages that are sent home; treats from the rewards catalogue; a seat at the "Golden Table" during lunch; Celebration Assembly certificates; opportunities to participate in school events, competitions, trips, residentials and after-school clubs; and opportunities to represent the school at outside events. The emphasis is therefore largely on encouragement which appears to work well for many of the children.

When a child is unable to successfully follow the Golden Rules, a series of consequences are clearly set out

> MRS MORRELL: *They know they've an opportunity, if they do make a wrong choice, to reconcile that. They'll have a (umm) punishment, they'll have a loss of Golden Time while they have that reflection time with their Key Stage Leader, so that they can reflect on their actions and think about if they made that choice again, how would they improve. And then the line is drawn and it's a fresh page to start again.*

It was very telling that this teacher hesitated when she was about to describe the consequences for not following the Golden Rules. As mentioned above, the rules are seen by both staff and children from a positive perspective and there is great reluctance to make them a negative part of the children's experience. However, some kind of punishment has to be brought to bear when children break the rules, even if the ultimate outcome is that the slate is cleared at the end of the process. The primary tool for determining an adult's response is the traffic light system which is in operation for a half-day span and resets to Green each school session (a session is either a morning or an afternoon). Negative responses to the Golden Rules will result in a sequence of steps: firstly, a non-verbal warning is used (usually the adult looking directly at the miscreant), followed by a verbal warning; if these are not sufficient to curtail the undesired activity, then the child will be placed onto the Amber list which is visible to all the class. In all my discussions with the children, I was only given one example of how this operated in practice:

> Ciara: *I'm a good girl. But I went to the toilet at break - that's normal isn't it? - and was accidentally in there too long because there were [too many] people in there. I got told off and went down to Amber.*

The consequence of "going to Amber" is that the child will lose 5 minutes of their Golden Time and parents are informed so that they can follow up the incident at home:

> MRS MORRELL: *… all of these things then lead into the children's daily life, their behaviour, their behaviour for learning, their attitude; and those are communicated with the families, who sign up to that behaviour policy at the beginning of the year, in the children's diaries.*

Children who lose Golden Time are expected to reflect on their behaviour on Friday, either through a discussion (for Key Stage 1) or a written "think sheet" (Key Stage 2). The Headteacher sees this as a means of beginning the process of reparation:

> MRS TOPPS: *every Friday we do "Golden Time" and it's for children who have kept those rules; children who haven't, lose Golden Time. And within that lost Golden Time there is a reflective exercise that they do. It's about "first of all, I'm going to be brave enough and say, 'yes it was me, I did do that'. I made the wrong choice, and my wrong choice has an impact on somebody or something and this is what I'm going to do differently".*

Within the Behaviour Policy is a copy of the "think sheet"; it requires the child to consider whether they have contravened a Golden Rule, behaved in a negative way, or created a serious incident and a list of these possibilities is given. The reflection demands recognition of the transgression, offers an opportunity to pray for forgiveness and strength (in avoiding future incidents) and asks the child to list how they will focus on improving behaviour from now on.

> MRS TOPPS: *[the reflective exercise] is shared with people at home. Once it's done, that's it, it's done and then we*

> *follow what Mrs Morrell is always saying to us, "Right, OK, you've done that, you're saying sorry. Right, learn now, let's try not to make that same mistake again. If you're in that same situation, what are you going to do differently?"*

Should these measures be insufficient to bring the child in line with the rest of its classmates, then a further four levels of escalation can be invoked. The first of these is the Red list which results in loss of 10 minutes of Golden Time, negative "Dojo" points, and time in a buddy group to reflect on their behaviour. More serious incidents will initially lead to being sent to the Key Stage Leader for a 15-minute period, loss of freedom at lunchtime or break time, and then internal isolation for a day by arrangement with the Deputy Headteacher. At the top of the scale there is the consideration of exclusion for a fixed term or permanently, and this decision will only be made by the Headteacher *in extremis*. The whole system relies heavily on parental involvement at each stage, with the hope and expectation that the most serious rule breaking will be avoided by early and timely intervention. In the interviews with both Mrs Topps and Mrs Morrell, neither teacher dwelt on the ultimate sanctions, which implies that the preventative measures taken during loss of Golden Time are largely effective. I did not have access to statistics about exclusions but my experience of the school, when I was a governor, leads me to believe that these are very rare occurrences and that the school does its utmost to avoid excluding children as this does not sit well with the ethos and atmosphere within the school.

The morality of curricular substructure

This peculiar heading in Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen's book (1998) is derived from the ways in which the curriculum is designed, structured and delivered, both consciously and unconsciously. Modern Curriculum Theory refers to a "spiral curriculum" based on Bruner's work (Bruner, 1960) in which he proposes a means of "introducing … ideas and styles that in later life make an educated man (sic)"

(p.52) and which "begin as intellectually honestly and as early as possible in a manner consistent with the child's forms of thought." (p.54) but always working with what the child knows already. The idea of revisiting the same ideas and concepts as the child's intellectual (and in the case of this study, moral) capacity develops is one that is often seen in school planning and in National Curriculum documents. For Bruner, the purpose of education is not imparting knowledge but enabling a child's thinking and problem-solving skills to be applied to a range of further situations in the future once some basic ideas have developed at an early stage; the later repetition in a number of different contexts presents the child with opportunities for deepening their understanding of the concept over time, with the new learning clearly related to, and given a context based on, the original learning experience. At each stage the teacher needs to be aware of the child's perspective rather than offering complex material that would not fit easily into the mental and cognitive structures possessed by the child so a logical progression may be achieved.

However, behind this common structure may lie some further assumptions and practices which are not necessarily obvious to an outsider, but which fundamentally shape the learning process within the school and classroom. One such example, explained by Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen (1998), is the "expectation of truthfulness" (p.17) displayed by both teacher and student. Teachers are often seen as the fount of all knowledge and children rely on them to provide information that is factually correct and not merely an opinion. Likewise, teachers rely on children giving factually correct information when they ask questions, not just when being asked to recall information encountered in previous lessons, but also in the recounting of experiences which the proficient teacher can then develop within the context of the lesson. Within the British Values Policy (a sub-set of the SMSC Policy) are a number of important statements related to this notion:

Give everyone the opportunity to develop their full potential <u>within an atmosphere of mutual respect</u>

Focus on establishing the classroom as a community where all children can live and learn together <u>in an atmosphere of mutual respect and security</u>

Through stories and discussions of everyday experiences help children to consider the feelings of real or fictional people

(the underlining is my own emphasis)

When children respond to scenarios using their own experiences, the teacher does not have any idea of whether their recollection and subsequent recounting of the experience is accurate or fictional. However, everyone has to assume that the speaker is not deliberately falsifying their narrative and, in the atmosphere of respect and security that is expected, the child needs to be believed and the response taken at face value. Many occasions in unstructured time, at break or lunch time, lead children to bring concerns to the adults at school. When they complain about being bullied by another student or that they have had their games disrupted, the adults need to believe that the complainant is truthful so they can take further action. Over time, the children are shown that truthfulness is paramount both in their classroom learning and in the daily life of the school; even though there are no formal lessons on these topics, such an approach is profoundly woven into the fabric of the school's daily life and the children will be expected to absorb these principles. An interesting event took place during the Y3 interview. We were discussing things that the children did not like in school and one or two had expressed their concerns about whether they should tell me the things that they genuinely did not like. The conversation went as follows:

Ciara: *Do you want us to tell you?*

Interviewer: *It might be useful to say it because then you can explain to me why. Because otherwise, …*

Colm: *Because if you keep it to yourself, it's never going to get to the staff.*

I was not entirely sure whether the children wanted me to say something to their teachers or whether they were testing the ground in relation to my role as a researcher who had earlier told them that these discussions were in confidence and that my part in them was related to my interest in their answers rather than to act as a spy for the school. I concluded that they wanted to tell me things in confidence and that they did not want me to report back anything. This brief exchange demonstrated to me the essence of the "expectation of truthfulness" (ibid.) where the truthfulness of my earlier statements to them was paramount in gaining their trust and subsequent co-operation.

In terms of my observations, I would return to the two incidents I covered earlier (the teacher talking to the class about honesty when undertaking their spelling task and the TA on the playground) because both highlight the opportunity for the "expectation of truthfulness" to be undermined. I commented earlier that some children did not trust themselves to carry out the spelling task without cheating. This could be viewed from a different perspective: the children were being deliberately dishonest and wantonly breaking the trust that bound them to their teacher. In these situations, then, should the teacher always adopt a suspicious attitude and make it known, through subtle hints and humorous comments, that she is monitoring their actions or, knowing that such temptations are intrinsic to human nature, take a pragmatic view that some children will always break their trust and react accordingly? It then raises some important questions about the teacher's response when someone is caught cheating *in flagrante*. In a similar way, when a child complained to the TA about the bigger boy taking the ball from his group, she took this at face value and pursued the complaint with the child that I observed her talking to. The smaller child had an expectation that the TA would take his word as truth, something that he expects to happen in his classroom with his teacher. Neither of these incidents would be seen as particularly important in the daily operation of the school (since they are so

commonplace) but to a curious and observant outsider they say much about the inherent workings of the school and its moral attitudes. If teachers and other adults had to weigh up every incident in such detail, they would not have time to deliver the necessary teaching for which they are employed and the feedback from a third-party (researcher) is potentially of some value.

Another area which was mentioned on a number of occasions by the children is the topic of social justice within the school. Many of the older children (Years 5 and 6) I spoke with during the interviews expressed concerns about fairness, largely in the context of how rules and sanctions were being applied by adults in the school. The understandings they had were that a) all school rules were absolute and b) they would be interpreted by adults in an even-handed manner. The principal complaint was that some adults were too hard on some children or that they sometimes treated the boys differently from the girls (it was noticeable that the boys claimed that girls were favoured and that girls claimed that the older children were less favoured); for example, in response to the question "Are your teachers fair?" they said

> Ciara: *Well, Miss tells people to do stuff but then if you do something that she doesn't like, she could be more specific about what she wants.*
>
> Donal: *It's not fair that sometimes we all get blamed when someone misbehaves … because they [the teacher] don't know who it is.*
>
> Dermot: *Sometimes they are really strict … but if we do good and work, she [one of their teachers] gives us 5 minutes' break.*
>
> Fidelma: *No not at all. Two things: they have favourites, and they tell all the boys off and punish them, but they don't tell the girls off. If there's a really naughty girl in the class, then they never get told off … And with favourites, if you put your hand up, and everyone else has, then they choose one person all the time and we don't get the opportunity.*

However, the idea of social justice (even if only manifested through the concept of fair play) goes much further than the children's recognition of perceived adult biases. It encompasses how the teachers ask their questions and receive answers – do they give all children, of all abilities a chance to offer an answer, for example; how they choose from the forest of hands so that over a period of time all children are given a chance to contribute; how they allow the respondents to frame their thoughts before speaking and give them enough time to fully express their response; how well the other children pay attention to the responses from their peers and whether there is genuine mutual support when answers are not "correct"; and so on. When I spent time in class, it was clear that many of these points are covered well by the teachers, perhaps because those I observed were very experienced and had strong empathy for the core values of the school along with sufficient pedagogical skills. For their part, the children offered indirect evidence that these issues are considered because they demonstrated some patience when they held up their hands, they gave an impression of listening intently when another child was speaking, and they were open and relaxed when expressing their own opinions and feelings. The groups of interviewees were more sensitive to the real practice and noticed the inequalities that they feel were meted out to them; of all the potentially contentious questions I asked them, the set about fairness brought the greatest vehemence in their responses. Nevertheless, I concluded that social justice was healthy in the school because so many of these practices seemed a natural part of the daily routine and lay at a deep subconscious level rather than something which required constant work to achieve. My overall conclusion is that the evidence I collected suggests the practices around the school all have a root in morality and that this sense of morality is picked up by the children inadvertently and incidentally rather than as something that they are taught, despite their sensitivity to its occasional shortcomings.

Expressive morality within the classroom

Under this heading, I will refer largely to the many non-verbal signals that a teacher will use to convey rapid messages to their class. Children are usually very adept at noticing these, responding to them and adapting their behaviour accordingly. In the context of a study on morality and moral development, these signals are important because they often denote the teacher's ability to communicate the moral value of situation, that is, its inherent goodness or badness. However, this is an area which I found to be fraught with potential misunderstanding on my part as a casual researcher-observer because I was not party to the induction into how the teachers would behave in certain situations but which the children received over a long time. The teachers I observed used many non-verbal signs, from facial expressions to physical poses and to assign an accurate interpretation to each would have been very near an impossible task. Those which were clear and unambiguous in meaning related generally to the times when the teacher was listening to responses and had a clearly patient expression on her face; or those times when she was clearly agitated by a situation and was signalling her discontent to the class. On both occasions it was easy to see how the children responded: in the first instance, the children appeared to relax and be drawn into the response from their classmate and in the second there was a ripple of concern that ran through the well-behaved members of the class as they began to wonder what was about to erupt. On only one occasion did I observe what would be classed as a genuine demonstration of anger, when a child in the TOTW was extremely rude to the teacher leading the gathering and was called out for his behaviour. The shock caused by this outburst from the teacher put paid to any further disruptions and established a calm atmosphere for the remainder of the gathering. The fact that this teacher was highly respected and very much liked by the vast majority of the pupils led them

to understand more clearly where the limits of her tolerance lay and how strictly she guarded the moral well-being of the rest of the group which had assembled.

Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen (1998) also refer to the environment of the school and what underlying moral messages it transmits to the children. My study school is very well maintained, with uncluttered grounds, and has a conscientious caretaker who takes great pride in ensuring that the school is clean and devoid of faults. In combination with the staff overtly engaged in education, his manner around the school speaks volumes for his adoption of the core values that the school wishes to uphold. He makes sure that repairs are carried out to the fabric of the building, inside and outside, in a timely manner so that when the children or visitors have time to look at their surroundings, they can see that keeping them as pristine as possible is something important to him. That way, the message is clear to them: they need to replicate that care in the ways that they treat the building and each other if they are to avoid creating damage. In a similar way, the class teachers have some autonomy in deciding how they will manage the appearance of their classrooms. Many take great pride in ensuring that the rooms are as uncluttered as possible, with the creation of areas for storage and display designated so that the children can move about without damaging anything, even though space is often very tight with classes of 30 or 32. As previously mentioned, the displays have many purposes, and some teachers choose inspirational posters to complement the obviously mechanistic posters about certain aspects of learning a subject or technique. Some create niches along the walls of the room to use as a reflective area (a spiritual space or a topic space). The underlying message in the classroom is always that the children should respect their environment and learn to value all that God has created.

Examination of other documents

One specific task that was incorporated into the research methodology was the scrutiny of a number of documents. The school provided a range of items which were felt to be relevant to the discussions I would hold with both teachers and children, or which would expand upon what I already knew about the school. Whilst some of these have been briefly referenced in a previous section, I intend to take an extended view of their contents here.

Inspection reports

Two inspection reports were supplied: i) The Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) report from March 2017, which was the most recent one available at the time that I began my school-based investigations; and ii) the Denominational Inspection Report from the Diocese which was dated December 2013. Soon after I had completed the field work in the school, another Diocesan Inspection was carried out and I have accessed that through the school's website for comparison with the one from 2013.

The Ofsted report

This report was the latest and only one available since the school was incorporated into the local diocesan Multi-Academy Trust. It consists of the findings from a short inspection by a member of Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) which was carried out on a single day, as was the practice for a school deemed "Good" in its previous inspection. The HMI has the following brief for the inspection (quoted from the official blog article about short inspections):

♦ start with the presumption that the school/provider is still good. This allows honest, challenging, professional dialogue between inspectors and senior leaders, rather than a 'cliff-edge' experience.

- check:
  - whether leaders have a sound grasp of relative strengths and weaknesses in their school/provider
  - if there's a credible plan to address the areas for concern and maintain the strengths
  - if the safeguarding is effective and the culture is sufficiently aspirational
- During the short inspection, inspectors look to validate the leaders' assessment and test it against observation, discussion with staff and students, and data. They share emerging findings with senior leaders.

(The Office for Standards in Education Children's Services and Skills [Ofsted], 2015b)

The report consists of a narrative that explains why the school was still deemed to be Good, interspersed with some comments about Safeguarding (a key issue in all schools at that time), a brief four-point summary of the HMI's findings and a two-point summary of next steps for the school. The commentary refers to a sense of the commitment to a Catholic life in the school and how this is reflected both in the way that leaders in the school approach their work and the children manifest some of that commitment. The topic of social justice, in the context of charity-giving, was highlighted as proof of the ways in which children were listened to and made a valuable contribution to school life. There are the usual comments about attainment, comparisons with national averages for the Key Stage 2 tests and progress for boys and girls. There are also some comments about how the partnerships across the school's community are seen to work well, with particular praise for the governing body's engagement in the school and the governors' understanding of their responsibilities. Likewise, the role and engagement of adults other than teachers was recognised and how they are well-versed in the routines for managing pupils and any transgressions.

From the perspective of this study, there seems to be a serious gap in this report because there is no reference, even in passing, to the SMSC elements which formed part of the inspection protocols. In the Inspection Handbook extant at that time (The Office for Standards in Education Children's Services and Skills [Ofsted], 2015a), moral development of pupils is, as it always had been and continues to be, given some prominence in the inspection regime. The Handbook defines moral development in terms of the students'

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

(ibid, p. 35)

It is hard to imagine that the inspection did not touch on any of these issues, so it can only be assumed that their omission is an oversight in the light of all other issues being good and this "only" being a short inspection. In normal circumstances, the HMI would be expected to consider a wide range of areas if giving a judgement on personal development. OFSTED maintains that SMSC remains at the heart of all school development because "it requires schools to think about the kind of people we aspire to be, the kind of world we aspire to create, and the kind of education we aspire to provide." (Young Citizens, 2021)

The Denominational Inspection Report (now called the Diocesan Canonical Inspection Report)

In terms of this study, the original Denominational Inspection Report from 2013 only has two explicit references to moral development:

- in the context of Collective Worship, the Key Findings at the start of the report mention "pupils' skills in planning and leading liturgies… having a very positive effect on their moral and spiritual development". However, the relevant section on Collective Worship does not repeat this nor does it offer any supporting evidence to substantiate the claim.

- in the report, the section on Quality of Catholic Life simply states that "there are high expectations for moral and ethical behaviour", but again there is no evidence offered in support.

The diocesan policies and diocesan *Toolkit for Schools*, both of which are available at the diocesan website as support for schools undergoing canonical inspections, do not mention specific evidence in relation to moral development. The criteria for judging the Catholic Life of the School contain one statement that refers to pupils' interest and engagement with spiritual, moral and ethical issues but they do not exemplify how these might be evidenced for judgement or how the schools might achieve them. "Behaviour reflecting Gospel values" is another criterion for evaluation in the report. The detailed criteria refer to how well spiritual and moral education is informed by Catholic Social Teaching and to what extent the life of the school provides opportunities for spiritual and moral development, including how well leaders and governors fulfil their responsibilities to promote, monitor and evaluate such development. Nowhere in the section on Religious Education is there any mention of moral development and one is left wondering whether the inspectors felt that these two topics are separate or whether they are so closely entwined that it is impossible to unpick them. In the section about Collective Worship, the inspectors evaluate the extent to which Collective Worship contributes to spiritual and moral development, but the criteria only refer

tangentially to this through the idea of "reverence and respect" during liturgies and Masses. It therefore seems to me that the topic of moral development was not an issue that the canonical inspection of 2013 is concerned with, reflecting the apparent oversight that the subsequent OFSTED report contained.

I wished to triangulate these findings and looked for the most recent Canonical Inspection Report from December 2018. A similar picture can be seen in this report, with the key findings being more concerned that "the development of pupil spirituality is a high priority for leaders". When behaviour is considered, as a small part of the provision for the Catholic Life of the school, a sense of moral development arises but this is again only in very general terms when describing teachers as "models of mutual respect and forgiveness for pupils". The section about Religious Education has no mention of moral development, being largely concerned with the teachers' and pupils' subject knowledge, the pupils' ability to think and explore their ideas, and a variety of pedagogical and planning considerations including presentation of work by the children and the subsequent marking of this work by teachers. In the final part of the report, under the heading of Collective Worship, there is an interesting reference to the "experience of living and working in a faithful, praying community" which it is claimed "has a profound and visible effect on the spiritual and moral development of all pupils". As with the 2013 report, there is no evidence quoted to substantiate these claims and, bearing in mind that the overall criteria for canonical inspections had not changed to any degree in the intervening years, it is hard to fathom how these conclusions were arrived at based on the criteria available to a public scrutineer such as myself. Again, one is left wondering if there are hidden criteria to which diocesan inspectors have access (during their training?) or whether the judgements are made on a somewhat more arbitrary intuitive scale. By no means do I intend to denigrate the excellent work that the school does, and which I saw for myself when I was embedded there, but it begs a number of questions about

transparency, not to mention interpretation of the inspection criteria by the school itself.

Additional policy documents

The Ethos, Moral and Spiritual Development Policy

This school policy document stands out from all the others as it is the only one which specifically mentions moral development. The policy begins with a definition of "moral development":

> *Moral development should be viewed as a means of developing the conscience of children so that they realise that in many circumstances they have a choice and are guided by their conscience and their respect for the welfare of others into making right choices.*

It was clear in many of the discussions that I held with both the children and the adults that the word "choice" featured very heavily in what underpins the school's approach to morality. For example,

> MRS MORRELL: *They know they've an opportunity, if they do make a wrong choice, to reconcile that…*
>
> *we've all got that the right to be choice-makers.*
>
> *Choice-making… [is] about good and bad, about being able to stop and think before you act… if you do make a mistake, it's just as much a lesson and a moral choice and an opportunity for personal development, spiritual development.*
>
> *values provide opportunity for the children to make morally right choices. The actions and the choices that people make would be those moral decisions.*
>
> *I think we always link back to discipleship and to the examples from faith that lead us to make the right choices.*

Conscience is seen as a fundamental part of the human makeup and, in its Catechism, the Church judges all human acts to be undertaken freely in

consequence of a judgement of conscience (The Vatican, 1994, para. 1774) and its development is at the root of all moral law (ibid, para. 1731). The Catechism defines judgement of conscience as "the activity by which the moral conscience either: 1. Enjoins a person at the appropriate moment to do good and to avoid evil, or 2. Judges particular choices, approving the good ones and denouncing the evil ones" (ibid., para. 1809). Thus, the definition which the school makes is clearly in line with these teachings. Furthermore, since the Church exhorts all its people to develop their moral conscience by "the Word of God, the regular examination of our conscience, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the witness or advice of others and the authoritative teaching of the Church" (ibid., para. 1816), it is beholden on the school to provide such opportunities for moral development through the scholarly work that children undertake, the religious Acts of Worship in which they engage, and the conduct of the adults and older children in the school which should act as an example to those at earlier stages of development of this faculty. Indeed, in terms of this latter point, the school's policy recognises that emotional and psychological immaturity play an important role in the children's understanding of morality, with the acknowledgement that this immaturity can present "obstacles to moral development as much as a lack of knowledge".

The school also recognises that it is not alone in the task of moral development. The policy recognises the important role that parents and carers make in promoting moral growth and in the development of conscience. The wide range of home backgrounds that children admitted to any school these days bring to that community means that homogeneity in approaches may not be possible since some of those home backgrounds "may inhibit or hinder [a child's capacity] to relate to other, be respectful, to share or to be generous" as noted in this policy. It goes on to state that "some children may experience a sense of isolation or conflict as a result of the dichotomy between the security, values and atmosphere

at school and the daily reality of life at home". In my preparatory discussions with Mrs Topps, she raised this precise issue when she introduced the idea of the conflict that primary aged children experience: they know very well what is right and wrong but feel that they have to fit in with the groups to which they belong. Some of the contributions that the home background make will only exacerbate these feelings of conflict and this manifests itself in the behaviours of individuals and the way that a group mentality develops. The school's way of dealing with such issues is to offer time to explain why adults take certain actions, why there are rules and sanctions, and why the sanctions are intended not simply as a punishment but as a means of securing comfort and security for other children and adults in the school. Staff are thus always thrust into the frame as role models whose personal example must be of a consistently high standard. This personal example is reinforced through the "Statements to Live By" (see Appendix I for full list), a series of simple statements developed by the northern dioceses (Middlesbrough, Leeds, Hallam and Hexham & Newcastle) which are rooted in nine guiding principles that support the distinctive nature of Catholic schools and which apply to both the children and staff members. The principles are:

- Hear the Christian story and encounter the person of Jesus

- Understand their uniqueness as made in the image and likeness of God

- Experience a sense of belonging within a range of communities, including the local Eucharistic community

- *Know, appreciate and understand the importance of social justice*

- *Know that our limitations are also opportunities for growth*

- Understand the connection between knowledge and living

- Know that everything has the opportunity to reveal God's presence to us, i.e. to see the divine in the ordinary

- *Forgive and be forgiven, to reconcile and be reconciled*

- Experience fun, humour, imagination, creativity, play and excitement in life

The three principles that I have highlighted with italics have a particular resonance with moral development. They complement the RE programme and, at various times of the year, will be exemplified and given prominence through the display of the statement in each classroom and on other school displays; the celebration of a reflective Act of Collective Worship where the scriptural, sacramental and social relevance of the week's statement can be explored more deeply; through Circle Time in class where the children are encouraged to share their thoughts and ideas for implementing the statement during the week; and through materials that are made available to parents and the wider community.

Overall, the aim of the policy is to help adults develop within the children a habit of self-disciplined concern for others and a more mature sense of responsibility. Underlying this aim is a general recognition that morality comes firstly from the child itself and then, as the child develops, morality becomes more of a shared enterprise within the community of the school. The section in the policy which deals specifically with the development of a moral conscience highlights the need to offer safe opportunities in which children can make choices (as well as errors) and in which these characteristics can be explored without fear. The main focus is on creating a classroom where all can learn in an atmosphere of mutual respect and security. This is established by having clear boundaries governed by a set of rules for the classroom, and these may consist of the Golden Rules, or a set of working rules created by the children themselves. Within this framework, there are agreed sanctions and great care is taken that the sanctions specifically relate to the offence rather than be seen as some arbitrary outcome; in general, sanctions reflect the possible effect of the perpetrator's actions on other children. All classes are encouraged to discuss what they consider to be fair and unfair classroom and school procedures or relationships; this was particularly evident in the conversations which are shown in the paragraphs on *The morality of curricular substructure* where the children expressed their concerns about how they are

treated by their teachers. The policy section on developing a moral conscience concludes with some final commentary about the need for children to make their own moral decisions, the need to go beyond a simple regime of reward or punishment, and an argument for basing moral development on the ability of each individual to see their own goodness in relation to the goodness of others around them as well as in terms of a loving and forgiving God. The success of such a programme is highly dependent on the continual reinforcement of the principles set out in this policy, the knowledge of the adults in the school and their ability to deliver the objectives set out in the policy, but most fundamentally, I believe, in the innate goodness of those adults whose lives must be seen to be exemplary when they are at work. This is what makes the act of being a Catholic teacher, or a Christian teacher in a Catholic school, so demanding spiritually and emotionally since there is never a moment during which one can switch off or drop one's guard.

Interviews – other topics raised

Interviews with the adults

One of the sub-themes in the interview questions was about the nature of the school and how being a Catholic school made it stand out from the other schools in the area, with a focus on its impact as both a Roman Catholic and an (overtly) Christian school. The Headteacher visibly grew in stature as she explained how she saw the school and why she felt it had a character that distinguished it:

> MRS TOPPS*: we're very proud to say that we're a Catholic school and as such we've got a set of beliefs based on that Catholicism. [What] we basically carry out [is] that we are following in the footsteps of Jesus and our school is modelled on that. So, [in] everything that we're doing, we are following the word of God and it comes from the Gospels, or the assemblies, the Time out to Worship; all link in together [with] our behaviour rules, everything is linked to that. We are very much welcoming [of other faiths or none] but at the same time we are very proud to say we're a Catholic school.*

Further discussion of the nature of the school led to a question about how a visitor

might know that this was a school with a particular ethos and mission. The

Headteacher had very clear views about the external signs and symbols which

broadcast this to outsiders:

> MRS TOPPS: *You would see, from the minute you came in, the crucifix; you'd see, in every classroom, elements of Catholicism, even in the learning environment. You'll also see that we have Mass in school and that's a link to the church … during the Catholic Mass you will see when we refer very much to the Catholic religion, so that would distinguish us from other schools. The whole of our school being, and its essence, is all based on … Catholic Christian values. Everything that we do, both formally or informally, throughout every aspect of the day, it all comes from those values - it underpins everything.*

Interestingly, although asked the same questions, the RE Leader did not offer

such a comprehensive answer or exude the same sense of pride that the

Headteacher had demonstrated. Her perspective was more practical and related

more to the ways in which the children were seen to understand it:

> MRS MORRELL*: Everything we do links back to our faith and it gives us a purpose; and that faith purpose helps us to develop as individuals. It develops the relationship we have with God, even the children down in Foundation. They all know that God is their friend and Jesus is an example of that; we have to be friends like Jesus was friends to others; so that thread and that commonality drives everything that we do. Everything we do can be linked back to Scripture, to an RE lesson, to collective worship, to our Time out to Worship sessions.*

The two adults were very clear about the range of influences that had been

brought to bear on their own faith journey:

> MRS MORRELL*: I've grown up from the cradle as a Catholic. I was always actively involved as a young person, so I feel like it's my duty to pass that on, at a parish level and in school and with my own children.*

> MRS TOPPS*: I think that's my vocation. My faith is just how I live my life; it is just my way of my life, really. I can only lead the school through my faith and [asking] myself "what would Jesus do?"*

Much of Mrs Morrell's early formation was as a consequence of her active involvement in the youth group at her church and in secondary school, where opportunities to work with the diocesan Youth team arose as part of her wider activity within the Church. We shared some ideas about the people who had supported their faith journey and professional life. Once again, these discussions were not programmed directly into the interview protocol but arose because of thinking about opportunities to learn about leading in a Catholic context and continuing their Catholic Christian formation, both of which had arisen in either their professional lives or before they became teachers:

> MRS MORRELL*: I spent a year volunteering at the [Diocesan] Catholic Retreat Centre and that made a real impact upon me, on my faith and on myself as a person. It's inspired my own vocation … I went through Catholic schools and a Catholic university… I go to diocesan training… [and have]… a network of RE leaders with whom I can always communicate.*

For Mrs Morrell, the main influence seemed to be her time at the Youth Centre, working with other committed young Catholics to enhance the educational opportunities of children from diocesan schools who went there for short retreats. The experience meant that she subsequently made a conscious decision to focus on Catholic RE teaching by enrolling at one of the few remaining Catholic University Colleges for teacher training to obtain her degree. Mrs Topps had not had that kind of opportunity to develop her faith as a young adult or to choose to work at a place with such a strong outlook on spirituality yet there was still a trajectory that brought her into Catholic education for her first job and then onto a significant promotion when she moved on to another primary school:

> MRS TOPPS: *I was deputy for a headteacher who… had gone to train to be a priest and was a very dedicated, religious man. He was an inspiration of faith, of how it can empower you and you how you can live your life through it... [and] he was a big part of shaping the way I am.*

During this part of the interview conversation, it was clear to me that this experience had been a very profound one. My questioning and prompting had to be taken more gently, and with greater sensitivity, because it was clear to me that she was drawing on some very emotionally poignant memories and I felt grateful that she was willing to share them so openly. I also knew the particular individual of whom she spoke so highly and our mutual bonding over similar conversations that I had shared with him, when I used to visit his school as part of my primary liaison duties, helped me through what could have been a tricky situation.

Interviews with the children

Celebrations, rituals, and Parish links

The children were aware that the local parish priest had been a regular visitor to their school, but some were not clear about why he visited. For example, the discussion with Y4 gave the impression that he went in regularly and generally came in to celebrate Mass, but they were confused by some of the stories used in his homilies even though they quite enjoyed them, since his approach was child-friendly and somewhat amusing. In particular, they could not remember the message that these stories were supposed to clarify though they clearly remembered what some of the stories were about and could tell me of the occasions when he talked about his car's sat nav or about his doormat with the word 'Welcome' on it. It was clear that these children had given little thought to the deeper meaning and the message had thus been lost in translation. On the

other hand, the Y5 group knew that each story held a more profound meaning and they related how the homilies were followed up in their lessons later on the same day so that the meanings could be further investigated and unwrapped. Their conclusion was that the messages related largely to how they should live the Christian life or behave towards each other, and they were able to reflect on what it meant to be 'good people' and how that intention could be lived out. By the time they reached Y6, though, reflections on the readings for some Masses were an expectation, with some of these being used in place of a homily given by the priest. They also reinforced the part played by supplemental work in developing their understanding of the key messages being related.

Acts of Worship and Assemblies also featured in these discussions, with most of the classes being able to recall recent gatherings and their purpose. From their perspectives, the weekly Friday Assembly was an opportunity to praise good behaviour and good work, with some individuals being singled out for special prizes under the banner of Golden Time. Around the time of the first round of interviews, the school had been involved in Lenten Assemblies and most of the children were able to explain the links between people giving up things for Lent and the Gospel story of Jesus in the desert for 40 days. Different year groups had different perceptions of these gatherings: Finbar from Y6 posited the idea that Assemblies were there to "help relieve the stress and get you calm by singing hymns and so on" but the general view was that they were a means of reflecting on the Gospel of the week, remembering about the life of a particular saint, preparing for a new part of the Church's liturgical season, and drawing the school community together to consider the good things that had happened in the previous week.

Caring for others

On a number of occasions, the children raised the topic of caring. In each group's first session, I gave them a chance to say what they liked about the school and a healthy number reflected the quality of care that was encountered; for example,

> Dermot: *we're like a little family, safe in the arms of God's love*
>
> Eileen: *Belonging, caring and sharing– this school is all about caring for one another, and they share everything, especially their kindness*
>
> Fionnula: *[they] always make you feel welcome, and people care about each other*

One child summed this up very well when discussing the phrase "*Loving, caring and sharing*" – she saw it as a general maxim for children at different ages who understand the different mottos that the school uses because they might be more appropriate for them as they develop their understanding. These discussions moved on naturally to children relating ways in which this was lived out. The Y3 group largely saw caring in terms of avoiding occasions when they might hurt other children or finding themselves without any friends. They talked about how they are careful on the playground, how they might be prepared to share sweets or how they might try to make others happy, but there was really only a superficial understanding of their motives. Similarly, the Y4 group found it hard to recall occasions when they would proactively help others and many of their examples related back to the rules which had been covered previously. Dierdre commented that it was "*important you do the right thing and don't hurt their feelings; [for example], if someone is lonely, you could go up to them and make friends*". I shared an observation that I made during a break from the interview with this year group - I had watched a group playing rough games and hurting each other on the playground - and this seemed to genuinely surprise them. What this observation prompted was a lengthy discussion about what they would or wouldn't like if they were the victim (e.g., of kicking or rough behaviour). Further

prompting led to a discussion about children who went hungry. They were aware of such privations in Africa, through CAFOD presentations in assemblies, and were very shocked to learn that some children across England also suffered in this way, but talked about empathy in terms of feeling sad or upset (to the point where it makes them cry) when they hear stories about poorer places; *"It makes us feel like we're spoiled"* (Dermot, Y4), and "*that we're very lucky we have all these things*" (Dierdre, Y4). The Y5 children were much more tuned in when we broached the topic and offered some interesting reflections on their motives for being kind or caring. Eileen commented that "*when the little ones are upset, they come to me because I'm quite popular [with them]*" and that, as older children in the school, they are often asked "*to think about whether we would like to be treated that way*". Erin thought "*it would make me a better person*", while Enya insisted "*It's the right thing to do. We're all God's family.*" The Y6 group shared some of these motives: Fidelma said, "*If you don't want to be treated in a certain way, you don't do that to other people*", Finbar thought that if there was an issue with another child the Year 6 children would "*go and help them, because we are a caring class*". When pushed to say how they had learned to adopt these attitudes and values, each of the three children offered different perspectives: Finbar thought that they "*just learn through life … and see older people doing it on the playground*", Fidelma related it to when she was out with her friends around where she lives, because she can "*see how other people act when you are out playing*". Fionnula offered a very profound observation, saying "*It's good to see people who are not doing the right thing because you can learn how **not** to do it*". It is interesting to note how the responses develop as the children get older and have adopted more responsibility in the school; whilst the younger ones are still focussing on the benefits to themselves, the older children had begun the process of being able to rationalise some of their actions in terms of benefits to others.

Some final comments

There were several other areas of significance which arose from the data, but these are beyond the scope of this current document and may perhaps offer some additional avenues to pursue if, or when, this research is taken further.

Having explored some of the most important data and shown how I believe it addresses my research questions, I now wish to relate these outcomes to the three aspects of theory which I have considered in Chapter 2: moral development from a psychological perspective, moral development as seen through the eyes of the Roman Catholic Church, and the interrelatedness of ecological structures as seen through Bronfenbrenner's' theory.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

This study set out to examine the manner in which moral development is addressed in the research site. The main emphases were on the ways in which children expressed and exhibited moral behaviours at different ages, the ways in which teachers and other adults within the school community modelled these behaviours and acted as gatekeepers for the policies set out in school documents, and the influences of the school's Catholic ethos on both sets of agents. To gain a sense of how these are part of the living experience of the school, I have examined them through three theoretical lenses: a) psychological theories about moral development, b) the Catholic Church's teachings on the moral life and how it should be lived, and c) Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory which considers the whole system and looks at interactions within and beyond the school environment. The analysis now considers the findings in more detail by considering each research question in sequence and drawing on aspects of the three theoretical lenses where appropriate.

Expressing and exhibiting moral behaviours

My first research question dealt with issues about the kinds of thinking or practices that the children adopt when faced with moral issues. The literature on this topic is very wide, drawing on much of the psychological moral development theory. In particular, contributions from Jung, Skinner, Bandura, Piaget and Kohlberg stand out in the light of the evidence gathered, although some views of these theorists are not considered fashionable in current education circles.

Jung's views on moral development suggest that he saw it in terms of what he refers to as "education by example" (Jung, 1928, p. 383) and "contagion" (ibid., p.384) through experience. In his model of learning, there exists a strong

relationship between the teacher and student, described as "archetypal" (Mayes, 2005, p. 34), which creates a bond and sets up the "teacher as sage" (Mayes, 2003, p. 106). Skinner's behaviourist theories focus largely on how behaviours are reinforced and copied within a given cultural milieu, in this case the school. Strict behaviourist approaches would anticipate that children gradually succumb to the values promoted by, and across, the school and, because these are supported by a rewards and punishment regime, the children gradually internalise these standards without further intervention from the adults. Bandura takes it a stage further and revisits the Jungian idea of modelling by the teachers and other adults, deprecating the environmental approach that Skinner proposed and seeing the wider role of motivation as a factor in influencing this kind of learning. Bandura's ideas about *vicarious reinforcement*, the observational learning element of social cognitive theory and the attachment of learner and modeller through the four steps of the theory (Bandura, 1971), appear to strengthen the references to Jung. These ideas are consistent with feedback from the children where, for example, Finbar perceives the teachers' modelling of what they wished the children to learn and the imitation or emulation of these behaviours by some of the children themselves. They see the teachers as having knowledge which they wish to learn and consequently, they observe the adults in the school closely, weighing up the choices that are being made by them, for example, when they reprimand a member of the class or deal with incidents around the school. Thus, the role-modelling of fairness and of equitable treatment by adults at all levels of the school's hierarchy is seen by the older pupils as a key factor in shaping the cognitive and moral development of the children though at times the children's sense of justice can be severely offended when they feel that a wrong choice has been made by the adult, as witnessed by the exchanges about the ways in which boys and girls are treated in Y6. The teachers, for their part, seemed oblivious to the idea that they are modelling moral behaviours, and they did not think to speak directly about this aspect when responding to my questions, implying that it has

become an unconscious relationship (Gitz-Johansen, 2016) that they took for granted, though more evidence would be needed to substantiate this. It must be said, however, that as an outside observer my overwhelming impression was that both teachers were prime examples of outstanding moral role models, but they bring a strong sense of humility to the important work that they carry out and this might explain their lack of consciousness of the fact. For Mrs Topps, it "*goes back to my Catholic faith and my relationship with God*" since she felt that this was her vocation and for Mrs Morrell it was her conviction that all who work in the school are "*are following in the footsteps of Jesus [in] everything that we do*" with the "*essence based on… Catholic Christian values*".

A consideration of cognitive approaches raises questions of how the children think they learn about the rules that apply across the school. In Piaget's theory, the children who were interviewed lie either side of his boundary between heteronomous and autonomous morality based on their chronological ages. If his theory were to be taken at face value, then it might be possible to observe differences between the younger children (Y3 and Y4) and the older ones (Y5 and Y6), though sample size would be a significant issue here since my final data only contains interviews with five younger children and seven from the older classes. Piaget also suggests that the stage of their cognitive development plays a part, but this is a factor which I was not able to build in because I did not have access to the performance data for each of the children. Therefore, all I could only rely on for my investigation was what transpired in the interviews or what I saw and recorded in my field notes. The only Piagetian factor I could use for interpretation was his idea of immanent justice which relates to the punishments meted out by adults and whether they are seen as fair. There seemed little difference in the comments across all year groups and all appeared to think that, for the most part, their teachers used appropriate sanctions, though there were some disputes about the equal distribution of these in class, as mentioned earlier. Within each class,

though, the children described how their social interactions helped them to settle disputes quickly. For example, when Donal (Y4) talked about things he did not like about the school, he was clear that the arguments which occur between children created disharmony and needed to be resolved as quickly as possible. The opportunity to develop mutual cooperation through fair distribution of resources in the classroom and the implementation of shared social norms (Tomasello, 2018) meant that harmony could be restored. Kohlberg's theory would also suggest that there was a dividing line between the two younger classes and the two older ones, as the older children should be able to fit well into his Preconventional stage based on Kohlberg's idea that there are ontogenetic variations in the development of the individuals concerned, whilst the younger ones should not do so. From what I saw and listened to, there is no evidence to suggest that the younger children were any less capable of making moral judgements because all of the Y3 and Y4 children I spoke to were more than capable of recognising and interpreting the social rules governing right and wrong, both in their own classroom and across the whole school. I would therefore take issue with a strict interpretation of Kohlberg's theory as applied at stage 1, even though the data is limited to small numbers and a much larger survey would be required for a more definitive conclusion.

The children also suggested that other areas contributed to their understanding and development of the moral life. They talked about a sense of reconciliation when asked to comment on things that they do not like about school. As part of their experience of reconciliation they use sticky notes to write down what has upset them, and Dermot (Y4) pointed out a set of these notes in the classroom which formed a display as part of the "Prayer Corner". The children explained that when they sat together to consider the grievances listed in that space, they used prayer and reflection to lead them towards forgiveness of the wrongdoers and Donal (Y4) reported that children can be prompted by these actions to "*start being nice to me again and we make up*". It was interesting that, despite the same set

of questions being used with all age groups, the only children who made much of the idea of reconciliation were the Year 4 group. Perhaps this should not be surprising because the topic of *Admitting wrong and being reconciled to God and each other* featured prominently in the RE lessons for this class and the interviews were held in their classroom with all their prompts easily to hand. With the other year groups, it was not high on their learning agenda at the time of the interviews and possibly did not feature much in their responses for this reason. What is seen here reflects aspects of the Catholic Church's teaching on forgiveness and human dignity. The children appear to have internalised some elements of doctrine, in a rudimentary manner which is appropriate to their age and experience, and they are able to consider the context of their interactions with others, one of the key messages of *Gaudium et Spes* (Second Vatican Council, 1965e), and the importance of harmony in their community, which is essential for the congenial functioning of their classroom.

A second strand recognised by the children, which featured across all year groups, was the notion of choice-making. The responses varied across the age span and the children's body language accompanying each response gave much away about the thought processes behind it. In Y3, the general feeling seemed to be that it was another strand of their learning which had to be accomplished, but Y4 had considered a clear difference in approach and an emphasis on their maturation of thinking, along with the need for preparation as adults, became clearer; for example, Dierdre (Y4) mentioned "*we're meant to make our own choices because we're getting more grown up and we need to do what we need to make our own choices*" and Finbar (Y6) perceived it as teachers wanting to "*get us into the habit of making the right choices*". According to Gula (1989), choice-making is a core element of the Catholic Church's approach to morality; it links to perceptions of justice and this carries some significance because all moral agents are asked to consider how their actions might devalue the spirit of community that the Church

wishes to see built up and whether these actions "promote the kind of self-giving which sustains the well-being of life together" (p. 67). The habituation of choice-making in a variety of situations, and through a wide range of experiences, means that the children are exposed to opportunities for this kind of moral and spiritual development, even though the origination of those choices may dispose one person to respond differently from another since "what is a choice for someone else may never occur to us as a choice at all, for we simply do not see the world that way" (Gula, 1989, p. 141). Mrs Topps recognised the importance of this richness of experience and focussed one of her responses on the multitude of ways that the school offers the opportunities that Gula writes about. She talked at some length about how the Golden Time enables children to gain insights into their moral understanding and how it might enable them to consider reparation where this is appropriate. For her, the Golden Time activities are essentially moral in nature because they encourage positive attitudes and behaviours, through pride in their House or school's achievements in Friday assemblies or through learning about reverence for others in the more religious gatherings. Furthermore, when she spoke about extracurricular activities, it was to propose that these offered children many opportunities to test their moral perceptions in a concrete and living way so they can be shaped by further experiences not available in the mainstream curriculum. Although she did not appear to acknowledge the theory explicitly, her response focussed on another area of Gula's thesis (ibid.) about Roman Catholic moral theology: that critical realism, enacted through the experiences of a person throughout their life, leads that person to greater knowledge which enables them to review the processes which lead them to their decisions and thus to their "formulation of moral positions… and… a more complete grasp of the truth" (ibid., p19).

Do children consider others when moral issues arise and how does their environment promote this?

Using the school space for moral purposes

School is a space where values are enacted, and culture is expressed (Geertz, 1973) through the actions of the various members of its community thus enabling an observer to evaluate the connections between practice and belief. It further enables the observer to attend to the moral work of teaching (Sanger and Osguthorpe, 2011) since this aspect of school goes beyond the mere achievement of good results and lends itself to the development of students' character, which is critical for the future of our society mainly because of its contribution to the children's flourishing as human beings (Dewey, 1916; Noddings, 1984; Brighouse, 2008). Since much of what happens in a school demonstrates "many, often subtle and unacknowledged ways that morality manifests itself" (Sanger, 2008, p. 172) it was always my intention to explore these phenomena by using the criteria set out in "*The Moral Life of Schools*" (Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen, 1998) because the criteria reveal these manifestations very clearly and "seeing what appears obvious is not always easy" (Eisner, 1991, p. 71). The second research question addresses these issues through a focus on the school environment and its impact on the children and then asks about how the children develop their motivation to help each other.

The question of what entails the school's environment is a very broad one and for the context of this analysis I have chosen to focus on the ways that spaces are used to promote the school's values and ethos, as well as how relationships are observed and developed through trust and truthfulness, as through these elements of the broader environment the children's perceptions of morality will be stimulated. Much has been written about school as a learning space and the type

of learning climate which prevails in the classroom (Uline, Tschannen-Moran and Wolsey, 2009), with some studies considering how classroom organisation impacts on the ability of the learner to master whatever task she has been given (Getzels, 1974) or to respond in certain behavioural modes (Cooper, 1982; Eisner, 1991). There is a corollary to each of these: the teacher's personal philosophy of what it means to be a learner can dictate the classroom layout, and the power and authority of the teacher can be reflected in the position of their workspace, aided and abetted by the position of the furniture in the room. Outside of the classroom, primary schools often use as much space as possible to offer displays for the benefit of visitors and the children (Thomson, Hall and Russell, 2007) and many are now developing the school grounds to further enhance the child's experience.

Inside the classrooms there was a general sense of order, and the furniture was placed so that it could be used flexibly. At times the children were sat in serried rows, facing the front and at other times they were able to lean forwards and engage with the person in front of them or turn around to form small discussion groups. Thus, pedagogical variety could be brought in by the teacher and children rearranged periodically to work with others who were not in their immediate vicinity. Overall, behaviour was good, and the children controlled themselves well, even when there was a noisy buzz as they worked. These observations would concur with the general conclusion that the layout affects how the children behave and how the teacher's overall philosophy of learning is fostered (Eisner, 1991) because the teachers used many different cues with meanings which the children understood. For me, as an observer, it was not always obvious what had been intended, though I could see the children visibly responding when the teacher became more animated about a topic or see them settling back down when she quietened her voice. When moving around the class, the teachers also conveyed more covert messages about behaving well when their full attention was on someone else's problems; raised eyebrows or a facial expression were quickly

understood by those up to mischief, and behaviour was modified without needing an embarrassing public admonition. It was these small gestures which confirmed that there was a strong moral and community feel within the classroom, bolstered by the obvious care, affection and respect shown to each child, and this common feeling contributed to the moral education of the children without always being overt or tied up with the technicalities of classroom management (Watson *et al.*, 2019). There was an unspoken trust between the children and the teacher, developed over time, and both sets of individuals knew the lines which should not be crossed; in developing this atmosphere of trust, the teacher relied on children owning up if they had been mischievous or disruptive and thus the elements of truthfulness were reinforced. This approach is profoundly woven into the fabric of the school's daily life and, as Mrs Topps pointed out, "*every stakeholder has a part to play in moulding that child as an individual; how they then go about showing their sets of moral values can be in the most subtle of ways [and] it really comes down to your relationships with them.*"

During my time at the school, I was always struck by how much of the school was covered in displays but how many of the messages they conveyed were for information purposes only. Posters about the house system, large boards showing the current liturgical season, reminders about British Values and the outcomes of School Council discussions were immaculately presented artefacts and it was clear that someone had put in a great deal of effort to create attractive materials which should catch the eye of the children, but my conversations with the interview groups suggested otherwise – these beautiful pieces of work were largely ignored because they had become so commonplace and were now melting into the background, with the consequent loss of meaning and purpose (Uline, Tschannen-Moran and Wolsey, 2009), rather than having the constant impact that they had been designed to achieve. The messages they carried about pride in the house, the achievements of the School Council and the reminders about work they would

encounter in class were clear to me, but I would be wary of imposing my interpretations too strongly in the light of a word of warning about reading too much into the images and displays:

> *Ethnographers … re-think the meanings of … materials discussed and/or produced during fieldwork in terms of academic discourses [and] give them new significance that diverges from the meanings invested in them by informants.*
> (Pink, 2007, p. 124)

The messages may well have been clear to the children, but they did not feel compelled to enunciate those meanings in our discussions. Indeed, the only time when they did mention displays was when we were discussing behaviours and they were very keen to point out the posters that contained the Golden Rules and the classroom rules. A similar situation pertained inside the classroom, with the walls covered in a variety of teaching and learning materials to reinforce difficult topics or with examples of children's work which were refreshed regularly so that current topics could be seen. Likewise, the classroom had a prayer corner which was reviewed regularly. The teacher used it as a reference point for teaching about the Gospel reading of the week, which was linked to the class RE lesson, and when I spoke with the children, they appreciated the value of the prayer corner as a focus for reflection, particularly when they were able to use sticky notes to write down what had aggravated them or who they had been unkind to. During the time I spent observing in classrooms, a few of these items were referred to but, like many of the displays around the rest of the school, there was limited interaction with them unless they had a direct link to the work being covered at that moment.

Caring and prosocial interactions

Whilst I do not wish to rehearse again all the theoretical background to prosocial and caring behaviours that are set out in chapter 2, it is worth considering some

of those which have relevance to the data that I obtained. Some might argue that the essence of being human means that we have concern for others, and that this demonstrates our inherent moral state (Hastings, Zahn-Waxler and McShane, 2006). This concern for others expresses itself in empathy, compassion and altruism to different degrees and can also be linked to cooperation (for example, see Trivers, 1971). Hoffman's ideas about empathy (Hoffman, 2008) suggest that children can be sensitive to distress in others and will attempt to alleviate that distress through some intervention. Later in childhood, they also develop feelings about others who may not be in their immediate surroundings and have been known to instigate action for groups of people they do not know (for example, homeless, poor, or oppressed groups), marking a third stage in Hoffman's theory. Eisenberg goes further and suggests that these manifestations of prosocial behaviour are a core part of the development of moral behaviour (Eisenberg-Berg, 1979; Eisenberg and Miller, 1987; Eisenberg *et al.*, 1995; Miller *et al.*, 1996; Eisenberg, Zhou and Koller, 2001). In terms of how this happens within a school, Duffy and Chartrand (2017) propose an intriguing mechanism. They discuss several ways that "dyadic mimicry—the mimicry of something perceived in one person by another" (p. 440) could be associated with prosociality and this begs many questions about how the children watch their teachers and other significant adults before recreating that behaviour. They further suggest that by mimicking the adults the children's attitudes converge with those of the adults, which poses interesting questions about adult behaviours and how they are perceived. Key conclusions drawn by Duffy and Chartrand suggest that cooperation is enhanced as an outcome of the affective emotions being stimulated, and that occasions where sacrifices could be made are possible (Staub, 1970, 1971, 1979). Whilst all might not agree with these generalities (for example, Goodwin, 2017), there is much food for thought when analysing the data from this study. From the perspective of a religious environment, there is some evidence that prosocial behaviours can be driven by feelings of guilt (McKay, Herold and Whitehouse,

2013) and could be linked with the commitment to a religious group, potentially through the generation of positive emotions. A further avenue of thought is that where a society or group (for example, a school) has a set of social norms, such as the school rules, the individual believes that they *ought* to do certain things to conform to those norms (House, 2018). In these situations, the individual may believe that there are expectations to be prosocial and fear that there will punishment if they do not comply.

The conversations I had with the children seem to suggest that prosocial behaviours are commonplace across all year groups, though the best examples came from the Year 4 sessions. Many cases seemed to be linked to the creation of new friends, especially when new children moved into the school (which had happened a great deal in the three years prior to the start of my study). Dierdre (Y4) spoke at some length about why she had befriended a new girl from Lithuania. For her it was a matter of seeing someone alone, empathising with that situation and then making a move to look after the new girl; there seemed to be nothing in it for Dierdre – she was already a popular girl in her class and had many other friends – so the best and most satisfactory explanation is that she felt moved by the plight of the new child. In the same group, Donal also offered some insights to the motivation for making someone new feel welcome. In his case, however, in contrast to Dierdre's motivation to reach out selflessly, he hinted that there might be something in it for himself – a new friend – so his motivations for prosociality are not quite as clear cut. Erin (Y5) also stressed the welcome that her class gave to new children and Eileen offered another explanation which seems to fit in with the idea of mimicry, something that was confirmed by a response from Fidelma (Y6) whose response was "*[we] learn it by watching other people, from when you are a baby*". Eileen's response centred around what the teachers did and said, including how her class was given time to reflect on what it was like to be in

someone else's shoes. This response was also echoed in the Y6 interviews by Finbar and Fidelma whose maxim for prosocial behaviours was "*Treat people like you'd want to be treated*".

There are implications for some of these prosocial acts in examining the ethos of a faith school. In justice reasoning, charity plays a fundamental role, particularly because of the long history of ethics embedded in many religions (for example, *Caritas* in Christianity). Paulus (2014) suggests that, from the age of 5, children begin to consider aspects of distributive justice and become prone to sharing unequally when faced with others who demonstrably have less than themselves. Whether this is related to recognition of distress (Decety and Svetlova, 2012) or to empathetic forces (Hoffman, 2000) is not clear but the way that my interviewees described their willingness to share food and other goods with other children supports this finding. A conversation with the Y5 group eventually covered the question of what they might do if they saw a younger child who had forgotten their lunch or who only had a little in their lunch box. After a lengthy discussion, there was a general consensus that some of them would be prepared to share their sandwiches with a child who had none. Erin suggested that she would be motivated by personal growth whereas Enya saw her behaviour in terms of the school's ethos and her faith-oriented response suggested that, for her at least, there was a bigger gain to be had. Ongley, Nola and Malti (2014) looked at whether sympathy, guilt or moral reasoning were factors in children's willingness to donate. Their findings suggested that a child's ability for moral reasoning was a stronger driver than either sympathy or guilt because, they argue, there is a duty to look after those in need, and while sympathy was still a strong emotive force in girls it only played its part alongside guilt in maintaining relevance for the children concerned. Although I had expected the children to talk about their involvement in recent fund-raising for causes such as CAFOD or Red Nose Day, my questions did not elicit any responses about these areas despite my awareness that they were

happening concurrently with my interviews. The only child who mentioned external donations was Colm (Y3) who talked a little about how the class had constructed a Nativity Box (consisting of a nativity scene, a blanket and a prayer book) which could be sent off to children in need. For me this was a big surprise because there are many opportunities for donations to be collected in school throughout the year. One final area of prosociality that arose very unexpectedly was a comment from the other Y3 child, Ciara, who was talking about how she used her saved pocket money to celebrate achieving a new badge in gymnastics and spontaneously offered this comment: "*I was allowed to get something for me, some sweets or something, because I got a badge in gymnastics, but I got something for M and K as well out of my pocket money because I didn't want to see them upset when I got mine*" [M and K are her sisters, with Ciara being the middle child of the three]. Hughes, McHarg and White (2018) offer one explanation for this kind of behaviour. They contend that sibling relations are 'all-out', offer "rich … opportunities for learning about others' emotions" (p. 96) and that children are often motivated by the quality of positive and gratifying interactions with their siblings.

What impact do the secular and Catholic curriculum have on the children's understanding of moral issues?

My third research question is about how the school supports children in developing personal skills and moral development. Young people develop their moral frameworks through interaction with others and, according to Kohlberg (1984a), these are be established with reference to their cognitive abilities. Turiel's Domain Theory (1983) also stresses the ways that choices also develop in line with cognitive ability as well as through a deeper understanding of social conventions. The role of a school curriculum is to offer opportunities for cognitive development and to enable that understanding of the child's place in society to mature,

including an understanding of how society's rules and norms operate, thus allowing the child to develop the personal and social skills it requires for adult life. At the heart of the secular curriculum, the Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development [SMSC] regulations (The Office for Standards in Education [Ofsted], 2004) determine and define some of the key personal and social skills which students are expected to acquire through their exposure to the education system in England. Central to the SMSC curriculum is a framework for moral development, building on "society's shared and agreed values" (ibid., p.15) and developing pupils' decision-making, consideration of others and self-control through the critical exploration of their experiences. It also draws subliminally on theories about moral development including Piaget's idea that morality is founded on a system of rules (Piaget, 1932). Best (2000) opines that a values-led approach to SMSC is not ideal and he suggests more of an affect-led approach with experiences of empathy at the heart of moral development to avoid the worst forms of "book learning" (p. 17) which diminish the impact that SMSC can have in preparation for adult life. Catholic schools in England and Wales have always embraced SMSC as a core feature of their work and Catholic school leaders have given it a particular emphasis and importance (Johnson and Castelli, 2000; Johnson, 2002). Morris, Clark and Potter (2012) rehearse a number of potential reasons why Catholic schools are successful in this endeavour and conclude that it is due to the sense of a "shared constitutive culture" (p. 131) or the increased focus on attitudes and accepted norms of behaviour which Catholic teachers exhibit in a predominantly Catholic environment.

The school in this study meets its statutory and diocesan requirements by offering regular RE lessons based on the 'Come and See' programme supported by the Department of Catholic Education and Formation (Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, 2012). The Headteacher believes that it is completely grounded in the moral codes that SMSC wishes to promote, and this was seen in

some detail through the theme of 'Reconciliation and Inter-relating' which threads its way through the syllabus from Y3. It focusses on 'Making Choices' as a sub-theme and offers opportunities for the children to reflect on their experiences and why choices are made. In the school's eyes the students' actions and choices are the moral decisions which are theorised in many academic papers, but which are brought to a reality for the children by being accessible and relatable. The children recognise this and several of them, notably Dierdre (Y4) and Finbar (Y6), were able to explain how the choices they make affect not only themselves but others around them, including why they felt their actions were "the right thing to do" (Nucci, 2002). As a complement to the formal material in the RE curriculum, there are 'Statements to Live By' which form the basis of a week's reflection and are used as the basis for classroom prayer, individual prayer and Collective Worship. They are prominently displayed in classrooms and referred to regularly; they are also prominently displayed in the school's entrance for all visitors and are shared with parents in the weekly newsletter. The 'Statements to Live By' are prefaced by the phrase "Nurturing Human Wholeness in our Distinctive Catholic Tradition" which prompts staff and children to contemplate who they are, what they believe in and what they hope to become as fully human individuals in their school community. With this multi-pronged curriculum, Jung's ideas about the how the curriculum can be unified (Henderson, 1956) play some part in the overall approach taken by the school in successfully delivering its obligations.

The formal RE curriculum also links to two policy documents which I examined prior to the interview phase. These two policies, the *Ethos, Moral and Spiritual Policy* and the *Behaviour Policy*, set out the parameters within which the children will operate and experience the moral life. The first of these sees moral development as a way of developing children's consciences so that they realise the range of choices they are presented with and can make the right one for the circumstances. It draws on psychological and emotional understandings of

children's development, recognising that immaturity is as much a barrier to development as a lack of knowledge. The policy stresses the importance of morality as an individual action which then becomes a shared enterprise within the school community and relates sanctions to the severity of an offence, usually seen as the impact of the perpetrator's actions on other children. The *Behaviour Policy* then picks up these themes and extends them across other aspects of the curriculum. It is a reminder to all that they are expected to be good and to live as good Christians. The manner of its formulation, with input from children from the School Council, suggests that there is some alignment with Kohlberg's Stage 3 where personal responsibility leads to deeper reasoning about the effects that they have on each other. The Golden Rules operate at what appears to be a slightly lower level than the *Behaviour Policy*, since the wording is meant to appeal to a much younger, immature moral reasoner who might be operating only at Kohlberg's Stage 1 or 2. Their formulation draws indirectly on scriptural references (Mark 12:29-31, Matthew 22:34-40, Luke 10:25-28), manifested in the Catechism of the Catholic Church. Looking at the Behaviour Policy and the Golden Rules with a critical eye, an area of Catholic teaching which appears to be missing in an explicit form is the emphasis on repentance, reparation and reconciliation which features in a number of sections in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (The Vatican, 1994). Paragraph 982 of the Catechism states: "there is no offence, however serious, that the Church cannot forgive… forgiveness should always be open to anyone who turns away from sin"; further on, paragraph 2227 comments that "… everyone should be generous and tireless in forgiving one another for offences, quarrels, injustices and neglect... The charity of Christ demands it", and paragraph 2843 fulfils this by saying that "the Lord's words on forgiveness, the love that loves to the end, become a living reality". In one of my early discussions with Mrs Topps, she mentioned that the time devoted to group discussions, in buddy groups or with members of staff, where they reflect on their misdemeanours during Golden Time, was one way in which an approach to

reparation could be addressed but there was no further exemplification of this in the policy. Reflecting on some of the ways in which the policy was seen in practice during my period of observation, it is clear that, whilst many of these ideas are only implied by the outcomes and consequences within the policy, they are made explicit in the actions of both staff and children through the ways that they conduct themselves around the school and during Golden Time meetings, and the implied nature of these ideals can thus be understood in the context of the school's overriding ethos, exemplified through a statement that the policy is based on the teachings of the Catholic Church and the ethos is in essence an expression of those teachings.

What is the impact of the Catholic nature of the school in developing the children's moral outlook?

In many ways, the themes that my fourth research question set out to address are covered by the previous sections in this chapter and I will therefore focus on a synthesis of the main points and then embellish them with additional materials that have not been satisfactorily dealt with thus far. First, though, let us consider the nature of the prototypical Catholic school when setting the benchmark for this deliberation. Concern has been voiced that Catholic schools could become "dualistic … by separating secular and religious aims" (Arthur, 1995, p. 227) with their Catholicity becoming a bolt-on rather than part of the holistic vision of the Sacred Congregation "as inspired by the unifying vision of Christ, [and] integrally bound up with the work of the Church" (Carmody, 2017, p. 162). As I began my investigation, I was prompted to consider a number of vital questions which underpin the fourth research question: what makes a school Catholic, is it the membership of the school, its ethos, or the mission to bear witness to Christ in the society it serves? (Walbank, 2012). The answer is clearly multi-layered and

will depend on who responds, since Walbank's findings suggest that it may fall to "the head teachers' interpretations of how to be a Catholic presence in the community they serve" (p. 180). My own answer would favour the way that Christ is made present within and outside the school community and my focus on moral development as a lens for the study gave me the opportunity to explore these facets in greater detail by considering how morality was operationalised across the school. My discussions with the children revealed that they receive rich messages about the ways in which the Catholic Church is a living entity in their lives. Through frequent and focussed Collective Worship they are introduced to the work of the Church across the world; in "Time Out To Worship" they experience the splendour of Scripture in song and have space to go beyond themselves in energetic or reflective praise; through celebration of Mass as a whole school or in classes they can encounter the stories of Jesus' life in the Gospels. The children know that everything they learn in school, their formal RE lessons and other subjects across the curriculum and even down to their extracurricular activities, proclaims their school's Catholic nature because they are infused with the core messages of the Sacred Congregation and linked to the Catholic Catechism through its scriptural references. Within the school's policies on behaviour and ethos there are strong statements about how to care for their pupils and these are lived out by the staff members. The canonical inspection documents refer to "models of mutual respect" with forgiveness at the heart of the school's sanctions, leading to the fulfilled promise that each session of the day will begin with a clean slate regardless of what has happened earlier. The teachers spoke eloquently about how each person is valued as a child of God, and how that is reflected in the relationships that build up between staff members and children, and between individual staff members. Through regular meetings and discussions, everyone who works in the school knows what their role is and that they will be supported to fulfil it. There are also some more obvious links to the school's Catholic nature. From the moment that a visitor enters the building, they are aware of symbols of

the faith. Crucifixes are visible in strategic places, most obviously in each classroom. In the hall, there are banners from previous Y6 groups with Scripture quotations on them, reminding all who read them of the benefits that these children felt they had gained from their time in the school. All of these things contribute to an overall sense that the Catholic spirit is alive and thriving in the school, leading in turn to a secure environment in which the children can develop morally.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological model as a lens

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) offers a way to conceptualise moral development because it considers child development in the context of a complex system of relationships and interactions, starting from the child's family and moving through to the broader implications of culture, values, customs, and ethos. Traditional psychological theory, such as Piaget's (1932) or Kohlberg's (1981, 1984b), considers the individual and places moral development squarely in the domain of that individual's cognitive capacities with internalisation of social rules and abstract principles of law and justice being the main drivers of observed behaviours. However, other theories of moral development suggest that contributions from the child's environment make this depiction more complex. Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (1991) allows us to describe how children learn from their social experiences and how cognitive processes mediate these experiences before the child turns them into moral behaviours; Gilligan's critiques (1977, 1982) suggest that, based on her compassion and caring model, other influences may play a part in moral development with an 'ethics of care' perspective superseding the male-oriented 'ethics of justice' perspective; Aronfreed (1968, 1970), Eisenberg (1979; 2000) and Hoffman (2000) offer theories that relate moral development to altruistic and empathetic behaviours;

and Social Domain Theory (Turiel, 1983; Smetana, 2006) emphasises emotions, social relationships between adults and peers, social practices and social order as the main drivers when moral judgements are made, underpinned by concerns about violations of welfare, justice and rights that are, in turn, strongly influenced by early social experiences.

Taken as separate tesserae in the mosaic of moral development, each of these theories offers insights about the underlying psychological forces that determine a child's moral development, but the strength of Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory is its integrative power to draw together these many strands and offer an overview from the child's perspective. His theory emphasises the pre-eminence of context in shaping the child's development and offers a holistic approach which includes every system a child and her family might be involved in, reflecting the "dynamic, bidirectional relationships between people and context" (Hayes, O'Toole and Halpenny, 2017, p. 6). The model envisages the child as an "active agent" (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006, p. 811) in her world, being influenced by and taking on board influences from the environment or context in which she lives and contributing to her "own development – for better or for worse - through [her] own choices and acts" (Bronfenbrenner, 1999, p. 22). Additionally, the model predicts that if certain dispositions are experienced, then these will ultimately be reflected in the child's dispositions (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006); for example, a child who experiences a calm environment may learn, in time, to control her urges and become calm herself and, as Resnick puts it, adopt a "habit of thought" (1987, p. 41). For the model to work successfully, Bronfenbrenner places great emphasis on the proximal processes that take place in educational contexts:

> *In order to develop … morally… a child requires…*
> *participation in progressively more complex reciprocal*
> *activity, on a regular basis over extended periods of time*

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*with one or more persons with whom the child develops
a strong, mutual… attachment, and who are committed
to that child's development*

(Bronfenbrenner, 1989, p. 5)

For this study, a consideration of what happens in the various systems from

Bronfenbrenner's model will explicate some of the intricacies involved. At the very

heart of the ecology is the developing young person, in what might be called the

endosystem where the person represents a "learner with certain genetic and

species-specific attributes" (Hirsto, 2001, p. 27), who possesses complex physical,

cognitive, social-emotional, and spiritual-moral processes which contribute to the

intrapsychic components of human and moral development (Bogdanova, Šiliņa

and Renigere, 2017). In the microsystem, the child interacts with her parents and

siblings and past experiences of how these interactions occurred will affect the

child's moral development, for example closer relationships with one sibling. In

the mesosystem, influences from school, such as peer-to-peer or student-to-

teacher encounters, or opportunities for Collective Worship and service, now link

with those familial ones, both enriching and extending the direction of moral

development. More distally, the exosystem, which will contain influences such as

the child's neighbourhood, local parish and other community aspects, will have a

bearing on the child because of the bonds of Christian fellowship which "join us in

mutual care and concern for each other" (Lowe and Lowe, 2010, p. 97). Even

further removed from the individual, the macrosystem of the institutional church,

the child's social class, the country in which they live, the way it is governed, and

the prevailing education system, will all have tangential impacts. Across time,

through Bronfenbrenner's final overarching chronosystem there will also be

elements of change which affect the child's moral development, such as the

developments in moral theology within the institutional Catholic Church following

Vatican II, waves of immigration from countries with different perspectives on

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morality, and the development of technologies that bring potentially negative moral stimuli to bear on the child.

For a Christian child, or one being educated in a Christian school, we could suggest that the Church is only one of many ecologies which the child experiences – "the ecology of daily living, the ecology of justice, the ecology of faith and religious experience" (Catholic Education Service, 2008, p. 8) - among the many intricate webs of relationships and friendships within the child's personal ecologies. If we consider how moral development occurs, especially within the social contexts that the various moral development theories outlined above suggest, then it can be seen that moral development is both a matter for the individual (in the Piagetian and Kohlbergian traditions) as much as a corporate and community enterprise (in the way that Social Cognitive or Social Domain Theory suggest). Moral formation takes place in many different settings and contexts, ranging from inter-personal encounters, interactions with texts and images, and engagement in community activities; thus, if an aim of the Catholic Christian community is to develop a strong moral climate, it is important to sustain the personal ecosystem within the larger ecosystem that is the Church and reflect the desire for human wholeness and flourishing that St Paul describes as "the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). As has been seen in Chapter 2, the Catholic Church promotes this notion of human wholeness through the doctrine of *Imago Dei*, from Aquinas' emphasis on flourishing in the *Summa*, and through the promotion of Virtues in the Catholic Catechism. By these means, the Christian community builds the relationships underpinning Christian fellowship (1 Thess. 5:11) through the many opportunities for reciprocal exchange in our daily lives and these "reciprocal relationships become the engine of our growth" (Lowe and Lowe, 2010, p. 95), both within the community and for the individual as a moral being. In acting lovingly and being "kind to one another" (Eph. 4:32), showing mercy and forgiveness, and "stimulat[ing] one another" (Heb. 10:24), the

relationships will ultimately build the child up as a member of "the ecosystem of the body of Christ" (Lowe and Lowe, 2010, p. 95) and, if Bronfenbrenner's model works as predicted (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) then moral dispositions will become habit just as other dispositions do so.

Chapter 6 – Conclusions and Implications

The Main Issues Revisited: Implications and Concluding Observations

The main objective of this thesis has been to explore some dimensions of the life of a Catholic primary school through the lens of moral development. In doing so, this qualitative study took the form of an ethnography with psychological theories of moral development as reference points from which to build a picture of the many-faceted parameters which inform the daily life of the school, its curriculum and its ethos. Since the study site is a Catholic school, due cognisance was given to the underpinning moral theology which guides the ethos of the school and acts as a driver for its policies and practices. The study was undertaken at a time when many changes have taken place, both in the way that Catholic school governance is addressed through a Multi-Academy Trust system and in societal mores that determine what constitutes right and wrong for the 21st Century child. These trends expose the Catholic school to new pressures - to performative pressures on the educational front and to pressures from social media and world events on the societal front - which impact on a child's interpretation of how people now behave and my concern that these two pressures could affect the core moral outlook of the new generation prompted my forays into this field. A wide range of evidence was taken, from field observations and interviews to the scrutiny of key documents, so that a picture of the school's position could be pieced together. Some aspects of Grounded Theory were used to formulate interview protocols following scrutiny of documentation and initial conversations and the unifying themes of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory were used to conceptualise moral development in the school.

This chapter now considers the overall findings from the study, in the light of the research questions set at the beginning, reflects on the contribution being made

to the field of Catholic Education and proffers some considerations for future action or future research. Reflections on the process of research pertinent to this study are presented through issues about epistemology and ontology, positionality, ethics and hegemony which influenced how the field work and data analysis were undertaken.

My contribution to the field of Catholic Education operates at two levels. At the macro level, which addresses Bronfenbrenner's macrosystem and chronosystem, there is a fear that, as "certain concepts have insinuated themselves into the fabric of human society" (Paul VI, 1967, para. 26) and "everything comes under the law of competition and the survival of the fittest" (Francis, 2013), Catholic schools have become more like state schools (Arthur, 2009, 2013), with the now commonplace move towards academisation and the instigation of Multi-Academy Trusts bringing a highly performative outlook to education. Thus, there is a danger of Catholic schools losing their unique identity (McKinney and Hill, 2012; Fincham and Lydon, 2014; McKinney, 2021) which enriched the education landscape in England and Wales for so long. As Arthur (2021) comments, "what we appear to have lost … is a teleological understanding of human life: that is, human nature in its flourishing condition, [which] makes sense of moral character" (p. xv). Developing a child's moral character is not just a matter of teaching RE (Arthur, 2013) but of offering a comprehensive package of life experiences and opportunities, through Worship, reflection, repentance and service to each other, which will develop the Virtues (Devanny, 2018) required for "human flourishing imbued with the Spirit of Christ" (Towey, 2019, p. 7). The study shows that there is no need to fear the tide of secularisation in Catholic education because the various policies and approaches used at the research site have sufficient rigour to deliver the educational aims of the Catholic Church.

At the micro level, which addresses Bronfenbrenner's mesosystem, the school has been found to engender an atmosphere of true Catholic witness at every level, from the children through the school caretaker and mid-day supervisors, the teachers and teaching assistants, and the school's leaders. Each person in the school community is attributed their rightful dignity as a human being as set out in the post-conciliar documents and the children are implicitly aware of this. The evidence can be found in the manner with which each person is treated, the way that forgiveness and mercy are woven into teaching materials and school policies, the reverence given to the children's spiritual life through their experiences of worship and prayer, and the deep levels of concern and care that pervade the school's ethos. The study demonstrates that this school, if typical, represents a countercultural resistance to the trend of secularisation by retaining the core values that our forefathers set up for Catholic education and is a place where everyone can "cultivate … the true, the good and the beautiful" (Francis, 2014, p. 3) while providing and promoting the moral life through all that it undertakes.

Reflexivity and positionality reflection

Reflexivity is at the core of all qualitative research because questions about "who I am, who I have been, who I think I am, and how I feel" (Pillow, 2003, p. 176) as the researcher have an impact on how the data is collected, selected, and interpreted (Finlay, 2002) and because the behaviour of the researcher affects the nature of participant responses, affecting to some extent how the findings will be drawn up. As part of the research process, it is therefore vital that the researcher undertakes a meta-analysis of the research process, explicitly considering the influences that are brought to bear and to identify "that lived experience that resides in the space between subject and object" (ibid., p.533). What this means in practice, for me, is that I undertake a close examination of issues that could potentially have affected the outcomes reported here and attempt to report some

of my motivations, assumptions and interests which may have distorted the research I have been undertaking. When I began formulating the introduction, I became aware that it gives the impression of being a "confessional account" (ibid., p.533) but since this is permissible in the realms of ethnography and anthropology (Seale, 1999), I feel that it is justified to include such an account since I have maintained some level of objectivity and not just engaged in a process of navel-gazing.

As a trained scientist, with all the positivist trappings that go along with that persona, I moved into the field of ethnographic research with no prior knowledge of its operational requirements and only a limited background from the readings I had undertaken as preparation for the earlier stages of gaining approval for this study. Positivism implies that the methods of natural science – observation, hypothesising, and derivation of logical truths – are being applied to the research problem and that repeatable outcomes can be achieved, with convictions about knowledge as being accurate and true. At the other end of the spectrum, interpretivism considers individual cases to trace phenomena (Crotty, 1998) by examining the interactions between people and the objects around them. For me, the challenge was to recalibrate my thinking so that, instead of seeing the world through the lens of positivist science, I could begin to explore those meanings and interactions at a more human level through the newly acquired interpretivist lens. Looking at it another way, I felt that much of the scientific data that I have been brought up to recognise is hard and fast, "clean" if you like, whereas the murkiness of human interactions meant that the interpretivist data collected from my ethnography was "dirty" (Shulman, 1994; Calvey, 2008) and that the murkiness and "dirtiness" gave it multiple interpretations depending on how I viewed it. Their dependability and transferability are more nebulous than my "clean" scientific data which is much easier to replicate. Over the time I spent on the study, I came to realise that much of social science and particularly

ethnography cannot be "proven" or replicated and this bestows a uniqueness on the data.

Epistemology and ontology "as a Catholic"

In chapters 1 and 3, I addressed some of the epistemological and ontological concerns I had as I prepared for this study. What I have come to realise, after reaching the final stages of the project, is that there is another dimension to which I had not given any deep thought at that point. This is the impact of my Catholicity on both my epistemological and ontological frameworks. I have identified many different personas that have played a part in my development of this project and hidden beneath the surface is the question of what difference has my being a Catholic had on the way that I have looked at the school and the outcomes of the study. This is not simply in terms of potential biases, though I recognise that these may yet exist, but rather at the level of how my Catholicity drives my thinking and responses. I would acknowledge that my scientific training in chemistry has shaped the way I think about carrying out investigations and it took some time before I realised this. As a Catholic scientist taking on a project about moral matters, I have to go a stage further and weigh up how different the two fields of study can be. Pinckaers (2001) offers some insights which I have found helpful. He contrasts the scientific method and the investigation of moral matters by pointing out how science demands distance and neutrality, "cold objectivity" as he describes it (p. 51), yet moral experience is one of interiority where understanding morality demands reflection "upon one's own personal engagement in human actions" (p. 51). For Pinckaers, this is what constitutes real wisdom, which requires "the warm flame of action" (p. 52). I can only hope that my deliberations are not merely scientific and objective but are filled with some of that warmth from the experiences I have gained during the study.

There were several occasions where my experiences as a parent, teacher/head teacher, catechist, and volunteer came into sharp focus and came to my aid. I would like to reflect on three specific instances briefly because they made me question my relationship with the "research context, the research subjects/participants and the research data" (Corlett and Mavin, 2018, p. 378) that arose from these conversations. The first incident occurred when I was talking with Mrs Topps, the Headteacher. It was quite late, after school, and we had been discussing how her religious beliefs were integral to the school's moral life and how her sense of vocation was so important to her. She volunteered a comment about having to be courageous sometimes because she knew that a particular course of action was the right one to take. My response was to recall and share part of a prior conversation with Mrs Morrell who had talked about her vulnerability and to share my own feelings on the matter, particularly as Mrs Topps' comment brought back memories of a difficult decision about a permanent exclusion I had made as a headteacher, one that was not popular with my staff. As the conversation evolved over the next few minutes, it transpired that we had both had experienced the wisdom of a colleague with whom we had both worked – she as his deputy and me in the role of primary liaison for his school. On transcribing the conversation later, I found myself wondering about whether I had compromised that bit of data and yet, with deeper reflection, I realised the value of such a shared learning experience. This deeper entanglement with my subject yielded interesting data and made me stop and think about what it really meant to be an ethnographer rather than adopt it just because it seemed to be an appropriate methodology. Irwin writes about "intimate familiarity" (Irwin, 2006, p. 155) with research subjects, how this needs to be accounted for in considering ethics and then balanced with the feminist position that an "emotional connection is less exploitative of research participants than an objective stance" (p. 158). In

truth, I had not anticipated this level of interaction with my subject and had not accounted for it prior to the interview though I have tried my very best not to misrepresent her in the description above.

The second occasion took place during the first interview with Year 6. On this occasion we were addressing the questions about Religious Education and what the children thought they gained from it. As with other conversations with the children, some of this went off at a tangent but it was one of those exchanges which caught my attention when I came to transcribe the interview. The children were clearly thinking very hard about what they heard in RE and volunteered information about their doubts concerning the authenticity of stories in the Bible, in relation to their faith. Some of them had expressed concerns about the theology that they were supposed to accept. I decided to engage them in a very short lesson about how the Bible stories were not always factual but contained a deeper meaning and how that deeper message is more important than the initial story. When faced with the prospect that some of the stories could be envisaged in that way, they agreed that it might not be as faith-shattering as they had previously thought. My reflection when transcribing the interview was that, as an interviewer who had previously taught RE and Catholic catechetics, I was able to avoid being completely flummoxed and was well-placed to engage with them and explain the issue. Thus, my experiences with this age group as both a parish catechist for Confirmation and as an RE teacher helped me navigate an important discussion which, on deeper reflection, gave my position as researcher greater credibility for those children.

The third occasion bears some resemblance to this event with the Year 6 but on this occasion, it happened during a conversation with Y3. We had been discussing what the children disliked about their class and with mock surprise I was asked "Do you want us to tell you?". Of course, I wanted to know as it might reveal

something about relationships in the class, but I could not let them know that so I coolly replied in the affirmative and suggested that it would help if they gave an explanation as well. The immediate response from another child was to chide his classmate and suggest that if she didn't say something it would never get back to the staff. This prompted me to think more deeply about the position they thought I held; was I perceived as a spy who would report back all my findings to the class teacher and the head teacher, or was I really being honest when I had said to them that I simply wanted to know their views and that these conversations were purely to help me unravel something about the way that they worked as a class? The dichotomy in these last two scenarios is not lost on me. I have been concerned for some time that my "insider-outsider" position could potentially compromise my role as a researcher working in an environment that was familiar to me in so many ways; after all, not only did I have experience as a Catholic educator, but I was a regular volunteer in their school, who knew the staff well. I therefore had "privileged access" (Merton, 1972, p. 11) to a different layer of the school's structure and this brought with it the risk of ruining my whole enterprise. Merton poses another troubling proposition, based on a particular social epistemology – by virtue of being an "insider" as a Catholic in a Catholic setting does that mean only I can interpret the setting accurately due to my "monopoly of knowledge" (ibid., p. 13)? The answer is to be found in my attempts to balance these contradictions and noting that there are benefits to be gained as well as challenges to be overcome (Kerstetter, 2012). The benefits, as I discovered in these three incidents, are that it is easier to engage the participants and consequently to gather much richer data. On the other hand, Kerstetter suggests that it is common for insiders to have difficulty in separating their own experiences from those of their participant, as I did with Mrs Topps, and to meet crises in confidentiality when working in a familiar setting, as I found with the Y3 children, so the lesson to learn is about giving these matters due consideration prior to engaging in a venture such as this study.

Reflection on the interview process

Much has been written about potential problems with interviewing children (Clark, McQuail and Moss, 2003; Clark, 2005; Loveridge, 2010). At the ethics approval stage for the study, I was given some clear conditions that needed to be met and these were based on potential issues of the children's vulnerability when talking about sensitive topics, their protection from abusive relations with adults and about disparities in status between children and adults. Much of the concern about hegemonic relationships between the adult researcher and the children centres around including children's rights and the perspectives that children bring to research but are linked to social research's historically poor record of listening to children (Morrow and Richards, 1996). Mauthner (1997) lists a number of ways that such obstacles could be overcome and many of these are strategies that I tried to adopt, such as being flexible and allowing the conversation to flow even if it went in a different direction from what I envisaged. On analysis, these strategies appear to have been of benefit; for example, the discussion with Y6 about beliefs and the meaning of faith would not have taken place if they had not felt comfortable to say those things to a relative stranger. However, the negative side was always on my mind, and I am still left with questions about whether the children in the younger classes spoke honestly and freely at all times in their attempts to provide me with answers that would please or impress me. Similarly, my attempts to ensure that, during the interviews, there was always a presence from another colleague had both positives and drawbacks. On the positive side, the children were always interviewed in an environment where they could feel comfortable yet could still expose issues without feeling that they would be overheard. However, this meant that several sections of the recordings were ruined by "off-stage" noise derived from the working atmosphere of the spaces in

which the recordings were made, and if I were to carry out such research again, I now realise that further negotiation about quieter spaces would benefit me as researcher. In addition, a more proactive manual recording of important points in contemporaneous notes could have enabled me to retain some of the important elements of the conversation which had been lost in the ensuing hubbub. To a lesser extent, the same concerns could be levelled at the interviews with the two adults as witnessed by my conversations with them about vulnerability and pressure which, although not directly relevant to the thrust of this study, were a powerful reminder that sensitivity is a key trait of all interviewers.

Implications

A number of serious challenges face the young people who currently inhabit Catholic primary schools. Attitudes to morality have seen a swing towards more liberal outlooks among many UK Catholics (Clements and Bullivant, 2021) , challenging the old manualist approaches and contesting clerical authority on morality, with women often taking more liberal perspectives. However, younger generations (the so-called Gen Z and Millennial generations covered by an age range of 18-39) have begun to turn this tide, as reported anecdotally in university chaplaincies, back in favour of a more traditional Church. The examples of blatant falsehood which I drew attention to in my introduction suggest that truth and truthfulness are in short supply, driven to some extent by the constant barrage of social media news and 24-hour reporting of world events (Andrews, 2021). In parallel to these challenges, there is some emerging evidence that moral education is being side-lined in schools in the same way that arts and humanities subjects have been relegated as subjects with a low perceived economic benefit (Orchard, 2021) with a consequent impact on professional formation at all levels; Orchard reports that current PGCE courses fall into the trap of using "reductive

and behaviourist assumptions about human nature" (p. 105) when preparing young teachers for managing classroom behaviour and this impoverishes the vocational experience of teaching. Recent changes to the organisation of schools across England into Multi-Academy Trusts raise spectres of politicisation of education through the use of 'super-heads' whose aim is to impose government dogmas on schools (McGowan, 2021); of inadequate structural support for schools by diocesan education bodies now that the local authority links have been severed (Foley, 2020); of an increased secularisation of Catholic education which dilutes the mission of the Catholic Church (Fincham, 2019) and denies the "spiritual and transcendental dimensions" (p. 10) which it has held to for many years; and of the potential loss of identity for individual Catholic schools whose ethos has to be submerged into the corporate MAT ethos (Glackin and Lydon, 2018)

The vast corpus of work on Catholic morality does not help a lay person to grasp the significance of moral living. My reading of so many books and articles reinforces my perception that the Church as an institution falls short in its mission to educate good Catholics in England and Wales because the majority are largely left to their own devices once the core Sacramental programmes of Initiation in the Church are completed in late teens. What might be considered is clear teaching from the pulpit, using homilies as they were always intended to be used, for the instruction and illumination of the Scriptures and the rich traditions which impinge on our moral outlook, and reflecting Vatican II's call in *Optatam Totius* that the Church "communicate such truths in a manner suited to contemporary man (sic)" (Second Vatican Council, 1965b). There is a pressing need for this formation before numbers decline steeply in the church-going population, as well as a rapprochement in the internecine fighting between traditionalists and revisionists which has pitted some elements of the Church against others. These differences in approach to morality lead to a discontinuity in the practice of the faith as experienced by the English Catholic Church and the immigrant populations

who now make up a larger proportion of practising Catholics in our parishes. Not all Catholics have the inclination to read, or have access to, the range of materials that my studies have revealed to me. Some of these documents would open the eyes of the faithful and empower them to take charge of their moral selves.

One implication is the consideration of the early formation of *all* Catholic teachers and *all* those who work in Catholic schools which would help to bring about a better understanding of their role and vocation in the salvific work they share with the ordained ministers of the Church (see Franchi and Rymarz, 2017). The challenge raised by the demise of a widespread Catholic Higher Education system in England means that there is no systematic way of reaching these potential candidates and this work could be undertaken through Catholic chaplaincies at universities or across dioceses if it is to succeed in preparing the next generations of Catholic teachers for our schools. Without that formation the very nature and existence of a Catholic school system will be at risk. Cardinal Basil Hume, speaking about spiritual development, insisted that:

> *"I do not believe that an adult can awaken in a young person a sense of the spiritual if that adult is not at least well on the way to discovering the spiritual dimension of his or her own life. I do not mean that a teacher has necessarily to have found the spiritual meaning to their life, but that spiritual questions must have become real for them. Indeed, in this as in other areas, the best teachers are those who are still learning"*
> (Hume, 1997, p. 83)

and this leaves me wondering; if the emphasis on *spiritual* was replaced throughout the quote by the word *moral*, it would be a highly apposite reflection and call to arms for the situation our Catholic schools currently face since "you cannot pour from an empty cup" (see, for example, Glackin and Lydon, 2018). Our children need good Catholic, moral teachers, in their homes and in their schools, and we in the Church would be failing them if we did not give due

consideration to these matters. Some further research on implementing these suggestions would therefore seem appropriate and timely in the light of recent synodal discussions.

A final thought

Since these musings may have given the impression that much is gloomy for the future, I would like to finish with a ray of hope. In a review of moral theology texts, Bennett (2020) draws attention to one of Servais Pinckaers' books, *The Sources of Christian Ethics* (Pinckaers and Noble, 1995), in which Pinckaers writes about the life of faith and the moral life, two elements of human existence that he sees as congruent. He contrasts 'secular Christians' who simply *aspire to hope* with those who *wish to be faithful to the Gospels* and thus must go through a period of testing their faith. Perhaps in these turbulent times we need to turn our minds to Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* (2015a) with its roots in Catholic Social Teaching, its emphasis on solidarity, stewardship and the Common Good, and a deeply moral outlook on our place in Creation, demanding as it does a response to the cries of the poor and the Earth, to help find a way forward that brings justice to all and love to our neighbours, key ideas that children in this study have been exposed to in abundance.

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Appendix A: School Characteristics

Size of School in September 2017	241 Mixed Gender Age Range: 3 – 11
Percentage Achieving Level 4 or more in 2016 Key Stage Two National Tests	SCHOOL NATIONAL MATHS 93% 70% READING 69% 66% WRITING 89% 74%
Percentage Achieving Level 4 or more in 2017 Key Stage Two National Tests	SCHOOL NATIONAL MATHS 93% 75% READING 90% 71% WRITING 90% 76%
Overall Effectiveness of School in 2017 OFSTED inspection	Good (2)
Personal Development and Wellbeing (Including Spiritual Development) in 2006 OFSTED Inspection [N.B. This was the last time that this aspect was included in the inspection framework]	Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils are very reflective, show a genuine and deep concern for the well-being of others and have high levels of knowledge and respect for cultures and traditions different from their own.
Overall Judgments in Section 48 Denominational (Diocesan) Inspection 2013	Overall Effectiveness 1 Catholic Life 1 Collective Worship 1 Religious Education 2
Overall Judgments in Section 48 Denominational (Diocesan Canonical) Inspection 2018	Overall Effectiveness 2 Catholic Life 1 Collective Worship 2 Religious Education 1
Religious Make-up of School	51% of pupils are baptised Catholics 30% are from other Christian denominations 2% are from other faiths 17% have no religious affiliation
Religious Make-up of Child Interview Groups	See details in Appendix B

Appendix B: Composition of interview groups

All names on this page are Pseudonyms used in the recording and analysis of interviews.

Composition of Staff Interviews:

Headteacher (Mrs Alice Topps) – White Female, Catholic
Curriculum Leader: Religious Education (Mrs Beatrice Morell) – White Female, Catholic

Composition of Child Interview Groups:

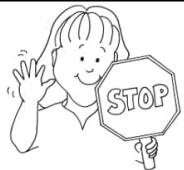|	
Year 3 (aged 7 & 8)	Ciara – White Female, baptised Catholic with Catholic father and Methodist mother
	Clodagh – Withdrew at start of interview process
	Colm – White Male, baptised Catholic with both parents Catholic §
	Conor – White Male, ¶
Year 4 (aged 8 & 9)	Dierdre - White Female, baptised Catholic with both parents Catholic §
	Donal – White Male
	Dermot – White Male, baptised Catholic
	Desmond – Withdrew at start of interview process
Year 5 (aged 9 & 10)	Eileen – White Female
	Emer – White Female
	Erin – Mixed Race Female
	Enya – White Female
Year 6 (aged 10 & 11)	Fidelma – White Female,
	Fionnula – White Female, baptised Catholic, both parents Catholic
	Fergal– White Male, ‡ ¶
	Finbar – White Male, ‡
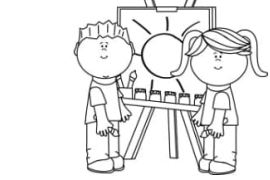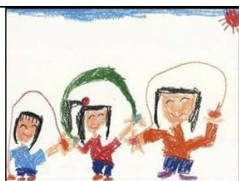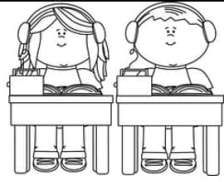
§ Siblings
‡ Twins
¶ Not available for second part of group interview; in keeping with the agreed ethical protocols, none of this child's answers have been used for analysis

N.B. The children's names are all based on the following code:

a) the name corresponds with their gender.
b) the year group can be identified from the first letter of their pseudonym as this corresponds with the numerical position of that letter in the alphabet, e.g., C is the third letter of the alphabet, so this means all names beginning with C correspond to Y3 children, etc.
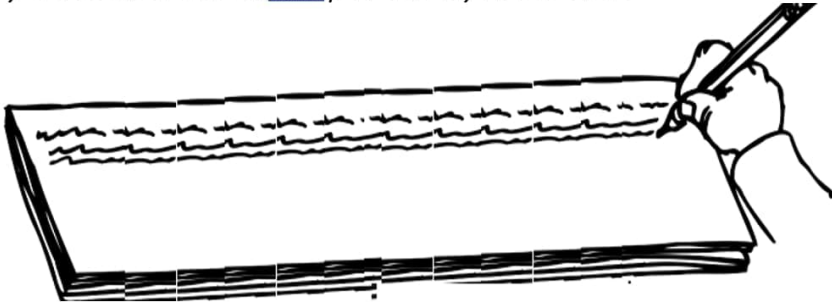
Appendix C: Research Information Sheets

1. Sample Information Sheet for Children in Y3 and 4

Dear My name is Karol Grabowski and I am working on a project at the University of Nottingham.		
	I would like to find out about what you learn about making good choices at school and at home. I would like to find out about what happens on the playground and in class.	
I will ask you to talk to me or draw some pictures or find another way to tell me about this.		
	I would like to record what you say to me and to keep any pictures you draw.	
We will look at and listen back to what you tell me so I can tell other people what you have told me.		
When I tell other people what you said about how you make good choices, I will not use your real name.		
Would you like to choose another name for me to use? Write it here:		
You can tell me anything you like about how you make good choices, but if you tell me something that makes me worried about your safety, I will have to tell someone who can help you.		
	If you do not want to talk to me or work with me on this project at some time in the future, you can stop at any time – I won't mind. If you do stop, it will not make any difference to your schoolwork or how any adult will treat you.	

Appendix D: Consent Forms

Child Consent Sheet (Y3 and 4) – The Letter that gives your permission

	Please put a tick here to say you have done each step:
I have read through the information letter with Karol.	
I am clear about what I am being asked to do.	
I know that Karol will record my voice.	
I know that I can draw pictures to help Karol to know what I mean.	
I know that Karol will not use my real name.	
I know I can stop doing this if I want to.	
I know I don't have to do this if I don't want to.	
I know that I get to keep a copy of the Information Letter and a copy of this Permission Letter.	
I have asked your parents if it is OK for me to talk to you and they have said yes. Now I want to know if you would like to talk to me, so: *If you would like to talk to Karol please write your name here* *Thank you very much for your help.* *Karol Grabowski*	
Witness (my teacher)	
Witness (my parent)	
Date	

Appendix E: Parent Information sheet

Dear Parents

Your child is being invited to be involved in a small research study which I am carrying out as part of my doctoral studies at the University of Nottingham. Before you decide whether you want him/her to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what his/her participation will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with teachers from your child's school if you wish. Please contact me if anything is unclear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish your child to take part. Thank you for reading this.

Some of you will know me from ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ Church and from school as both the Parish Music minister and as a volunteer helping out with worship at ▮▮▮▮▮▮. Before I began volunteering at the school, I had spent most of my professional life as a secondary school teacher, with some time as Deputy Head at ▮▮▮▮▮, before moving on to become Headteacher in two secondary schools outside of Nottinghamshire. As a teacher, and particularly as a Headteacher, I have always been interested in how schools contribute to the development of young people who know the difference between what is right and wrong and who can make informed decisions about the events in the world they encounter every day. These days it is a much bigger challenge than it was, even ten years ago, and I feel that church schools like ▮▮▮▮▮▮ can make a big difference to the development of your children.

Since I retired from the role of Headteacher, I have been at the University of Nottingham, working with a variety of young adults who are preparing to become teachers. The courses on which I have been a tutor have included elements of the topic of moral development and certainly many of my discussions with my students have prompted me to reflect on what an important role schools play in helping children to grow into moral adults, but more especially how church schools do that.

A few years ago, I began a course for the Doctorate in Education degree and decided to follow up these reflections by undertaking my research project in the area of moral development of children. I approached ▮▮▮▮▮▮ as a school that I know well, and where the children also know me from my regular visits, in the hope that I will be able to gain some interesting insights into this topic. My plan is to observe what happens as part of the daily life of the school, through visiting some lessons and talking to some of the Chaplaincy Group members as well as a few key teachers. The technical term for this kind of research is "ethnography" and, put simply, it means that I will get under the skin of what it means to be a member of the community that is ▮▮▮▮▮▮ School. My choice of children who belong to the Chaplaincy Group was made because I believe that they will be very capable of offering me some thoughts about how the ideas I am interested in are expressed in both what they learn in lessons and through their interactions with significant adults and other children in the school.

I hope to carry out group interviews/discussions in school between November 2017 and July 2018. The interview/discussion will take approximately 10-15 minutes in any given session so that the children will not be overburdened with thinking about my questions. It is intended as an opportunity for the children to express their views, how they relate to what they have learned in school and how they interact with other children and adults in school. The interviews will be recorded, and later transcribed into text form so that I can use the information when I write up my project.

As part of the presentation of results, your child's own words may be used in text form. This will be anonymised, so that he/she cannot be identified from what was said. All of the research data will be stored in a secure place on the university's special research server in a separate, password-protected file. The only people that may need to see the files will be me and my supervisors, Professor ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ and Dr. ▮▮▮▮▮▮.

Please note that:

- o Your child can decide to stop the interview at any point
- o Your child need not answer questions that they do not wish to
- o Your child's name will be removed from the information and anonymised. It should not be possible to identify anyone from my reports on this study.

It is up to you to decide whether you would like your child to take part or not. If you decide to allow him/her to take part, you are still free to withdraw him/her during the interview or any time and without giving a reason. If he/she withdraws from the study all data will be withdrawn and destroyed.

If you do decide to allow your child to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a parent's consent form.

Once the thesis arising from this research has been completed, a brief summary of the findings will be made available by me upon application; I will let ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ have a copy and ask her to share it with anyone who is interested. You also need to know that the results could be presented at academic conferences or in academic journals. The data will be kept securely for seven years from the date of publication, before being destroyed.

If you think that this study has harmed your child in any way you can contact the University of Nottingham using the details below for further advice and information:

Contact for further information

Supervisor: Professor ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

E-mail: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
Phone: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Research student: Mr Karol Grabowski

EdD student, University of Nottingham School of Education

Email: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

The contact details of the Research Ethics Coordinator, should anyone wish to make a complaint on ethical grounds, are:

educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I sincerely hope that you will agree to let your child be a part of my study and look forward to working with the children and staff in the near future.

Yours sincerely,

Karol Grabowski

Appendix F: Parent Consent Form

PARENT CONSENT FORM

Project title: An ethnographic study of moral development in a Catholic primary school

Researcher's name: Mr. Karol Grabowski

Supervisor's name: Professor ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

If you are happy for your child to take part in this research project, please read through the following statements and sign to say that you understand what is being asked and what your rights are:

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to let my child take part.

- I understand the purpose of the research project and my child's involvement in it.

- I understand that my child may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect his/her status now or in the future.

- I understand that while information gained during the study may be published, my child will not be <u>identified</u> and his/her personal results will remain confidential.

- I understand that my child will be audio recorded during the interview.

- I understand that electronic data only will be stored in a password protected computer that only the researcher and his supervisor <u>has</u> access to.

- I understand that I may contact the researcher or supervisor if I require further information about the research, and that I may contact the Research Ethics Coordinator of the School of Education, University of Nottingham, if I wish to make a complaint relating to my involvement in the research.

Signed …………………………………………………………………… (parent)

Print name ………………………………………………………… **Date** …………………………………

Contact details

Researcher: *Mr Karol Grabowski*   *E-mail:* ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
                                     Tel:

Supervisor: Prof. ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮   *E-mail:* ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
                              Tel: ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

School of Education Research Ethics Coordinator:
educationresearchethics@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendix G: Interview schedule for teachers

1) What do you think of when you think of the word "morality"?

2) What do you think drives people to behave morally?

3) Is religion necessary for morality?

4) Do all religions universally prescribe moral behaviour, and in what ways?

5) What impact do religious beliefs and practices have on moral behaviour?

6) When you think about morality in the setting of this school, what is the impact of it being a Roman Catholic and Christian school?

7) How do you think that moral development is supported in this school context?
    a. taught curriculum
    b. hidden curriculum
    c. relationships

8) How is consistency of moral action maintained in the school?

9) Which are more important, morals or values?

10) What would you say is "the heart and soul" of this school?

11) Are there explicit aims of the school which provide an opportunity to develop the spiritual or moral life of the school?

12) How would you describe the ethos of this school from your perspective?

13) To what extent do you think that the religious side and the Catholic side is influencing the values and the ethos of the school?

14) How do you make the values and ethos meaningful for the children?

15) How do you pick up on or reinforce values which are related to moral development?

16) How do you think that the curriculum the children experience helps them to develop their moral identity?

17) To what extent would you say that your own religious beliefs are integral to the development of the school's moral life?

18) How do children participate in the development of the moral position of the school?

19) What is the purpose of worship and assembly in school?

20) How do you use worship and assembly to support the moral development of the children?

21) How do you support staff who are not Catholics or do not belong to any acknowledged faith to act as role models for the kind of moral atmosphere that you wish to develop in the school?

Appendix H: Interview schedule for children

Things they like about school:

1) When I say the name of your school what are the first three words that you think of?

2) What do you like about being a part of this school?

3) Is there a school saying or motto? Do you know what it is and what it means?

4) What do you like about your class? What don't you like about it?

5) What is your favourite subject and why? What is your least favourite subject and why?

6) Do you like RE lessons? What do you think you learn about in RE?

7) What kinds of things do you learn about in PSHCE and Circle Time? Do you ever learn how to get on with other people?

8) Does your teacher give you time to think about how other people feel about situations?

9) What kinds of things do you do in assemblies? What do you like and dislike about assemblies?

10) How do you feel when you are taking part in assemblies?

11) Do you have celebrations in school? What are they about? How do you feel when you take part in those celebrations?

Rules

1) Are there any school or class rules that you have to follow?

2) Why do you think there are these rules?

3) Do you think they are good rules?

4) Did you come up with the rules or did someone else?

5) Do you think that the rules are fair?

6) Are your teachers fair?

7) Are there ever any times when they are not fair? Why not?

8) What happens if people do not follow the rules? Who decides what happens?

9) Do you have a school or class council? What does it decide?

10) Who is on the council? How were they chosen? Why were these children chosen?

Priest and Mass

1) Do you get visits from our Parish Priest?

2) When he comes in, what does he do in school?

3) When he says Mass, how do you feel? How do you react to what he says?

4) Does he have a message? If they think he does, then what is the message? Why does he have a message?

Interview Questions Avoidance of Antisocial Behaviour

1) Why would you not want to push other children?

2) Why would you not want to take something that does not belong to you?

3) Why would you not want to make other children angry?

4) Why would you not want to tease other children?

5) Why would you not want to break other children's toys?

Preference for Prosocial Behaviour

1) Why would you want to help another child who is hurt?

2) Why would you want to share sweets with other children?

3) Why would you want to be kind to others?

4) Why would you want to give away your toys to children who do not have enough to play with?

5) Why would you want to get food for a child you know is hungry?

Appendix I: "Nurturing Human Wholeness in our Distinctive Catholic Tradition: Statements to Live By…"

- We are all special.
- I can say one good thing about myself.
- I can say how I feel.
- I can laugh and have fun.
- I know what to do if I see anyone being hurt.
- I understand that rights match responsibility.
- I try to stand up for myself and others without hurting others
- I try to be just and fair.
- I can tell you how I look after myself.
- I think before I make choices that affect my health.
- I can work, play, rest and pray each day.
- Simple things can make us happy.
- I try to love others as I love myself.
- I try to follow our school and classroom rules.
- I know I belong in a community that includes my school.
- I know we are happiest when we are united.
- I listen to what you say.
- I show that I am listening to you.
- I co-operate with others in work and play.
- I try to use words that make the world a better place. (Please, sorry, thank you)
- I try to appreciate the beauty and the wonder in the world around me.
- I know that it is ok for me to make mistakes.
- I can learn from my mistakes and failures.
- I try to keep going when things are difficult and not give up hope.
- I know what humility means.
- I know when to ask for help and who to ask for help from.
- I can recognise comfortable and uncomfortable feelings.
- I know how to help others when they are in trouble.
- I understand what trust means
- I try to forgive people when they hurt me.
- I try to accept forgiveness from others.
- I know how to show I am sorry.
- I understand the importance of peace.
- I know what human dignity means and I show that I respect others.
- I stand up for people who are being treated unfairly.
- I notice that we are the same and we are different.
- I try to be accepting of others.