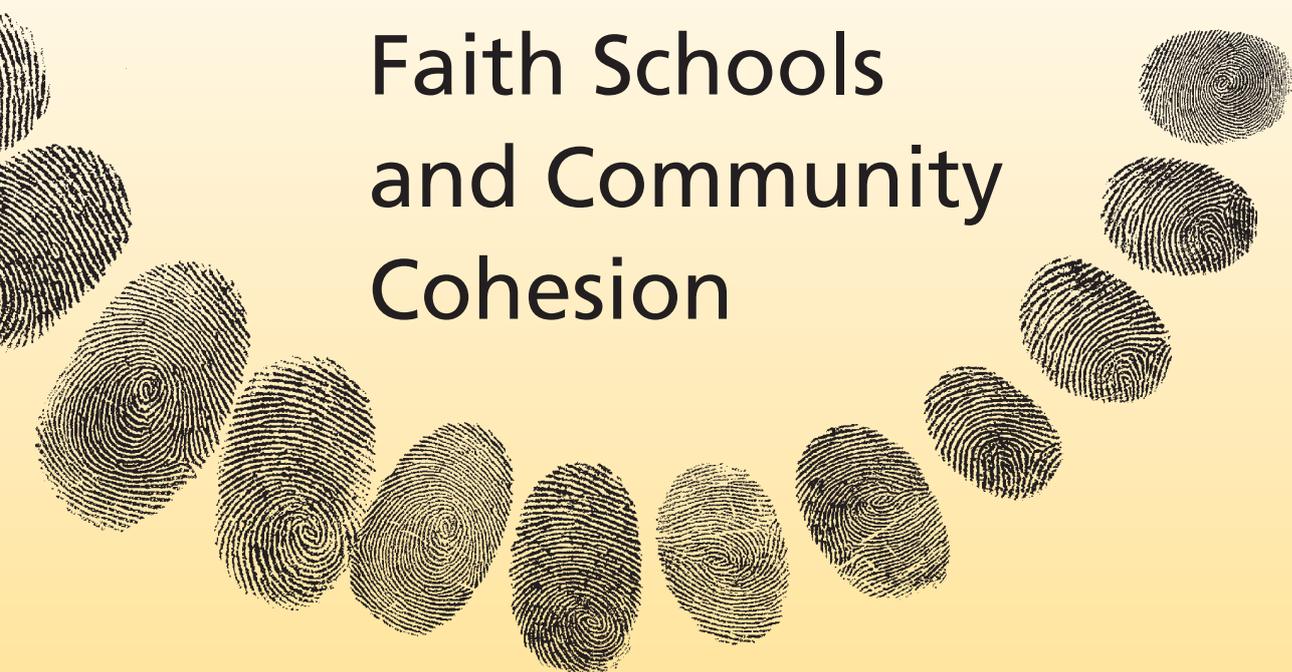


Right to Divide?

Faith Schools and Community Cohesion



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Rob Berkeley

with research by Savita Vij



Foreword

England is a more diverse country in terms of ethnicity and faith than it has ever been before. This is a welcome change. There are many benefits to be gained from diversity. However, that diversity needs to be balanced with equality and cohesion in order to create a successful multi-ethnic society.

We currently have an education system that includes faith-based schools. These schools go some way towards reflecting the diversity of religion and belief in England, but this research project has asked whether a school system with faith schools can also promote equality and cohesion.

The project involved a wide range of stakeholders (parents, teachers, education experts, religious leaders, local authority officials and pupils) through a range of different means whereby we could learn from their experiences about the benefits and challenges to cohesion that a school system with faith schools provides.

This report summary gives a brief account of the key findings and recommendations of the full research report. It also relates the history of faith schooling in England to support further dialogue on this crucial issue.

The report's recommendations have far-reaching implications for our entire schooling system. In our collective attempts to create 'a society at ease with itself', significant change may sometimes be necessary. Too often the debate about faith schools in England has been based on empty rhetoric; in this report we offer a more considered, independent and evidence-based approach.

As the multicultural settlement that had been the pattern until 2001 is increasingly challenged, and schools are asked to respond more vigorously to continuing inequalities, play a larger role in their neighbourhoods and communities, and prepare young people to be effective citizens as well as effective participants in the labour market, the role of faith schools has come under greater scrutiny. The recommendations that result from this research project propose a way forward that seeks a sustainable balance between diversity, equality and cohesion – a solution that contributes to a common aim of a successful multi-ethnic society.

Michelynn Laflèche
Director
The Runnymede Trust

Six key recommendations to clarify the role of faith schools in our education system

1. End selection on the basis of faith

Faith schools should be for the benefit of all in society rather than just some. If faith schools are convinced of their relevance for society, then that should apply equally for all children. With state funding comes an obligation to be relevant and open to all citizens.

2. Children should have a greater say in how they are educated

Children's rights are as important as parents' rights. While the debate about faith schools is characterized by discussions of parental choice of education, there is little discussion about children's voice.

3. RE should be part of the core national curriculum

Provision for learning about religion is too often poor in schools without a religious character. Provision for learning about religions beyond that of the sponsoring faith in faith schools is also inadequate.

4. Faith schools should also serve the most disadvantaged

Despite histories based on challenging poverty and inequality, and high-level pronouncements that suggest a mission to serve the most disadvantaged in society, faith schools educate a disproportionately small number of young people at the lowest end of the socio-economic scale.

5. Faith schools must value all young people

People cherish facets of their identities beyond their faith, and these also need to be the focus of learning in faith schools – and valued within them. Similarly, religious identities should be more highly valued within schools that don't have a religious character.

6. Faith should continue to play an important role in our education system

With these recommendations acted upon, faith schools should remain a significant and important part of our education system, offering diversity in the schooling system as a means of improving standards, offering choice to parents and developing effective responses to local, national and global challenges in education.

The Role of Faith Schools

Discussions, dialogues and debates on the role of faith schools and their effect on community cohesion often create more heat than light. Runnymede first intervened in this area 27 years ago (see Dummett & McNeal, 1981); and the debate still rages today.

For this report we have consulted with over a thousand people – parents, pupils, professionals and policymakers from a range of faith backgrounds as well as those who do not subscribe to any religion. We approached the issues open-mindedly; seeking only to discover what part faith schools play in preparing young people for life in a multi-ethnic, multi faith society. Our findings and recommendations set out a direction for policy and practice that offers an opportunity for faith schools to play their full role in building a successful multi-ethnic, multi-faith nation.

Government policies are committed to increasing choice and diversity in the education sector. The participation of faith schools and religious organizations in the state-maintained sector is significant in providing this choice. Government is also keen to strengthen the role that schools play in promoting social cohesion through increased contact between young people of different ethnic and faith backgrounds. At the same time, parts of the media and public opinion are calling for caution in expanding the role of faith in education given increasing concerns about segregation, reported ‘parallel lives’ between different ethnic and faith groups, violent terrorism carried out in the name of religion, and ongoing discussion about the proper relationship between religion and the state.

Faith schools are defined in this report as state-funded institutions that educate pupils within the context of a particular faith or denomination. There are just about 6900 faith schools in the state-maintained sector making up 33% of all maintained schools; of which the Church of England has the largest representation with 4657, followed by 2053 Roman Catholic, 36 Jewish, 8 Muslim, 2 Sikh, 1 Hindu and around 82 other Christian schools. While debate about faith schools is often characterized by discussion of Muslim schools, they are few in number and consequently low in their impact on cohesion. While this research project includes Muslim schools, we have been looking at faith schools as a whole, not at individual faiths.

Although faith schools have a long history in the English education system, their involvement has been viewed as controversial; and the current government’s tone on the issue has changed with successive government ministers. Since 2001, faith schools have been courted and faith organizations encouraged to become more involved in education in ‘the maintained sector where there is local agreement’ (DfES, 2001:

45). Independent faith schools have been encouraged to acquire state funding and voluntary-aided status.¹ Academies have been seen as another option for the encouragement of faith schooling, described as state-maintained independent schools aiming to make a difference ‘in areas of disadvantage’ through external business, charity and religious sponsors.

Similar in concept are ‘trust schools’ (Education and Inspections Act, 2006), which provide further opportunities for faith bodies to play a role in state-funded education. In 2008, however, perhaps in recognition of ongoing controversy over the involvement of faith schools in the English education system, or to mark a change in the tone of government policy, Ed Balls (in response to the interim report of this project – see Osler, 2007)) made the first statement on faith schools from the Brown government. He distanced the government from encouraging growth in the number of faith schools, noting:

In some local communities, there is support for faith schools, in some there are schools moving from the independent sector to the state. Other communities are clear that faith schools aren’t the right schools for their communities. It is up to the local community to decide what it wants. We’re not leading a drive for more faith schools. (House of Commons Children, Schools and Families Select Committee, 2008)

It would appear, then, that government policy is not completely settled in this area.

At the same time, following the disturbances in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham in 2001, and reinforced as a consequence of the tragic London bombings in July 2007, the notion of community cohesion based upon ‘shared values’ has become a central policy initiative. Schools in particular are identified as being crucial to breaking down barriers between young people.

The concept of community cohesion has been highly influential in setting new research and policy agendas analysing and responding to the impact of segregation. Sir Herman Ouseley (2001) pointed to a ‘virtual apartheid’ between schools in his review of race relations in Bradford, arguing that it has led to polarization, failure to prepare students for life in a multi-ethnic society, and racial tensions within and beyond schools. The Cattle Team Review (2001) highlighted how distinct ethnic or religious communities can live within metres of each other without developing cultural or social bonds, and stressed that schools have a role to play in challenging such ‘parallel lives’.

As our starting-point in this study, we take the guidance issued to schools on their statutory duty to promote community cohesion, introduced in 2007, and use the discussions we have conducted online and face-to-face with community groups, schoolteachers, pupils

¹ Voluntary Aided schools are partly funded by the local authority and the religious authority, and governing bodies have control over admissions and the teaching of Religious Education.

and policymakers to assess whether faith schools are well placed to deliver their obligations in this regard in the following areas:

- encouraging pupils to share a sense of belonging,
- helping pupils develop a positive appreciation of diversity,
- removing barriers to equality,
- and building strong partnerships between people from different backgrounds.

Research Recommendations and Policy Actions

Our consultations led us to identify six key recommendations, which will clarify the role of faith schools in our education system, and help them improve their capacity to fulfil the role of promoting cohesion between young people from different ethnic and/or faith backgrounds.

End selection on the basis of faith

Faith schools should be for the benefit of all in society rather than just the few. If faith schools are convinced of their relevance for society, then that should apply equally for all children. With state funding comes an obligation to be relevant and open to all citizens.

Faith schools can demonstrate a successful emphasis on the teaching of values, one which we recognize as a significant contribution to effective education for the 21st century. However, faith schools are much more effective at educating for a single vision than they are at opening dialogue about a shared vision. As currently constituted they may be having the effect of limiting young people's ability to engage in such discussions. This is a significant reason why we advocate that faith schools should accept a broader range of pupils, from a range of faith backgrounds or of no faith.

All parents should be given access to what faith schools claim is a distinctive ethos. Currently, there remains some question as to the link between parental choice and faith. The educational success of many faith schools may mean that the faith of the school is not the overriding consideration in the choice the parents are making. Opening up faith schools to all young people would enable the schools to focus on identifying the distinctive nature of what they are offering in terms of their vision. At the moment, faith can be used by parents as a means of ensuring social exclusivity within a school. This works counter to the stated aims of government to create spaces where people from different backgrounds can work together for common aims.

There are few external structures for creating a shared vision between schools as they are currently constituted and given the direction of travel in government policy

towards greater autonomy for schools; it is unlikely that this can improve in much more than a piecemeal, bolted-on manner. While efforts at twinning between schools are welcome, they are unlikely to lead to the kind of meaningful contact over a longer period that is required to break down barriers. Our earlier research has already highlighted how existing levels of ethnic segregation between schools will continue to be exacerbated by selection on the basis of faith (Osler, 2007).

If faith were to be perceived as an educational specialism for a school, it would provide the infrastructure for them to cascade their expertise among other institutions, just as other schools do. Given the quasi-market that operates between schools, and the government's commitment to offering parents choice between schools, all schools need greater support in building partnerships with each other and with other organizations so that they can function together to improve education for all rather than merely for some.

Our research has found that commitment to the promotion of cohesion is not universal and, for many faith schools, not a priority. Despite the existence of a statutory duty to promote community cohesion since 2007, and good race relations since 2002, many faith schools have done very little to engage with community cohesion initiatives. Given the challenges made by many in civic society, academia and parliament to the continued existence of faith schools on the basis that they are detrimental to cohesion, we found that, for many schools, cohesion was still not considered to be important. Too often, there remains a resistance to learning about other faiths when faith schools are seen as the spaces in which singular faith identities and traditions are transmitted, rather than as spaces in which faith is 'lived'. By seeing faith schools as schools for all in the community, rather than as a means of ensuring exclusivity, the potential for learning about others' religions and faiths will be enhanced. This will in turn contribute to greater understanding of faith diversity in England.

Without faith-based admissions criteria, resistance to the contribution that faith organizations can make to the English education system could lessen. This would enable a real and effective partnership to be established between government and faith organizations in providing education for all citizens. Instead, controversy over the role of faith in education and resistance to engagement between faith schools and the remainder of the schooling system has the effect of limiting the legitimacy of faith organizations in schooling.

Children should have a greater say in how they are educated

Children's rights are as important as parents' rights. While the debate about faith schools is characterized by discussions of parental choice of education, little is heard about children's views. Faith schools in particular emphasize parental choice (even when those choices may be based on an incomplete understanding of our very complex education system, or a will to avoid interaction

with young people of other backgrounds), but do not champion the rights of children.

Restoring some balance, through giving young people appropriate opportunities to influence the shape of their educational experience, is crucial. Teaching about democracy and citizenship within institutions that are autocratic only serves to demonstrate to young people the double standards of adults. If young people are to develop the ability for critical thinking and self-determination, in opposition to absolutist thought and closed approaches to difference, developing appropriate democratic dialogue within schools is necessary. Both faith schools and those without a religious character could do far more to enable young people's voice and participation, thereby demonstrating their commitment to democratic dialogue.

RE should be part of the core national curriculum

In schools without a religious character, provision for learning about religion is too often poor. In faith schools, provision for learning about religions beyond those of the sponsoring faith is also inadequate. Local structures for supporting religious education in schools are too often weak and ineffectual. All schools should therefore follow a common RE National Curriculum as a minimum guarantee of learning about the role of faith in society, critical thinking about religion, ethics, and the diversity of faith traditions.

Faith schools should also serve the most disadvantaged

Despite histories based on challenging poverty and inequality, and high-level pronouncements which infer a mission to serve the most disadvantaged in society, faith schools educate a disproportionately small number of young people at the lowest end of the socio-economic scale. Selection procedures, while based on faith, seem to favour the more privileged. In the case of many faith organizations, therefore, allowing faith to be a criterion for school selection would appear to contradict their mission to provide education for the most disadvantaged. When challenged on this data, faith school providers seem to be more keen in their public announcements to discuss statistical validity than engage with a mission to serve the most disadvantaged.

Faith schools must value all young people

Inequalities and failure to tackle religious discrimination in non-faith schooling is a significant driver for faith school attendance. Faith is an important marker of identity for many, and all schools need to be able to show that they respect this by challenging bullying on the basis of faith background, and improving the quality of teaching about religion and faith.

Important facets of people's identities operate beyond what they are able to express through their faith. These other aspects need to be developed within the process of

learning in faith schools – and well valued within them. It is not enough to privilege one marker of identity over all others, catering for young people only as members of particular faith communities without also understanding their gender, ethnicity, age, ability or sexual orientation. While this may prove to be controversial for many faith-based organizations, becoming schools for all will require the development of teaching practices and ideologies that value everyone equally.

Disappointingly, given their emphasis on values and moral education, faith schools have not developed a distinctive approach to learning about diversity. They appear to take approaches to race, gender and disability equality that are similar to those of non-faith schools, and are therefore no better placed to respond to the needs of young people. This is particularly of concern given the large numbers of minority ethnic pupils attending faith schools (particularly in urban areas), and the ongoing controversies about gender and sexual orientation within many faith communities.

Faith should continue to play an important role in our education system

While not diminishing the strength of the caveats and criticisms expressed above, faith schools remain a significant and important part of our education system. They expand the range of choice in schooling, and a means of improving standards, by offering choice to parents and developing effective responses to local, national and global challenges in education. Yet, all too often, faith schools struggle to engage with neighbouring schools and other social partners, thus limiting the impact that they can have. As currently constituted, they display an insular and too often absolutist approach to faith which excludes rather than includes. Young people deserve better from our school system as they grow to become adults in a multi-ethnic and multi faith society.

* * *

Any reform which impacts on one-third of the schooling system is likely to be radical and difficult. However, the status quo is no longer an option. Currently, government policymakers appear to have reached an impasse; with faith organizations unwilling or unable to change the nature of their schools significantly, offering to do little more than tinker at the margins of their provision to address issues of national concern – namely community cohesion. Government on the other hand has expended much political capital in this area already, leading to the Janus-like situation of welcoming faith schools into the system, but only where there is agreement from the Schools' Adjudicator and other local partners, who have shown an antipathy to faith-based schooling as currently constituted. These recommendations offer a way of moving beyond this impasse and, while they will require a shift in the current understanding of faith-based schooling, offer a solution which can ensure the relevance of faith in schools for the 21st century. ■

Appendix 1

A brief history of faith schools in England

Faith schooling is part of a long tradition of religious involvement in the English educational system. With approximately 6900 maintained faith schools in the system, as noted earlier, they constitute one-third of all state-maintained schools in England.

Status. The majority of faith schools (91%) are in the primary sector and have voluntary-aided status (VA). The Church of England has the largest representation of maintained faith schools with 4642 schools, followed by Roman Catholic (2038), Christian other (88), Jewish (37), Methodist (26), Muslim (7), Sikh (2) and the first state-funded Hindu school, which opened in September 2008. There is also one Seventh-day Adventist secondary school and one Greek Orthodox primary school. (see Table 1)

Denomination. The number of maintained faith schools does not reflect a proportionate relationship with religious populations by denomination. According to the 2001 Census, Christianity is the main religion in Great Britain, at almost three-quarters of the population (72%). (This group included the Church of England, Church of Scotland, Church in Wales, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations.) People with no religion formed the second largest group (15%). Around 5% claimed a non-Christian religious denomination with Muslims as the largest religious group after Christians, followed by Hindus, Sikhs, Jews and Buddhists respectively.

The pattern of faith involvement varies in the Independent sector and in relation to Academies (defined as state-maintained independent schools aiming to make a difference in areas of disadvantage through public-private partnerships). All of the faith-sponsored Academies are Christian in denomination. Of the 47 Academies now open (April 2008), 16 have a faith designation: Church of England (3), Roman Catholic (1), CE/RC (1), and non-denominational Christian (11). Out of an estimated 900 independent faith schools (representing 2 out of every 5 independent schools in England approximately), over 700 represent various Christian denominations; the next largest groups are the 115 independent Muslim schools and 38 independent Jewish schools. DCSF (2007: 6).

The choice of school status – voluntary controlled (VC), voluntary aided (VA), independent faith schools and faith-sponsored academies – relates to the different ways in which they are funded, and governed. Among the state-maintained faith schools, approximately 59%

of primary faith schools are VA and 40% are VC. In the secondary sector, 88% are VA and 10% VC. A full 100% of RC primaries and non-Christian schools are VA, giving them greater control over governance, school admissions and the teaching of Religious Education.

Denominational schools and the state system

To understand the particular make-up of faith schooling, it is useful to look at the history of faith schools within different religious denominations. The following factors appear to have played an important role in the demand for and provision of faith schooling across different faith-based communities:

- poverty, educational inequalities and the desire to use education as a route for socio-economic mobility;
- successive waves of immigration and efforts to promote integration;
- demand for faith-based education by faith, educational and community organizations;
- changing religious needs.

What follows is a brief description of how and when the major denominations began to interact with the state education system.

Faith schools within different religious denominations

Church of England schools. The National Society (formed 1811) aimed to promote the ‘education of the poor in the principles of the established church’ in the absence of a state-education system, later introduced in 1870. The Education Acts of 1902 and 1944, whilst expanding state supported education, initiated a ‘dual system’ of schools and consolidated the position of voluntary Christian schools with increased financial support. Today, the Church of England provides some 25% of primary and 6% of all maintained secondary schools in England. Many of these Church of England schools were established to serve the local population irrespective of religious affiliation. They are supported by the National Society, which encourages education in accordance with the principles of the Church of England. The Dearing Report on Church Schools (Archbishops’ Council, 2001) has recommended the establishment of additional Anglican schools, particularly VA schools. CE schools can be found across England; however, a disproportionately high number of CE faith schools (roughly 40%) are in rural areas. (Data source: Godfrey & Arthur, 2005)

Roman Catholic schools. Between 1847 and 1906, the number of Catholic schools in England grew markedly; primarily in urban areas. This growth responded largely to the influx of working-class Irish immigrants, communities who were at the heart of state-funded Catholic schools by the Catholic Poor School

Table 1. Maintained Primary and Secondary Schools¹
(1a): Schools by Status and Religious Character (January 2007, England)

	Primary Schools						Secondary Schools					
	Community	Voluntary Aided	Voluntary Controlled	Foundation	Total	Total	Community	Voluntary Aided	Voluntary Controlled	Foundation	Total	
Total	10,726	3,731	2,542	362	17,361	2,112	554	113	564	3,343		
No Religious Character	10,726	15	43	322	11,106	2,112	40	53	551	2,756		
Church of England	0	1,956	2,446	39	4,441	0	137	53	11	201		
Roman Catholic	0	1,696	0	0	1,696	0	341	0	1	342		
Methodist	0	2	24	0	26	0	0	0	0	0		
Other Christian Faith ²	0	28	29	1	58	0	22	7	1	30		
Jewish	0	28	0	0	28	0	9	0	0	9		
Muslim	0	4	0	0	4	0	3	0	0	3		
Sikh	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1		
Other	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1		

Source: *School Census and Edubase*
¹ Includes middle schools as deemed; ² includes schools of mixed denomination or other Christian beliefs.

(1b): Number (headcount) of Pupils by Status and Religious Character of the School² (January 2007, England)

	Primary Schools						Secondary Schools					
	Community	Voluntary Aided	Voluntary Controlled	Foundation	Total	Total	Community	Voluntary Aided	Voluntary Controlled	Foundation	Total	
Total	2,799,440	785,840	414,130	108,270	4,107,680	2,023,450	504,450	112,740	627,850	3,268,490		
No Religious Character	2,799,440	2,470	8,400	99,210	2,909,510	2,023,450	39,960	64,610	614,590	2,742,600		
Church of England	0	361,960	396,520	8,840	767,320	0	120,100	40,830	11,190	172,110		
Roman Catholic	0	404,350	0	0	404,350	0	316,600	0	1,290	317,890		
Methodist	0	420	4,070	0	4,490	0	0	0	0	0		
Other Christian Faith ³	0	286,180	5,130	1	11,540	0	19,720	7,300	780	327,810		
Jewish	0	8,690	0	0	8,690	0	6,080	0	0	6,080		
Muslim	0	1,150	0	0	1,150	0	1,200	0	0	1,200		
Sikh	0	1,300	0	0	300	0	500	0	0	500		
Other	0	330	0	0	330	0	290	0	0	290		

Source: *School Census and Edubase*
¹ Includes middle schools as deemed; ² excludes dually registered pupils; ³ includes schools of mixed denomination or other Christian beliefs. Pupil numbers have been rounded to the nearest 10. There may be discrepancies between the sum of constituent items and totals as shown.

Committee, now known as the Catholic Education Service (CES). Catholic independent and Catholic grammar schools were established in the 19th and early 20th centuries to provide education for the children of the small Catholic upper and middle classes. Today Catholic schools make up around 10% of primary and 10% of all maintained secondary schools in England aiming to preserve the Catholic religious culture. The CES supports these schools on behalf of the Bishops' Conference and in partnership with 22 diocesan education services. Almost a third of RC schools are in the North West, in some areas making up more than a third of the schools in an authority. (Data source: Grace, 2002)

Methodist schools. State-funded Wesleyan schools (historically affiliated with John Wesley's efforts to establish Methodist day schools) arose from concern about domination of public elementary education by the Church of England and a growth of Roman Catholicism in the 19th century. These schools therefore have their foundations in a revival of Methodism in England. Although around 900 Methodist public elementary schools already existed by 1870, internal disputes over the role of the church in providing state-education led to a decrease in their number. Today there are more than 60 Methodist Primary Schools, 26 of them state-maintained. Largely in the North West of England, they reflect a historical predominance of Methodism among the working-class populations of the old mill towns.

Jewish schools. The Manchester Jewish School opened in 1853 after a demand for equality of provision alongside Church schools. Waves of Jewish immigration since the 19th century have encouraged further take-up of state-support. Although the Jewish population swelled between 1880 and the 1940s with an influx of immigrants from Eastern Europe, the numbers attending Jewish day schools began to fall, reflecting an impetus towards integrating and assimilating into wider society. Post World War II, a changing attitude towards education saw the setting up of educational organizations and community leaders, raising the profile of Jewish schooling. The number of pupils enrolled in Jewish day schools more than doubled (from 12,800 to around 26,500) between 1975 and 2005/6. There is now an ongoing presence of Jewish schools in Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham and North East/North West London. However, the type of schools and maintained funding differs between mainstream and strictly orthodox schools. Although demand for strictly orthodox schools is growing, in the maintained sector (which makes up only 28% of Jewish schools), 70% of the schools can be described as mainstream and 30% as strictly orthodox. (Data source: Miller, 2001; see also Jewish Leadership Council's Consultation Document, 2007)

Muslim schools. The first two Muslim schools, the Islamia Primary School in Brent, North London and the Al Furqan Primary School in Sparkhill, Birmingham,

became state-maintained in 1998. The emergence of Muslim faith schools is linked to the migration of South Asian Muslims to England in the 1950s and 1960s. Since then, independent faith schools linked to mosques and charities have grown, supported by funding from community members. This support was prompted by key concerns, e.g. to provide a 'safe' environment for post-pubescent girls, a faith-based education, training for future religious leaders, and the opportunity to increase achievement among pupils from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds in particular. Muslim independent schools have proliferated and now number around 115, a six-fold increase since 1990, providing education for an estimated 1% of Muslim children. Since 2001, Muslim schools have been actively welcomed into the maintained sector, with the government giving the Association of Muslim Schools (AMS, founded 1993 as a network for the growing number of Muslim schools in the UK) financial support to facilitate their integration into the sector. (Data sources: Flint, 2007; Hewer, 2001)

Greek Orthodox schools. St Cyprian's Greek Orthodox Primary School in Croydon, South London is the only maintained school from this religious tradition in the UK. Pupils from nursery to Year 6 have daily Greek lessons. The first Greek Orthodox community was established in London in the 1670s, with the arrival of a small group of refugees. Since then many wider communities have developed, particularly with the arrival of new migrants after the Second World War.

Sikh schools. The first state-funded Sikh school in England opened in 1999 after a two-year campaign for the Guru Nanak Sikh College in the London Borough of Hillingdon to become a state-maintained primary/secondary school. It opened in 1993 as an independent school following concerns from Sikh parents about drugs, indiscipline and declining moral standards in other schools. This school has received considerable media recognition for its external examination achievements since 1999. The second Sikh school to open was in Slough, Berkshire in 2006. Slough has some 10,000 Sikhs, according to the 2001 Census, which makes it the highest concentration in the country to date.

Seventh-day Adventist schools. The government currently provides funding for one Seventh-day Adventist school, the John Loughborough secondary school in Tottenham, London. This voluntary-aided school has been funded since 1998, although the Seventh-day Adventist Church has had a presence in Britain since the mid-19th century. However, the school has been criticized for teaching Creationism and has recently received a 'Notice to Improve' from the school inspectors (see Branigan, 2002a, b). In the United Kingdom and Ireland the Adventist Church operates 2 secondary schools and 9 primary schools. Negotiations are currently underway to acquire state funding for 8 Adventist primary schools and another Adventist secondary school (see Lechleitner, 2007).

Hindu schools. The first state-maintained Hindu school opened in September 2008 in Harrow, West London. It is a voluntary-aided primary school run by the I-Foundation organization, a charity linked to ISCKON (the International Society for Krishna Consciousness) promoting Vedic culture and philosophy. I-Foundation claims that the demand for the school is from Hindu parents who are becoming increasingly concerned that their children may be losing touch with their culture and religion. They are now looking to develop further schools in Barnet and Leicester, locations with large Hindu communities. In these areas and others with sizeable Hindu populations a number of independent and supplementary schools are run by different Hindu sampradayas (organizations within Hinduism that represent various theologies passed on by oral training and initiation). These include the Swaminarayan School in Wembley and Sai schools in Harrow and Leicester; teaching language and religious classes in addition to secular subjects. Given the diversity of Hindu traditions, some concern has been expressed about representing them all in a single school.

Tell Me What I Need to Know

A new resource to help parents and schools work together to support BME, Traveller, and Refugee children's learning

Parents/carers' involvement in their children's learning can make a real difference in supporting them to achieve their potential. *Tell Me What I Need to Know* is a series of booklets designed to help parents – particularly those from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME), Refugee, Asylum-seeking and Traveller communities – support their children's education more confidently and effectively.

Covering formal education from ages 3 to 16, there is a booklet for each stage of a child's education. An additional Good Practice booklet brings together suggestions for creative action to help parents and schools work in partnership.

The booklets are available to download from the Real Histories Directory website www.realhistories.org.uk

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About Runnymede

The Runnymede Trust is an independent policy research organization focusing on equality and justice through the promotion of a successful multi-ethnic society. Founded as a Charitable Educational Trust, Runnymede has a long track record in policy research, working in close collaboration with eminent thinkers and policy makers in the public, private and voluntary sectors. We believe that the way ahead lies in building effective partnerships, and we are continually developing these with the voluntary sector, the government, local authorities and companies in the UK and Europe. We stimulate debate and suggest forward-looking strategies in areas of public policy such as education, the criminal justice system, employment and citizenship.

Since 1968, the date of Runnymede's foundation, we have worked to establish and maintain a positive image of what it means to live affirmatively within a society that is both multi-ethnic and culturally diverse. Runnymede continues to speak with a thoughtful and independent public voice on these issues today.



The Runnymede Trust
7 Plough Yard
London EC2A 3LP
T: 020 7377 9222
F: 020 7377 6622
E: info@runnymedetrust.org

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Dr Rob Berkeley is Deputy Director
of the Runnymede Trust.

Dr Savita Vij is a Runnymede
Research Associate.