Catholic Schools in a Plural Society

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Data and Analysis

By

Andrew B. Morris

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrew was born in 1946 in Birmingham and trained as a teacher at Loughborough Teacher Training College from 1964-67. He has spent forty years working in Catholic education in a variety of teaching, leadership, administrative and governance roles. He has been awarded a Certificate of Education, a Diploma of Loughborough College, has four degrees, including a PhD and an honorary BA.

He is a former secondary school Headteacher and Deputy Director of Schools in the Archdiocese of Birmingham. He has been an external examiner for PGCE students in at York St. John University. He has worked as a consultant to the Catholic Education Service and also in collaboration with the Office for Standards in Education to publish a number of papers on the academic standards and attainment in Catholic schools in England.

He was seconded for a period of five years from the Archdiocese of Birmingham to Liverpool Hope in October 2007 as Senior Research Fellow and Director of the (then) Centre for Christian Education. Following that secondment he was appointed Course Director of Post Graduate Research at the Maryvale Institute in Birmingham from 2013-15. He continued to work as lecturer, tutor and supervisor on its doctoral programme before his retirement in 2022.

His academic specialism is in the field of faith-based education and school leadership. He has over thirty articles published in academic journals is an established author, book and peer article reviewer, provides educational training and other support for Catholic and Anglican dioceses, is an international conference speaker and advisor to Institutes of Higher Education, Local Authorities, other providers of Schools, the Catholic Education Service and various Catholic and Anglican Dioceses. He has prepared employment and other quasi-legal documentation for the CES, Catholic dioceses and local authorities, and has been the lead liaison officer for the Catholic sector in three Local Authority reorganisation schemes, Coventry, Oxfordshire and Warwickshire.

He is the author of '*Fifty Years On: The Case for Catholic Schools'*, '*Re-Imagining Christian Education for the 21st Century*' and '*Catholic Schools in a Plural Society: Collected Papers and Essays 1994-2012*' first published by Matthew James (in 2008, 2013 and 2014 respectively). He contributed to and edited *'Catholic Education: Universal Principles, Locally Applied'* published by Cambridge Scholars Press in 2012 and two volumes of *'Faith Hope and Educational Research'* published by Liverpool Hope University Press in 2016 and 2017 respectively. He has six entries in '*Encyclopaedia of Christian Education*' published in 2015 by Rowman & Littlefield Publishing, is a named contributor to Prof. Trevor Cooling's '*Christian Faith in English Church Schools'* published in 2016 by Peter Lang and has a contributed a chapter to *Reflections on Pope Francis's Encyclical Laudato Si* published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing in 2017. His most recent publications have been two volumes of edited extracts '*Aspects of Doctoral Research at the Maryvale International Catholic Institute*' both published by Cambridge Scholars in 2019.

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PREFACE

The published articles, essays and briefing papers included this book represent much of my contribution to the study of Catholic sector maintained schooling over the last twenty years during which I have been a teacher, headteacher, educational administrator and, latterly, an academic working in a university with a Christian foundation.

I was born into a Catholic family. I am a practising, educated and reasonably well read Catholic layman, but have no claims to being a Catholic philosopher or theologian, to hold any authoritative insights about Catholic doctrine or to be a Catholic intellectual. As such, I take a relatively uncomplicated view of my Catholic life, accepting the idea that God is the centre and focus of human existence without undertaking any exhaustive intellectual investigation of the notion. I accept that there are truths beyond human understanding and that it is through revelation and the person of Jesus of Nazareth that we know of God. I accept official Catholic teaching about human nature, free will, natural law and the teaching authority of the Church expressed through the magisterium. I was – and still am - what could be called, an orthodox, traditional Catholic rather than a progressive or a faithful dissenter. If a caricature of my religious journalistic reading habits is at all helpful in providing an insight into my research stance, it can be said that, on the whole, I find the attitude of the newspaper '*Catholic Herald'* towards Church teaching and the authority of the magisterium more congenial than that of the (more prestigious?) Catholic periodical *'The Tablet'*.

In matters educational, if it is possible to apply meaningful labels, I hold traditional rather than progressive views about the role of teachers and their relationship with pupils. In ethical matters I am an absolutist. That is, I believe there are moral absolutes, though I accept they might not yet be known, and I am sceptical about the emphasis placed on personal autonomy, freedom and individuals 'working out their lives for themselves' which often characterises the politically liberal, relativist or pluralist stance. As such, I believe that it is both acceptable and proper in a liberal, pluralistic society for religious communities to make claims about their conception of the ideal society and the good life and seek to

promulgate that view in an attempt to preserve and develop their specific, religiously based, cultural identity.

I started teaching in 1969 and, having spent my working life in Catholic schools, am committed to their success both as religious, social and intellectual institutions. My interest in into their effectiveness as institutions for teaching and learning arose out of my personal and professional commitment to the promotion and development of Catholic education specifically because I had, in 1986, been appointed headteacher of a Catholic comprehensive school. In doing so I became responsible for ensuring its performance as an effective institution and subject to the ever increasing scrutiny of government inspectors in the newly created Office for Standards in Schools (OFSTED).

'League tables' of schools' academic performance were first published by government in 1992, coinciding with my retirement from my post and taking a role as a diocesan officer – swapping my responsibilities for a single school for a diocesan wide oversight of some two hundred and forty institutions. However, like many of my former colleagues I studied the data avidly to see how 'my' (former) school compared with others and noticed a clustering of Catholic schools towards the top of each local authority 'league'. I was intrigued; what reasons might there be to explain this apparent phenomenon?

So began my involvement in formal educational research which, in turn, became the subject of a PhD study programme at Warwick University. My doctoral studies explored the possibility that Catholic schools in England were indeed more academically effective than other similar institutions in two parallel studies. One involved a statistical analysis of OFSTED secondary school inspections reports; the second was a more detailed comparison of secondary school performance across one Local Education Authority (LEA) and was the subject of my PhD thesis. (*Papers derived from those studies are included in the section two of this book*).

The first part of the final thesis, which uses a quantitative approach to add to the small body of data concerning the academic performance of Catholic institutions, compares the effectiveness of comprehensive schools in one local authority. The second, and more extensive, area of my research considers the school processes involved in two different types of Catholic school, illuminating the relationships between their academic effectiveness and elements of their culture that determine their 'Catholicity'.

At that time – early 1990's – there was some evidence that suggested Catholic schools in England might be more effective academically than other local authority maintained schools in terms of their pupils' examination results. However, it was not conclusive and there was very little published research directly focused on this phenomenon.

There was a more extensive body of research findings originating in the United States of America (see for example, Coleman et al, 1982; Greeley, 1982; Hoffer et al, 1985; Hill et al, 1990; Bryk et al, 1993). They indicated that pupils attending Catholic schools, all other things being equal, achieved higher levels of academic attainment than similar pupils in municipal schools. The evidence also suggested that Catholic schools were particularly effective with pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

However, differences in the educational systems and culture of the two countries did not allow simple direct comparisons to be made - for example, Catholic schools in the USA are predominantly private rather than municipally maintained and, therefore, do not operate under the financial or political control of the local electorate – so more English based research was needed if the growing debate about the role and effectiveness of state maintained schools with a religious character was to move beyond assertion and counter assertion towards a more rational evidence based debate.

I was not so much concerned with philosophical concepts of 'good' education or justifications of religious or secular based models, but with the concept of school effectiveness and the specific beneficial effects that a Catholic education may provide for pupils, particularly in the area of academic achievement. For a school to be effective implies that there is some pre-determined target, or set of targets, established for it and some means of measuring whether they have been achieved. In this case I was primarily concerned with the levels of achievement in public examinations of pupils attending Catholic schools and comparing them with those of similar pupils in non-Catholic schools.

My completed thesis was that the form of religiously based socialisation promoted by Catholic schools in England was broadly supportive of academic aims and outcomes. I argued that the traditional approach to the provision of education in England and Wales taken by the Catholic Church enables Catholic schools to establish a school environment that is particularly conducive to helping pupils achieve academic success. I argued further that the distinctive religious vision of education inherent to

the traditional model of Catholic school, though academically effective for pupils of all abilities, was especially so for the less able and those from lower socio-economic groups.

Taken together, my findings from the two strands of enquiry in my thesis suggested that:

- all other things being equal, Catholic schools are particularly effective academically
- their academic effectiveness is positively associated with the nature, quality and effectiveness of the religious education provided
- their academic effectiveness is positively associated with the school's effectiveness as an agent of Catholic socialisation and the development of a Catholic cultural identity
- the traditional type of Catholic school in England is comparatively more effective in achieving both religious and academic outcomes than the progressive model

Implication

In essence all I had done was to undertake a comparative case study of the effectiveness of two institutions in one medium sized local authority. My research suggested that the necessary ethos to meet those purposes is closely associated with the holistic model. Whether my findings they were capable of being generalised beyond the specific case studies to wider applications in the Catholic and national education system, however, was another matter.

I argued that, for Catholic schools, effectiveness should be concerned with their function as institutions for acquiring knowledge and skills required in our society and their role in the transmission of Catholic faith and culture. Although there was increasing amount of evidence of the academic success of Catholic schools in general, looking to the future of Catholic education, with all its potential opportunities and difficulties, further research was needed to:

- extend, confirm or refute my findings across a wider sample of types of Catholic school in the primary and post-16 phases, and;
- compare the stated and actual ethos of different models of Catholic school.

I concluded my thesis with the observation that there was never was a better time to undertake such research since "studying the Catholic sector was becoming a more central activity in educational research". The papers selected for inclusion in this book suggest I took my own advice.

Rather than placing the papers in chronological order based on the date of publication, they are grouped into four thematic sections. The first comprises papers that are concerned, primarily, with the background and context of state maintained Catholic schools.

The second section explores, briefly, the academic research into the academic performance of Catholic schools prior to 1995 and speculation about possible casual factors for the evidence of their seemingly high levels of effectiveness.

The third, and by far the largest section, is concerned with empirical data about the relative success of Catholic sector schools compared to other maintained institutions and is divided into three parts. There are papers providing data on pupils' academic outcomes, testing possible causal factors and social outcomes and comparative studies of teachers and leadership of Catholic schools. Section four is a collection of essays and briefing papers to various bodies, including dioceses, the Catholic Education Service, government agencies and individual schools about various aspects of the interaction of Catholic education and the state within the existing 'dual system' of educational provision in England.

I trust they will be of interest to all those who are interested in promoting an evidenced based understanding of the outcomes of the English maintained Catholic school sector and, perhaps, be of some help to other researchers providing empirical evidence about the sector in years to come.

Andrew B Morris
December 2013

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This book comprises a selection of articles published, mainly, in peer reviewed academic journals, supplemented by a smaller number of essays and documents prepared for policy makers within the Catholic educational sector.

The chosen texts have been re-printed almost entirely as originally published except for the correction of certain typographical errors, some minor changes in punctuation and some editing to avoid unnecessary duplication, for example, historical background, or reviews of literature. However, in one case, a paper published in the London Review of Education – *'Academic Standards in Catholic Schools in England – Indications of Causality'* - contained errors of fact which went unnoticed at the time by myself and the peer reviewers. I am grateful for the opportunity presented by this book to make the necessary corrections.

A significant number of papers could not have been written without the data supplied by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). I am very grateful for its support and encouragement and, particularly, the co-operation I have received from individual officers employed by the OFSTED Research and Development Department. In particular I must also thank officers in the Department for Children, Schools & Families (DCSF) who helped with the preparation and presentation of the data in the paper *Contextualising Catholic School Performance*.

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SECTION 1:

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT – CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND

To understand the place, role and performance of Catholic schools in England today, one has to appreciate the complex history both of the Catholic community and of the state sponsored compulsory educational system that began in the last quarter of the 19th century. Though it was developed from within a predominantly Christian culture where, for the most part, a mutually supportive linkage between education and Christianity was accepted as part of the natural order, disputes about the nature and role of religious belief and instruction in state supported schools were central during the period leading up to the first statutory Education Act in 1870.

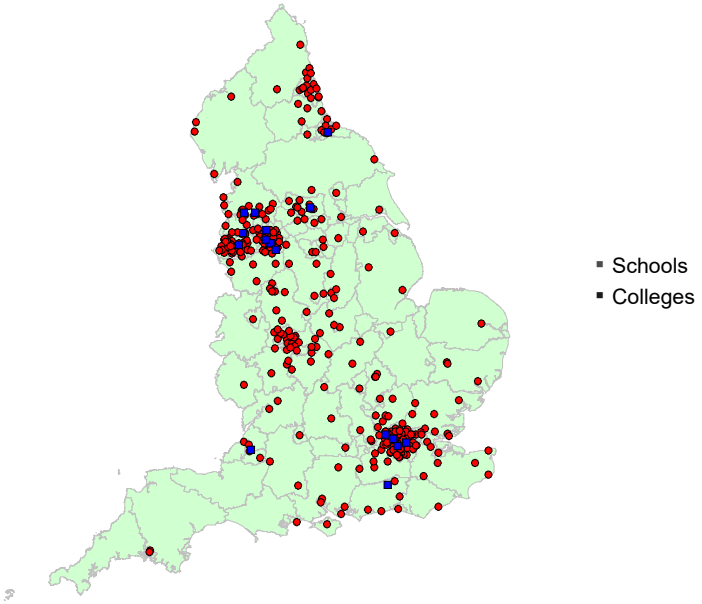
Some thirty years later, the 1902 Act introduced a national and municipal 'dual system' of educational provision having, broadly, two different types of elementary school. Those provided by the newly created local authorities were maintained by government grants and local rates. Voluntary, or non-provided schools as they were designated, were funded, mainly, by Christian denominations and maintained by them with the assistance of some government grant, but not by local rates. Secular instruction in both types of school was under the directions of the local education authority. Religious instruction was in accordance with the voluntary school's trust deed but strictly non-denominational in local authority schools.

The Education Act 1944 extended the pre-war educational system, making education compulsory for pupils up to the age of fifteen (section 35 of the Act) in newly created secondary schools. This triggered a vast expansion of provision by local authorities and Church groups. Today, around a third of all state maintained primary schools, and some fifteen per cent of secondary schools, are designated as having a religious character, of which there are twenty different types. The vast majority belong either to the Church of England or the Catholic Church, but there are also a small

number provided by minority Christian denominations, some Jewish, Muslim and Sikh schools, together with a few joint ventures by different Christian denominations working together in a variety of partnerships.

Today the Catholic dioceses provide a network of voluntary aided primary and secondary schools. Many of the secondary schools specialise in one or more curriculum subjects, some only educate pupils aged 11-16, others from 11-18. There are a few Sixth Form Colleges and, at the time of writing, two Academies. However, the spread across the country is uneven, institutions being located mainly in urban areas, with around 30% in the North-West of England, between 10-14% in London, with smaller groups in the North-East and West Midlands (figure 1).

Figure 1: Catholic Secondary Schools & Colleges in England



Source: Key, T. (2006)

The total number of Catholic pupils in Catholic maintained schools peaked in 1974 at 0.94 million when a gradual decline in pupil population began. In 1980 there were approximately 0.76 million, in 1990 some 0.68 million, in 2003 there were 0.63 million and in 2007 0.57 million, with a corresponding increase in the percentage of non-Catholic pupils, from

around 3% in the 1970s to nearly 30% in 2007. Today, approximately 0.71 million Catholic and non-Catholic children, representing around 9.8% of the total pupil population in England, are educated in Catholic schools (Catholic Education Service, 2008, 2009; DCSF, 2008).

Despite that structural and geographical diversity, the bishops identify five essential characteristics of all their schools/colleges. They include a *search for excellence* and *education of all*, with a particular duty to care for the poor and disadvantaged (Catholic Education Service, 1996, 1997). That concern for the poor and underprivileged is not new, but rather has formed a central element of the Church's understanding of its educative mission for over 150 years (Marshall, 1850).

The four papers selected for inclusion in this section, in their different ways, contextualise the position of Catholic sector schools provided by the various English dioceses consider the broader socio-legal background that underpins the diversity of the statutory educational provision in England, by provide a brief history of their primary purposes and development, and reflect on some of the recent objections made of Catholic schools

The first paper*, 'Faith Schools and the Plural Society: Exploring Notions of Diversity',* began life as a presentation given at a Symposium entitled 'The School in the Plural and Divided Society' held at Queens University, Belfast on 3rd December 2010. Adapted slightly, it was included in the proceedings of the Symposium which were published in Policy Futures in Education in October 2012. The paper describes two differing conceptions of the plural society, one strong, one weak, and argues that societal attitudes, which once championed legislation supporting minority communities, now seem to be leaning towards marginalizing or even suppressing the contribution of such groups to the common good of society.

'By Their Fruits You Will Know Them: Distinctive Features of Catholic Education' was published in 1998. The article drew on doctoral research undertaken at Warwick University completed in 1996. It outlines the nature of the Catholic community, its history and culture, and speculates that high levels of social cohesion that can be generate in schools serving a self-identifying and relatively homogeneous community may be major contributory factor in their apparent academic effectiveness.

The remaining two papers were written with a more general audience in mind. They were both intended to provide a response, from a Catholic

perspective, to the increasingly vocal objections being expressed about admissions to schools with a religious character. One was published, in a slightly abridged and edited version, in the Tablet (Education Supplement) 7th February 2009 under the title *'Schools in the Secular Firing Line'*. While addressing similar issues, *'Catholic Schools: Dilemmas, Difficulties and Contradictions'* is aimed at a different audience. Published in the journal Networking - read mainly by educationalists in Catholic schools and colleges – it sought to provide a brief summary of a coherent defence of mainstream Catholic schools in England and a justification for admission policies giving priority to baptised Catholic pupils.

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EXPLORING NOTIONS OF DIVERSITY IN SCHOOL PROVISION

First published in 2012 in Policy Futures in Education 10. 5. 518-527

Introduction and Historical Background

The classical liberal concept of the role of the state is one in which differing life styles, beliefs and value systems are, in principle, accorded equal value. The state provides mechanisms that protect the various positions and refrains from giving its support to any particular viewpoint in order to promote the legal equality between diverse components of society. It accepts limits on its powers in order that minority beliefs and groups are protected from unwarranted state interference and, where necessary, supported to ensure equal access to the benefits that the state provides. In such circumstances Catholic parents could be reasonably confident that their wish for a Catholic education for their children would be both respected and supported. However, there are two differing interpretations of the concept of pluralism; one 'strong', the other 'weak'. A strongly pluralistic state is one in which definite, differing, conflicting and often incompatible positions are allowed. Those differences are acknowledged and respected, and discourse between them is on the basis that some may be better than others in some ways or particulars. In contrast, the 'weak' version reflects a view that all positions are equally valid and no group can argue a case that it is in any sense better than any other. Within such a society any attempt to do so is usually regarded, at best, as a serious social solecism. In such circumstances, religious manifestations of any sort are only tolerated if kept in the private sphere, and state supported Catholic education for baptised Catholic children is viewed with suspicion.

In 1940, Winston Churchill articulated the view of many at the time, I believe, when he likened the conflict with Nazi Germany as a battle between Christian civilisation and forces of a perverted and barbaric paganism. In similar fashion, when developing the post-war legal framework for education, a major concern for both national government and international agencies was to protect children from the educational

techniques and approaches of totalitarian states on the political right and left.

At the international level, one way of achieving freedom from possible state indoctrination was to give parents rights over their children so that those rights would prevail not only over the children's rights but also over the wishes of (possibly malevolent) governments. Certainly, the United Nations seems to regard the protection of children from state indoctrination as more important than protecting them from (possible) parental indoctrination.[1] For example, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states that:

Article 16(3)

> *"The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the state"*

and also that:

Article 26(3)

> *"Parents have the prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children."*

Arising from the Universal Declaration, the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (1976), Article 18(4) requires states to:

> *"… have respect[2] for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions"*

and, using the same phraseology, Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976), requires the state to:

> *"have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to choose for their children schools* ***other than those established by the public authorities*** (my emphasis), *which conform to such minimum standards as may be laid down or approved by the State and to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions."*

Parental Responsibility and Education: British Legislative Framework[3]

Members of the Council of Europe signed the European Convention on Human Rights on 4th November 1950. The UK government ratified it in 1951. It came into force in 1953.For the purposes of this paper, the relevant sections of the Convention are Article 9 and Article 2 of the First Protocol. Article 9 gives qualified rights to religious minorities. It provides protection against persecution and requires the state to respect the religious beliefs of its citizens, subject to certain controls.

> *Article 9*
>
> *1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion … to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.*
>
> *2. … subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.*

The specific right to education is the subject of Article 2 of the First Protocol of the Convention.

First Protocol - Article 2

> *"No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the state shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions."*

This Article, however, has been subject to reservations and caveats by a number of countries and, as far as the UK is concerned, must be read subject to the reservation secured by HMG at the time the Protocol was signed. This provides that the principle in the second sentence applies:

> *"only so far as it is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure."*

As such, this binding international Convention is consistent with the provisions set out in the Education Act 1944, Section 76 (subsequently, s. 9 of the Education Act 1996). Accordingly, though education in England and Wales is compulsory, parents retain the primary responsibility for

ensuring that their children receive an effective education and, while the vast majority delegate that responsibility to a state maintained school, they are not required to do so. They can educate their children elsewhere. (This is not necessarily the case in other Western liberal democracies, for example Germany and, most probably soon in Sweden. Some would argue that legal right is also being threatened in England.[4]) Where they do want to take advantage of the state maintained educational provision, they are able, under current admissions arrangements to express a preference as to the type of school they wish for their children and have a reasonable expectation, within legal caveats, that their preference will be accommodated.

> **Education Act 1996, Section 7 (previously s. 36 of the Education Act 1944)**
> *"The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable –*
> *(a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and*
> *(b) to any special educational needs he may have,*
> *either by regular attendance at school or otherwise".*

> **Education Act 1996, Section 9**
> *"In exercising or performing all their respective powers and duties under the Education Acts, the Secretary of State, local education authorities and the funding authorities shall have regard to the general principle that pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents, so far as that is compatible with the provision of efficient instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure."*

The legal (as opposed to moral) question of what might constitute a suitable education, and how best this might be provided, also rests primarily with parents. The following judgements given in English courts about the type of education that children should receive, given before the incorporation of Human Rights legislation into UK law, seem to be consistent with that legislation and with the moral position articulated by the Church. The first by Viscount Jowett, Lord Chancellor in Baxter v Baxter [1947] All E.R. 886, affirmed the right of parents to bring up their children within their existing religio/cultural framework when he said:

> *"In any view of Christian marriage, the essence of the matter as it seems to me, is that children, if there be any, should be born into a family, as that word is understood in Christendom generally; and in the case of a marriage between spouses of a particular Faith that they should be brought up and nurtured in that Faith."*

The following two judgements are not directly connected, but both address the interpretation of what might constitute a 'suitable' education, especially within the context of a diverse society. In a case brought at Worcester Crown Court in 1981 (Harrison & Harrison v Stevenson), the judge defined a 'suitable education' as one which was such as:

> *"1. to prepare the children for life in modern civilised society, and*
> *2. to enable them to achieve their full potential."*

This limited clarification was extended by the judgement in the case of R v Secretary of State for Education and Science, ex parte Talmud Torah Machzikei Hadass School Trust (1985) (Times, 12 April 1985). Mr. Justice Woolf held that:

> *"education is 'suitable' if it primarily equips a child for life within the community of which he is a member, rather than the way of life in the country as a whole, as long as it does not foreclose the child's options in later years to adopt some other form of life if he wishes to do so".*

The effect of such judgements served to reinforce the idea that representatives of specific religious minorities, such the Catholic Church, should be allowed to provide schools for the children of Catholic parents. And as the post-war Catholic system grew and developed, there existed what might be termed benign neglect by the educational establishment. If you looked at official documents of the 1950s, '60s and '70s you might never know of the existence of the dual system of county and voluntary schools or that there was a Catholic sector. It is no accident that the only book of any note concerning the Catholic system that was published in more than thirty years after the end of the war was entitled 'Catholic education – The Unobtrusive Partner (Michael Hornsby-Smith, 1978).

The Changing Character of Education

Education is generally regarded as both a public and private good with parents and the state having a legitimate interest in the nature of its content and provision. It is the balance of interests that is critical, however.

When the Ministry of Education was established in 1944, it had limited powers to intervene in what and how schools taught their pupils. In 1964, the Ministry was renamed the Department for Education and Science (DES), though its control of what children were taught remained constrained. (The department later metamorphosed into the Department for Children, Schools and Families – an interesting change in emphasis about the range

and extent of legitimate state power – before reverting to the Department for Education after the 2010 General Election. But I am getting a little ahead of myself.)

In 1976, James Callaghan, the then Prime Minister, made what many regard as a seminal speech at Ruskin College, Oxford. He called for a national debate about the purpose of education and the standards that should be achieved by the nation's schools. Though his remarks calling for a rational discussion noted the collaborative character of the educational enterprise, he counselled:

> *"If everything is reduced to such phrases as educational freedom versus state control, we shall get nowhere." (Callaghan, J., 1976)*

This is, however, an essential dynamic of the (legitimately) coercive character of the English educational system that cannot be ignored. In a strong pluralistic setting, the task is always to ensure an appropriate balance between the differing interests of parents, educators and the state. Callaghan's speech was intended to further the interests of greater personal equity and increase national prosperity. Whether or not he envisaged the outcome of his intervention, it marked the beginning of a significant change in the existing relationship between the parents and the state in post-war England and began what might be termed the marketisation of education, a process that successive governments have extended and refined over the past twenty-five years.

The 'Ruskin College Speech' marked the first stage of a process culminating in today's highly centralised, state controlled and inspected curriculum.[5] The Education Reform Act 1988 first defined the curriculum that was to be taught in maintained schools. The Education Act 1992 established the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) with a remit, among other matters concerned with quality assurance, to ensure schools complied with the new centrally determined curriculum. These, and subsequent legislation, have, I suggest, become a vehicle, in the name of greater equality, for the state to try and impose secular social policy and values on all schools and has seriously undermined the claim that we have educational pluralism. In other words, while there may still be plurality in the provision of schools, the content of the curriculum and the way in which it is taught is becoming more and more constrained under an legislative and inspection regime designed precisely to limit educational plurality and exert greater state control of schools, both state maintained and private.