PRIESTS AND HEADTEACHERS 'DOING THEOLOGY': EXPLORING INSIGHTS FROM PAIRED REFLECTION TO DEVELOP LEADERSHIP PRIORITIES FOR VISION AND ETHOS IN TWO CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis reports on a study undertaken in two Church of England primary schools, which engaged priests and headteachers in the practice of paired theological reflection. It employed an experiential methodology with two distinct strands; a research method based on the 'Doing Theology Spiral' (Green, 2009) and narrative theological inquiry, through which the author interpreted participants' experiences. The resulting thesis contributes to the emerging knowledge and evidence base around church school leadership, proposing how theological reflection, rooted in the practical and everyday, might guide educational practice.

The study used 'Ordinary Theology' (Astley, 2002a, 2002b, 2013a, 2013b) as a conceptual framework, focusing on individuals' stories and the interaction between Christian tradition, doctrine and the participants' lived experience. Insights from Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and capital (Bourdieu, 1977) assisted in revealing individuals' dispositions and examining social influences on participants and their interactions. Data analysis, underpinned by a system of coding, uncovered patterns and connections within individual narratives and experiences, with meaning derived through a process of narrative thematic analysis.

In this thesis, the author explores the issue that priests and headteachers will encounter questions relating to their own role and ministry whilst discerning how theology inspires vision, ethos and leadership in schools with a Christian foundation. The findings arising from the data inform considerations for designing a new approach for priests and church school leaders to engage in theological conversation as an ongoing learning event. The author, as Director of Education for an Anglican diocese, also proposes initiating a collaborative process with schools and parishes with the intention of developing and piloting this process of inquiry and reflection in their specific contexts.

The conclusion of the study is that as priests and headteachers draw deeper into the life of their shared community, the richness of experiences, insights and responses as they develop new situations from learning and doing theology together could be truly transformational.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my maternal grandparents, who faithfully embodied a partnership between theology and education.

William Leonard Grint (1905-1979), Grocer and Methodist Lay Preacher
Joyce Edna Grint (1913-2005), Primary School Teacher

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ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS USED IN THIS THESIS

Anglican	Autonomous national or regional Anglican Churches make up the Anglican Communion, one of the world's largest global Christian denominations. The Archbishop of Canterbury serves as senior bishop of the Church of England and is the symbolic head of the Anglican Communion. He is also the diocesan bishop of the Diocese of Canterbury.
Annotations	My reflections and explanations written in the margins of the transcripts from sessions and interviews.
Archdeaconry	The district of a diocese for which an Archdeacon is responsible. Archdeacons are senior clergy in the Anglican Communion, serving under a Bishop.
Canonical narrative	The 'big picture' narrative revealed by a pair of participants, conveying the reality and issue they were exploring (e.g. see Phoenix, 2013).
Catholic	Refers to the Roman Catholic Church.
CE school	Church of England school (abbreviation).
CEEO	Church of England Education Office (abbreviation).
Codes	Codes were used in data analysis. They consisted of a category, subcategories and elements to define the subject or intention of sections of participants' contributions (e.g. see Dey, 1993).
Contextual theology	Theology situated in a particular locality; derived from the place in which it is incarnated, discovered by the people immersed in that context and which leads them to new understanding and possibilities (e.g. see Bevans, 2002).
Diocese	An area or district of the country under the pastoral oversight of a Bishop, in this context within the Church of England.
DDE	Diocesan Director of Education (abbreviation).
Diocesan Board of Education (DBE)	A statutory body in each Diocese, established in accordance with the Diocesan Boards of Education Measure, 1991. Responsibilities include promoting education according to the faith and practice of the Church of England, promoting religious education and religious worship and giving advice in relation to matters affecting Church schools and Church educational endowments within the Diocese.

Educational capital	Capital expressed through educational qualifications or teacher training, experience in leading learning or contextual influence, such as roles and responsibilities held by school staff (e.g. see Bourdieu, 1990).
Experiential theology	Theology rooted in a person's encounter with experience, mindful of perceptions and feelings that the experience stimulates (e.g. see Hull, 1984).
Key narrative	A recurring or repeated theme identifiable within a personal narrative (Boyatzis, 1998).
Operational capital	Where participants in the study indicated a sense or position of authority in decision-making relating to the day-to-day operation of the school.
Ordinary theology	A non-scholarly and non-academic theology; how ordinary people articulate their religious understanding or express reflective God-talk (Astley, 2002a).
Practical theology	Theology done in the context of practice; in this study, it refers to theology concerned with practical action in relation to education (e.g. see Hull, 1977).
SIAMS	Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (abbreviation).
Social capital	Aligned to the narrative of participants in the study, relating to their perceived role and influence in securing provision or support for the local community (e.g. see Bourdieu, 1977).
Theological capital	Capital expressed culturally, such as holding a position of Christian ministry within a community, by formal theological study, or through the experience of theological reflection or doing theology practically in context (e.g. see cultural capital - Bourdieu, 1977).
Voluntary Aided (VA)	A school with a religious character, established under the 1944 Education Act and maintained by a Local Authority. In VA schools the foundation governors form the majority of the Local Governing Body, have additional responsibilities in relation to capital works and are the employers of the staff.
Voluntary Controlled (VC)	A school with a religious character, established under the 1944 Education Act and maintained by a Local Authority. In VC schools foundation governors are a minority on the Local Governing Body and the Local Authority is the employer.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

As a former headteacher of a Church of England (CE) junior school and now Diocesan Director of Education (DDE) for an Anglican Diocese, with responsibility for strategic work across both CE schools and parish ministry with children and young people, I am intrigued by the dynamic between theology and education. Educational discourse is often informed or evaluated by reference to an academic theological perspective; thus, a theology of education is found alongside multiple other applications of theology (Hull, 1977). Yet theological reflection, rooted in the everyday, rarely exists as a practical activity of education professionals. This is evidenced in the availability of a 'large body of literature concerning the various models of leadership that might speak to Christian leaders, but little specific to guide their practice' (Spencer and Lucas, 2019, p.58). This thesis begins to fill this conspicuous gap.

I conceived of a study in two CE primary schools which would explore and facilitate the practice of practical theology at school level, framing my research questions as follows:

On engaging priests and headteachers in the practice of paired theological reflection, what does analysis of their conversation and commentary reveal about:

- their experience of participation and the process of inquiry and reflection
- the character of their role in leadership and ministry within the church school community
- considerations for designing a new approach to paired theological reflection for church school leaders and priests, relating to Christian vision and ethos?

I determined that practical theology in this context would avoid giving the impression of requiring scholarly interpretation. Rather, the study focuses on personal narrative and insight, through individual stories that might reveal something of how participants' understanding of God and the Christian faith connect with school leadership issues. Acknowledging that religious involvement in publicly funded education is opposed by

some organisations (National Secular Society, 2017) and the notion of a supernatural side to the universe is contested (Humanists UK, 2020), I also consider the idea of a divine sense (Chapter 2, Section 2.6 and Chapter 3, Section 3.2), and the place of Christian theology in education (Chapter 2, Section 2.3).

The encompassing conceptual framework I have used is Ordinary Theology (Astley, 2002a, 2002b, 2013a, 2013b, 2016), which I selected for two key reasons. Firstly, it is described as a learning theology (Astley, 2002a), rooted in context and with the potential to uncover a good deal about a person's development and theology as a process. Secondly, because it is grounded in the power of individual stories and helps to define the nature of theology within the study as everyday.

Ordinary Theology is something that can be heard and discovered in the narrative of ordinary Christian believers, an intrinsic element of each participant's vocation, with a focus on the kind of language used to speak reflectively about God. It places an emphasis on both the contextual and practical nature of theology; the dialogue, interaction and movement between Christian tradition and doctrine and the lived experience. It also facilitates hermeneutical conversation and establishes the possibility that a non-expert theology can offer a contribution to discussion that is equally valid as academic theology. Finally, in research terms, it is concerned with capturing the narrative of a shared or common life through empirical studies in specific communities, thus its application within the church school context.

As such, Ordinary Theology provides an appropriate setting for my methodology; narrative and the power of story engaging participants as they seek and explore shared truths about the Kingdom of God, as well as implications for their Christian life and ministry.

My study is also earthed firmly in the context of CE primary schools, aiming to support and encourage Anglican educational provision which 'makes for an encounter in both parish church and Church school which is fundamentally incarnationally grounded' (Terry, 2013, p.121). The term 'incarnational' refers to Jesus Christ assuming human nature; being recorded in the Bible, in one example, as 'the Word became flesh and lived among us'

(John 1:14, New Revised Standard Version). This provides a model for believers, instigated by Jesus, of divine imitation that is at the core of Christian faith and belief. Similarly, as a DDE I hope that CE schools, forming an integral part of the mission of the diocese (Archbishop's Council Education Division, 2013), also seek an incarnational life and method of ministry which evidences 'divinely imprinted hallmarks of authentic spirituality' (Iselin and Meteyard, 2010, p.35).

This life and ministry of a CE school is inspected under statute, the framework for the Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) published by the Church of England Education Office (CEEO) fulfilling the requirement of denominational inspection under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005. SIAMS uses an Evaluation Schedule for Schools and Inspectors which requires that 'in developing vision and leadership in a Church school, the school must evaluate … to what extent is the school's vision and its associated values grounded in a clear theology firmly rooted in a Christian narrative?' (The Church of England Education Office, 2018, p.2). I anticipate that the outcomes of this study might encourage further engagement between church and school, not simply through dialogue and practical involvement but through discerning vision, identity and purpose for their shared community and learning continuously about the theological underpinning of the school's educational work.

The study was deliberately iterative, incorporating a multi-strategy design of group sessions, interviews and reflection in which the participants' learning journeys became a central part of the data collection. It used a methodology of narrative theological inquiry; knowledge emerging through participant interaction and experience, and stories unfolding and evolving through reflection and interpretations of narratives. The narratives and reflections act as a source of spiritual and relational insight; the language used by participants expresses theology and describes how it meets human experience, as well as revealing dispositions and establishing power relations. It is a place where any connection between Christian tradition or heritage and everyday encounter might be discovered.

A supporting framework for theological reflection, the 'Doing Theology Spiral' (Green, 2009), was used during data collection sessions to assist exploration of the discussion

between priest and headteacher. It was not intended as a trial model for analysis, but a structure around which supporting data collection architecture created a narrative flow. A sense of continuous, less structured engagement was stimulated by the sharing of recordings and transcripts, alongside offering participants the opportunity to write reflective journals and to supplement or amend responses without any constraint on time.

Elements of Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Bourdieu, 1977) were also employed during the study, particularly during the planning phase before interviews and throughout the process of data analysis, to provide insights into the research participants' positions and attitudes. These elements proved useful in gaining an understanding of their dispositions and the level of social or cultural capital (such as status, experience and influence) or any sense of empowerment participants revealed which they were bringing from the fields of theology or education. This also provided pointers as to the nature of their leadership and ministry roles and how these were enacted in the organisation and spiritual life of the school.

Findings from my thematic analysis of data contribute to a discussion about participants' experiences of paired theological reflection, using their individual commentaries and the canonical and key narratives which emerge from each school. Additionally, the discussion offers insight into the importance of theology and Christian language being accessible for leaders and staff when discussing and expressing a school's distinctively Christian vision and ethos. It fulfils a core objective of the study; not to test an existing model of theological reflection, but to bring together analysis and learning to identify some considerations for designing a new approach to dialogue between school leaders and priests, to encourage them to engage in practical, everyday theological conversation.

Using a blended approach, the study uniquely brings together the three disparate research interests of Ordinary Theology, narrative inquiry and Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and capital. They are explored together through individual stories, appreciating the dispositions participants bring into conversation and using an intentional focus on leadership priorities for vision and ethos. This offers rich material to analyse participants' insights and experiences, providing an original contribution to knowledge in terms of how priests and headteachers might work together theologically, promoting

learning and professional development in the context of leadership and ministry in a church school setting. It also recognises how church schools' educational work is rooted in a Christian theological vision, the ways in which parish and school can work together on this vision and the process involved.

I acknowledge that the study is located in CE primary schools, but anticipate that the narratives, discussion and considerations for a new approach to theological conversation and reflection will be of interest to educational and spiritual leaders employed in (or indeed connected to) any primary school with a Christian foundation.

CHAPTER 2

Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter establishes the background to studying a process of paired theological conversation and reflection which seeks to support educational leadership in CE primary schools. It reviews selected literature that explores the dynamic between theology and education, has determined the research methodology and conceptual framework and describes the historic and current contexts from which CE schools locate their identity.

The starting point is to offer an appraisal of the background and characteristics of CE schools, including the essence of what it means for a school to express a religious character as well as the debate on their place in publicly funded education. By asserting the legitimate voice of Christian theology in education, I establish validity to the engagement of headteacher and priest in the development of vision and ethos within their school community.

Next, I explore the kind of conceptual framework in which this encounter of theological conversation might happen; one that is focused on personal and professional learning and imagines openness and equity between participants as theology interacts with educational practice. I consider the principles and hermeneutic of Ordinary Theology (Astley 2002a, 2002b, 2013a, 2013b), a framework grounded in the power of individuals' stories and conversation. Establishing that Ordinary Theology provides theoretical support for participants to engage in discussion about their leadership and ministry, discerning God in their human experiences, I then turn attention to broader thinking about the practice of theological reflection and associated approaches which helped to establish a clear methodology. In particular, I examine literature focused on methods of theological reflection which emphasise narrative or story, praxis and local expression; the learning from which steered this study towards a narrative theological inquiry approach.

Finally, I examine Bourdieu's constructs of field, capital and habitus (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990). I consider their place in this study, which is framed principally within the areas (fields) of theology and education and in which participants brought individual histories and dispositions (habitus) as well as experience, reputation or qualifications (capital). I affirm how the constructs were employed not as a structural or societal phenomenon, but as elements through which narrative inquiry was planned and individual narratives were analysed. Since the inquiry took place within CE primary schools, it was important to understand how each participant expressed their relationship to this particular context. Their dispositions could reveal a rationale for the way in which they articulated their own narrative, with these insights also forming an observation of the influence of context on their perceived sense of capital within the associated fields.

2.2 The context of Church of England schools

It is worth highlighting how mission, ministry and vision are captured differently in the approaches of CE and Catholic schools in England. Whilst both are designated as having a religious character or foundation, Catholic schools are *faith schools* which aim to transmit the Catholic faith to young people and prepare them 'for their life as Christians in the community' (Catholic Education Service, 2014, p.3). I use the different term *church schools* for CE schools, which draw specifically on their Anglican heritage. They have a history of valuing individual contributions and a concern for justice, rooted in the original Objects of the *National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church in England and Wales* (Louden, 2012), founded in 1811 and since 2016 referred to more broadly as the CEEO. Church schools are faithful in the sense of being deeply Christian and in service for the good of the whole community (The Church of England Education Office, 2016), yet without expressing the Catholic intent to proselytise.

2.2.1 The mission and vision of the Church of England

The growth of education based on the tenets of the Church of England can be detected in the foundation of the National Society in 1811, which sought to establish schools for the education and instruction of the poor. One of its guiding principles was that education was for the common good, equipping children and young people so that they

might challenge ideologies and ideas. Over two centuries later, still the 'worth of each student impels us to work to fulfil their God-given potential, whatever the religious or other tradition with which they or their family identify, and with special consideration given to those who are disadvantaged' (The Church of England Education Office, 2016, p.10).

Over the past twenty years the Church of England has continued to articulate a missional narrative for its church schools, rooted in the idea that they stand 'at the centre of the Church's mission to the nation' (Archbishops' Council, 2001, p.*xi).* Prior to the publication of its most recent vision document, *Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good* (The Church of England Education Office, 2016), Rev. Nigel Genders (Chief Education Officer for the Church of England) encapsulated the vision as being for 'the transformative purpose of lifelong education in the mission of the Church with a focus on wisdom for living and the spiritual, intellectual and emotional development that leads to the flourishing of every person' (General Synod, 2015, p.266).

Deeply Christian, Serving the Common Good (The Church of England Education Office, 2016) thus seeks to offer a model of education within a broad framework and reaffirm the position of the Church of England in the English educational landscape. Presently there are 4644 CE schools with approximately one million pupils attending, and it is the largest sponsor of academies in England (The Church of England, 2020a). One of its key principles is that all human beings are made in the image of God and are precious and valued in God's sight - and its commitment to pupils is 'to offering them an encounter with Jesus Christ and with Christian faith and practice in a way that enhances their lives' (The Church of England Education Office, 2016, p.16). Furthermore, the document advocates 'living well together', which includes the flourishing of pupils together with the flourishing of staff, wise management practices and being a hospitable community. The concept of flourishing within this community indicates that 'hope and aspiration are social as well as individual' (The Church of England Education Office, 2016, p.15).

2.2.2 Church schools and religious character

Having a religious character as a church school means developing and sustaining a clear Christian vision and ethos: 'Distinctiveness … must include a wholehearted commitment to putting faith and spiritual development at the heart of the curriculum and ensuring that a Christian ethos permeates the whole educational experience' (National Society, 2012, p.3).

However, this is not a parochial matter for application by the school in isolation, since the church school belongs to a wider network, including the parish and diocese. It is anchored by its historical Anglican foundation (how it was first established); then through belonging to a broader community members discover meaning and purpose, a rootedness in the Gospel enables it to flourish, and the narrative that is lived out draws deeply on the unfolding journey of the whole people of God (Elbourne, 2012). Having a religious character means discerning God's concerns and ambitions for the shared community.

This is at the heart of theological conversation and reflection between priest and headteacher; that the church school becomes part of the church's expressed narrative, engaged in its mission responsibilities and more prominent in the Church's missional life (Moynagh, 2012) – and similarly, that the church becomes rooted in the narrative and life of the school.

2.3 The place of Christian theology in education

2.3.1 Should faith and education be separate?

To argue the legitimacy of the Christian theological voice engaging with educational theory and practice, particularly in the field of publicly funded education, it is important to appraise ideas of separation and neutrality, i.e. the contention that faith and education should remain separate and consequently education should not privilege any belief or ideology.

According to Hirst (1972), education should be separated from *catechesis*, where catechesis is interpreted as supporting Christians in their lifelong journey of faith; a process of formation, education and instruction (Westerhoff, 1994). Such endeavours, as Hirst (1972) suggests, could be undertaken independently by schools and churches - or if both occur within a church school, should be separated such that any catechesis is invitational. CE schools are, after all, for pupils and students of all faiths and none, in which every child should be respected as a member of the community and a child of God, welcomed wholeheartedly in all their unique difference (The Church of England Education Office, 2019).

However, this does not make a Christian approach to education undesirable or suggest that no attempt should be made to use religious claims to justify educational principles (Hirst, 1976). This is a more contestable position adopted by secular organisations such as the National Secular Society (NSS), which advocates that religious and non-religious people have an equal right to express their beliefs, but that religious affiliation must not bring advantage or impinge on others' views and practices. The NSS argues that 'religious beliefs, ideas and organisations must not enjoy privileged protection from the right to freedom of expression' (National Secular Society, 2018). Such separation would make the activity of Christian theological discourse in education illegitimate, so a robust defence is required to maintain its place in the public sphere and its validity within this study.

A key element to this defence is a rejection of the idea that education can be ideologically neutral. It will always be shaped by sets of values and beliefs and 'people should be encouraged to draw explicitly on the resources of their [contestable religious and non-religious beliefs] in recognition of the contribution that they will inevitably make' (Cooling, 2012, p.560). These values and beliefs connect with human knowing and understanding, and since theology and the Christian faith are fundamentally concerned with questions of human being and purpose, 'there is no logical reason for its concerns being excluded from debates about the aims of education' (Cooling, 1994, p.58).

Thus, education can be considered from both a religious and a non-religious perspective, educational principles and values being interpreted based on personal beliefs – and each approach is equally legitimate (Cooling, 1994). By recognising this entitlement, it is

possible to explore Christian theological discussion as a mechanism for critiquing educational theory and practice, with the confidence to discover and practise credible and dynamic ways of doing so.

2.3.2 Theology illuminating education

There is also a straightforward relational point that the validity of the link between theology and education is secured by proposing that it is acceptable for any person to couch views of education in relation to their outlook on life (Hull, 1977). This appraisal is likely to be realised using insight, action and experience, each individual contributing to education by creating or discovering understanding that serves to inform or illuminate. In this way, Christian theology can exist alongside, and not superior to, other discourses; acknowledging that media and debate in the public sphere will include a humanist or secular view of education alongside those of faith groups.

I am advocating a research study which does not seek to engage Christian theology and tradition as a detached, external commentary on a model of theological reflection. It certainly rests 'upon the idea that theology is a form of thinking, a kind of rationality' (Hull, 1984, p.251). Yet Hull's (1984) notion appears to offer a method of building bridges between theology and education, rather than a method of doing theology that brings an encounter with experience, and an interplay between reflection and action (Green, 2009). There is a narrowness and imbalance in this idea of external application, of speaking into education from outside the sphere of education itself.

My objective is certainly that 'the principles of education flow necessarily and exclusively from theology' (Hull, 1984, p.258), but that the study is rooted in praxis, i.e. practising the activity of theology within education. I am pursuing an approach in which theological engagement is one of seeking an understanding of the divine will in a process of participant reflection together, with no separation of 'theologian' and 'educator'.

2.3.3 The credibility of theology illuminating education

In appraising the credibility and use of a Christian theological approach to illuminate education, the challenge of separation between religious belief and education reappears. It can be found in the context of discussion about the secularisation of society; that Christians in education ought to focus their professional learning on non-religious principles and aspects, since ideas resting on religious beliefs should be referenced against standards of reason and objectivity prior to their application to education (Hirst, 1981).

In response, Hull (1998) questions why one cannot speak of 'a Christian view of education which respects the autonomy and secularity of education' (ibid., p.20) and there is a strong challenge to such a dismissal of the theologian's right to contribute to educational theory, or of a church school to contribute to educational practice (Francis, 1983). Equally, there is an acknowledgement that theological language may not automatically be included or heard within the arena of education (Francis, 1990). So, what kind of entitlement or engagement might theologians have? Where Christian believers wish to offer a critique in education, they could not be denied an opportunity as it would be their right to do so. Yet these rights must be justified through practice and credibility earnt (Francis, 1983), seeking to affirm that theology at least provides a legitimate, potential source of interpretation and understanding for education, even if not considered a necessary one (Hull, 1977).

Credibility might be gained by using a practical theology that is 'good thinking about the religious kind of experience' (Hull, 1977, p.14), scrutinising aspects of education in the light of religious concepts and beliefs. The church school setting and network is well placed for this undertaking, and theological discussion about vision and ethos can be viewed as 'good thinking' within this environment, holding an ambition of the tripartite theological elements of nurture, service and prophecy (Francis, 1990). It also satisfies and reflects historic ambition and current role; church schools continue to be offered by the church, within the national structures that have grown out of the dual system and academy landscape (in relation to the 1944 Education Act and 2010 Academies Act

respectively), 'as a way of witnessing to their radical commitment to altruistic service' (Francis, 1990, p.358).

Moreover, it is difficult to see how CE schools might reach and articulate educational decisions without theological reference or being 'inspired … by radical commitment to the gospel of Christ' (Francis, 1990, p.358). Rather, they are invited to engage with modern culture and difficult ideas, with a mindset of transformation and theological curiosity (Cooling, 2008) – to see mission with an eschatological view in which pupils and students are 'kingdom builders who will shape the future of creation and whose actions in the world will have eternal consequences' (Cooling, 2008, p.10).

2.3.4 The place and voice of theology within this study

There is a paradox in terms of the voice of theology in education, which can be identified through the location and character of those contributing the voices. Key to the practice of theological dialogue at school level (in this study, in discussion of the development of Christian vision and ethos) is an understanding of the distinction between studying and applying theology. Studying suggests a scholarly or academic discipline, which tends to speak into education as an *external* voice, as opposed to applying theology practically *in context,* which greatly benefits from the interplay of local stakeholder voices.

Therefore, my research framework needed to offer an experiential, active theology, with the purpose of doing theology 'characterised by participation in the intentionality of theologising' (Hull, 1977, p.8). Moreover, activities for participants would seek to acknowledge the principle and process of continuous learning, bringing together the central issues of divinity and learning as they might apply to Christian adults and church school leaders – receiving illumination or insight through the Holy Spirit and being changed by the grace of God (Hull, 1985).

Ongoing insight adds progressively to an individual's knowledge, understanding that education or learning will never be complete, whilst 'the divine knowledge is, however, perfect in its quality and its extent' (Hull, 1984, p.217). This acknowledges a Christian's own fallibility and discipleship journey, the need to engage with the divine beyond the

parameters of academic study. What is suggested therefore is experiential theology, which is rooted in a person's encounter with experience and their cognisance of perceptions and feelings that the experience stimulates. Whilst being flawed by examples of awful human experience including loss and disaster, it brings a sense of continuity between human experience and God, in order that Christians might receive the revelation that is being offered (Hull, 1984).

Other viewpoints imagine theological educators working alongside professional educators, also raising the question of whether Christian commitment is necessary to stimulate 'a meaningful and effective theological education and dialogue with the Christian practitioner' (Pears, 2007, p.413). Although a stance that suggests more parity between educators, the suggestion is again that the interested voice is engaging from outside, offering criticality, secular subject knowledge, analytical tools and experience to enhance practice. There is no evidence of an approach that desires community adaptation and growth that emerges from within.

I suggest that the depth of these external voices is insufficient in exploring how theology might relate to the ''ecology' of the fullness of life' (The Church of England Education Office, 2016, p.9) within CE primary schools. Thus, my investigation employed a method of using theology practically in the local context in which the ambition is a more equitable position and relationship between participants. Through this it became possible that theological language could 'be spoken across frontiers' (Francis, 1983, p.148), mindful of the potential need for participants to be immersed in the disciplinary language of both theology and education.

2.4 Theology in Church School Ministry

Several authors and research studies have focused on the areas of church school ministry and the associated behaviours and expectations of church school leaders and staff. This provides insight into matters of Christian vocation, staff faith commitment, contextual theology and praxis. For example, Hull (1984) advocates that staff involvement in church school ministry may not presume any alignment between a teacher's faith commitment, the content of the curriculum offered and any faith commitment of pupils - rather a

position of divergence, where these links are broken. This describes the experience of a practitioner where teaching retains an essence of neutrality, although underpinned by values and beliefs, with a commitment to those of all faiths and none. In contrast, the intention of my study is to explore the scope of church school leadership and ministry as contextual theology; the interaction of human experience with scripture and tradition, the theologian (or participant) seeking 'to relate the Christian tradition and gospel message to the culture in which she is theologizing and to social changes within that culture' (Wright, 2013, p.187).

A related study recommends that a distinctively Christian approach might be engaged with curriculum, learning and teaching (Jelfs, 2010). The author does not fully attend to the place of an underpinning Christian vision for these areas, however her research findings do assert that vision, leadership and management 'were significantly influenced by their [leaders'] personal Christian commitment and sense of vocation' (Jelfs, 2010, p.33). It is interesting that she notes how the connection between school and church (in particular with the parish priest) tended towards being pastoral, or associated with governance, leading worship and celebrating festivals. This raises an important point about the church/school relationship; being vigilant to any implicit traditions or reciprocal engagement and the extent to which the church is established in the rhythm and corporate life of the school.

Of greater concern was the description of practices and habits in church schools which lacked any element of theological critique, instead demonstrating 'an uncritical compliance with the dominant educational discourse' (Jelfs, 2010, p.37). If provision seeks to be incarnationally rooted, following the example of Jesus Christ, then the proposed approach outlined by Luckcock (2006) that headteachers adopt a countercultural stance in school leadership feels more germane. It emphasises the role in terms of lay ministry and living out a Christian vocation, whilst resisting 'the managerialist ideology which is inimical to the Anglican ethos of nurture and service' (Luckcock, 2006, p.262). As a practitioner and leader, Luckcock (2006) recognises a responsibility to the faith community in mediating (as opposed to serving) government policy and challenging aspects that reflect managerialism or shifts towards functionalism.

A countercultural leadership approach can encompass both a practical and prophetic theology; a theology with a mandate to challenge the status quo. Headteachers should have the resources to do this kind of theology themselves, in praxis as opposed to through study (Luckcock, 2006), invigorated because any restriction on believers 'from applying theology in the public sector… silences the prophetic capacity of church school education to witness to alternative models of pedagogy, curriculum and leadership' (Luckcock, 2006, p.266). Luckcock (2006) draws on existing models of contextual theology to examine the demands of church school leadership, inviting a liberating approach of engagement and encounter through the Christian Gospel (Bevans, 2002). It is an encouragement to church school leaders to allow the Gospel to penetrate the church school culture through a 'respectful but critical analysis and authentic gospel proclamation in word and deed' (Bevans, 2002, p.119).

This advocacy of a counter-cultural mode, with its sense of criticality and challenging ideological norms, leads to a clear preference for practical theological research and the examination of models of contextual theology. It is active, focused on implementation rather than studying, revelation rather than theorising. Decisions that Luckcock (2006) makes express caution about both evaluative and instrumental research, the first as a process-focused quality assurance approach and the second characterised by sharing standard solutions for managerial strategy. Whilst neither approach is irrelevant, he cautions that they may constrain an experiential, critical stance – he values authenticity and advocates resisting pressure to conform.

I was drawn to Luckcock's (2006) less rigid 'humanistic research' as a mechanism for drawing on the ongoing narrative of leaders within a church school community. It brings together encounter and the activity of leaders reflecting on their own roles, their spirituality and vocation. It invites attention to the level of knowledge revealed by headteachers in terms of theological literacy, used to 'articulate their philosophy of education confidently, in a way that encourages reflection about their spiritual beliefs' (Luckcock, 2006, p.272). Furthermore, a knowledge of self as headteacher in relation to ministry will affect and inform community and bring a specific cultural and ethical dimension (Archbishops' Council, 2001).

This is faith seeking understanding as a rational activity, brought into the public discourse. It is a truth that a community is creating in and for itself, and what I propose is joint agency between priest and headteacher, drawing on a wider lived experience of the parish and school; exploring their complementary roles in ministry and discerning an understanding of their prophetic voice to the community, reflecting on divine activity and what is proving life-giving to those they serve.

2.5 The prophetic voice

The theology of prophecy, or prophetic voice, is most significant in terms of the potential role for theological conversation, being 'concerned with testing current social reality against an understanding of God's declared purposes for his creation' (Francis, 1990, p.359).

Yet what of the location and authority of this voice? A key position for Francis (1990) is that it is a practical theology that evaluates educational theory and practice, beyond simply the arena of church schools or Christian nurture. He reiterates a concern about position and influence, whether the theologian will be heard or whether contributions will be heeded by educationalists. Yet whilst he recognises the church's institutional investment and practical engagement, he also speaks of training theologians 'within the thought-forms of educational theory' (Francis, 1990, p.360), in so doing separating the theologian from their immediate context.

Whether a voice is an external source of insight and interpretation, speaking from outside education, or located as a challenging, prophetic voice at the heart of the educational context, the 'church's prophetic voice in education will be ultimately authenticated by empirical evidence of its practical involvement' (Francis, 1990, p.360). This is a helpful criterion in the context of this study; an exploration of theological conversation at local level, focused on priorities for vision and ethos and analysed through participants' experiences. I would hope that this demonstrates practical engagement, providing a fresh way of engaging theology and education in the context of a church school community. Furthermore, that it is connected accordingly to a commitment to a theology of education that has been published or moderated by the

national church (The Church of England Education Office, 2016) or at diocesan level by Diocesan Boards of Education.

2.6 Conceptual Framework – Ordinary Theology

2.6.1 Introducing Ordinary Theology

An empirical study, encompassing practical theology and a process of theological conversation concerned principally with personal narrative and insight, required a conceptual framework with specific characteristics. In essence, it would need to provide a basis for exploring theology contextually within the field of education - a learning conversation between a priest and a headteacher - where theological truth is received not through transmission but a more personal process and encounter.

I chose Ordinary Theology, rooted in the work of Astley (2002a, 2002b, 2013a, 2013b), because it describes and enables a theology which people can connect with, a practical theology for living (Astley, 2016). First and foremost, however, it is focused on the learning done by adults and the shifting of their beliefs and attitudes, identifying learning from individual experiences which bring about enduring change (Astley, 2002a). It also foregrounds 'the theological beliefs and processes of believing that find expression in the God-talk of those believers who have received no scholarly education' (Astley, 2002a, p.1), i.e. believers with no formal theological study or training.

Additionally, I am using Ordinary Theology as a statement of human worth. The basis of the learning conversation between priest and headteacher is not to draw out an intellectual or expert view, but 'to discern the "extraordinariness" – in the sense of the value – of what is ordinary in others' (Astley, 2016, p.232). My study sought to promote a context of empowerment, ascribing equal worth to each participant's spirituality, values and ideas. By exploring questions of leadership priorities for vision and ethos in CE primary schools, the setting was familiar to the participants and provided a space in which enduring change was possible and both might learn about their own lives of faith.

2.6.2 Principles of learning, encounter and dialogue

In a learning theology, tentativeness rather than certainty permits the kind of development or transformation imagined by the method of a reflective, theological conversation. Learning as it relates to religious faith and understanding comes through self-involving forms (Astley, 2002a), a more profound acquaintance with someone or a more intimate interaction. This denotes a shift from an instrumental view of dealing with content (i.e. knowledge about God or understanding Christian concepts) to a more formative approach, of 'knowing' God and the possibility that life may become re-orientated. It involves exploring the understanding and learning which form part of a person's faith flourishing (Astley, 2002a).

Another central principle is the importance of encounter, which places an emphasis on the religious learner as the centre of our concerns. Here, Ordinary Theology acts as 'an important mechanism for discerning the continuing guidance of the Holy Spirit for the Christian community' (Armstrong, 2013, p.67). There is a sense of ownership; religious learning is discovered, experiences are of the transcendent and divine, and learning prompts evaluation and action.

At the heart of Ordinary Theology is an 'interpretative dialogue between our own biographies and hopes, and the stories and promises of the tradition' (Astley, 2002a, p.133). Accordingly, all 'ordinary theologians' present a biography, experiences and convictions which form the essence of their humanity (Astley, 2002a, 2002b) – and as an ordinary life encapsulates what it means to be human, Christian identity and theology are most effectively encountered when the story is located within the context of this 'lived life' (Astley, 2002a). In adults, theology will be formed and changed perhaps through critical self-reflection, academic insight and positive or powerful experiences. Furthermore, continuous dialogue with others encourages collective understanding, although theology and its roots will always be personal.

2.6.3 The Ordinary Theology hermeneutic

The Ordinary Theology hermeneutic is one of expectancy and praxis; it 'embraces an

orientation towards God that involves, and is an expression of, learning how to live before God' (Astley, 2002a, p.55). In this study, it allowed exploration of participants' vocation and ministry: for example, did clergy and headteachers in CE schools articulate the same prophetic voice and ambition for their shared community? Moreover, it describes the relationship between reflection on theology and human experience, testing the former for empirical fit against the latter (Astley, 2002a). Its principle is about how the narrative is holding theology and giving a sense of meaning, whilst acknowledging that this meaning is contextual.

Ordinary Theology helps to examine the nature of theology; its objective is to link experiences and enable theological metaphors and stories to interact, using religious language to speak expressively about God. It places less emphasis on constructive narrative theology in which sacred stories, as expressions of human cultures, form cultural identities (Graham, Walton and Ward, 2005), or the idea of narrative as a redemptive force for social renewal. Rather, narrative acts as a source of spiritual insight, giving a sense of cohesion in bringing 'contemporary experiences … into conversation with the divine story' (Graham, Walton and Ward, 2005, p.76). It is this particular insight from experience and discussion which became the focus for data analysis within my study, the Ordinary Theology framework serving to help me hear 'the ordinary language and logic of the religious believer' (Astley, 2002a, p.147).

As a conceptual framework, Ordinary Theology enabled me to draw on other disciplines for data analysis tools, theoretical insights and empirical models and methods. Similarly, Astley (2002b) looked to Wittgenstein (1966) for perspectives on the relationship between language, praxis and experience, in particular the public use of words, noting that 'merely listening to people will not reveal their theology in a way that we can understand, unless we can get them to talk about what this theology means in their practice, in their lives and in their culture.' (Astley, 2002b, p.18).

Ordinary Theology does not depend on frameworks set by academic theologians, but uses the concepts of God-talk, or speaking reflectively of the divine (Astley, 2002b). Accordingly, a key premise for researchers when interpreting data is to acknowledge it as theology, because what is heard is an expression that holds theological meaning.

Thus, qualitative methods such as participant observation can provide rich data (Astley, 2002a), the researcher listening skilfully, looking 'for something that may count as *theological* or *theologically significant*' (Astley, 2002a, p.114).

2.6.4 A metaphorical bridge

The concept of Ordinary Theology recognises that whilst the use of a polar categorisation between scholarly and non-academic theology provides an easily distinguishable classification, these are ideal types on a spectrum of God-talk, which differ in degree but not in kind; they are not to be viewed as hierarchical and will interact (Astley, 2002a) through conversational partners. It does not mean that individual dispositions and references to academic qualifications will not emerge in dialogue, however within this study I anticipated that the priests and headteachers could sustain the central focus of themselves as learners in the juxtaposition of their life and experiences with Christian faith (Astley, 2013b).

This sense of correlation, used as meaning a connection of shared experiences, captures an imaginative vision of 'picturing life through theological or spiritual eyes' (Astley, 2013b, p.48). Since Ordinary Theology is rich in metaphor and narrative, as is the Christian tradition, the process of reflection bridges any cultural gap and sees connections between the Christian heritage on one side and present experience on the other (Green, 2009). Moreover, by understanding the overtly contextual nature of Ordinary Theology and exploring individual and school narratives, I hoped to reveal the significance of ordinary beliefs and therefore a theology that is significant to (and expressed by) the participants themselves.

2.6.5 Ordinary Theology within empirical studies

Most Christians' Ordinary Theology is made up of 'unsystematic bricolage' (Astley, 2013a, p.2), including everyday life experiences, prayer, gathered worship, Bible study and reading – the significance being that 'it articulates a faith and spirituality, and incorporates beliefs and ways of believing that they find to be salvific - healing, saving, making them whole' (Astley, 2013a, p.2).

Within an empirical study of Ordinary Theology, the importance for the subject is simply of having their theologies recorded and taken seriously. Thus, such a study will require 'theological listening' (Astley, 2013a, p.3) through a hermeneutical approach, using self-reflection and observation on the part of the enquirer. This stresses the importance of words and narrative, since it is difficult to infer theology from praxis, although this ultimately serves as the practical 'performing' of beliefs and values. With listening, the enquirer deliberately asks people what they mean, to 'unveil the theology in the linguistic data rather than impose our own theological categories onto that data' (Astley, 2013b, p.6) and reduce the potential for superficiality. This is an important methodological issue which I explore in Chapter 4, as I describe the approach I took in relation to data collection and analysis.

To support and affirm my selection of Ordinary Theology as a conceptual framework and to stimulate further reflection on my methodology and planning for data analysis, I have examined two empirical studies which in some way were rooted in Ordinary Theology.

The first explores how 'the ordinary' in theology is constructed in public worship and reflected through cultural tradition, interpretation and narrative as well as the lived experience (Ward and Campbell, 2011). It focuses on young people within charismatic worshipping communities in Scotland; researchers attending events at fourteen locations over a period of approximately eighteen months, including youth conferences, prayer cells and networks. The approach was ethnographic, capturing spoken language as data and initially analysing material by coding theological metaphors and themes, identifying regular or repeated phrases and metaphors and pursuing a particular connection to expression and identity.

The second (Neil, 2013) seeks to uses Ordinary Theology as a conceptual framework to understand how lay (non-ordained) churchgoers articulate their understanding and experience of the Anglican sacraments of baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist. The researcher commits to the idea that individuals will come to a group with some form of innate theology, a way of expressing their experience of the divine (Green, 2009). He explores several definitions of theology, noting that 'it is the developmental not-yet-finished aspect of ordinary theology which makes it such a fascinating subject for

empirical study' (Neil, 2013, p.29), then sustains a focus on the ability of participants in the study to express or narrate autobiographical experiences in terms of theological knowledge and language.

The findings from the first study (Ward and Campbell, 2011) were helpful in terms of identifying narratives within data. The authors describe two groups of narratives (intimacy and revival) and their account presents detail on common metaphors and themes, suggesting how themes create a 'core theological style' (ibid., p.232) of intimacy alongside a call for restoration and renewal, as well as making inferences on the form and impact of worship and prayer.

In the second study, results are presented as a narrative, with the author using a significant number of direct quotations from interviews and offering interpretation of the language used and 'paralinguistic information' (Neil, 2013, p.34). He also draws attention to the prominence of story-telling within the interviews and remarks that 'the theology had to be mined from the anecdotes and experiences' (Neil, 2013, p.35).

This presents an interesting contrast to how stories and narratives might unfold within the data collection process, especially interviews where a researcher is able to position themselves as an accompanying 'traveller' rather than a deliberate 'miner' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). It also provided me with two methodological points to consider; my role and impartiality in facilitating discussion between priest and headteacher during the research process, and the depth to which raw information would be mined and analysed.

The way in which both researchers have used or interpreted Ordinary Theology within these empirical studies raises some concerns, specifically where relating to scholarly or academic views about theology. One refers to academic material that has 'made accessible to non-theologians a way of connecting their everyday lives with a theological framework' (Neil, 2013, p.30), reflecting a perception that the lived experience somehow remains inferior in terms of theological reflection. Likewise, whilst acknowledging that the term 'ordinary' is not used negatively, Ward and Campbell (2011) suggest that it forms part of a linear progression in the process of learning and

education. This gives the impression that theological understanding emerging from different places along this continuum is not necessarily of comparable worth, contrasting markedly with the definition of Ordinary Theology as a lay, non-expert theology (Astley, 2002a) that can offer an equal contribution to theological discussion.

Nevertheless, these studies do serve to confirm Ordinary Theology as a legitimate conceptual framework, noting that the constructs of Bourdieu (1977), covered briefly in Chapter 2 (Section 2.8) and explored further in Chapter 3, will illuminate participants' dispositions and experience relating to academic and practical theology. For example, Ward and Campbell (2011) conclude that an understanding of the construction of Ordinary Theology is strengthened by analysing the structure of metaphor and narrative expressed within the community's worship style and communications, and Neil (2013) highlights the under-representation of lay people (those not ordained or belonging to the clergy) in the dialogue around theology. He concludes that his study 'has provided evidence that believers in rural communities in West Wales have a story of faith to tell and given an insight into theology which is ordinary' (Neil, 2013, p.37).

2.7 The practice of theological reflection

In the same way that Ordinary Theology involves a mutual critical relationship between human life experience (and reflections on it) and the Christian faith (Astley, 2013b), further literature on the practice of theological reflection (Graham, Walton and Ward, 2005, Killen and De Beer, 1994, Green, 2009) contains similar themes. Each proposes that doing theology in the manner of theological reflection is about developing methods of bringing into juxtaposition our present life experience and the treasures of our Christian tradition; to check one against the other, to narrate this interaction, to learn from the mix and to gain even more insight to add to the store of Christian heritage.

Since my study focuses on priests' and headteachers' experiences of participation and the process of inquiry and reflection, it is useful to look at examples and characteristics of approaches which focus on process rather than outcomes. For example, we may consider the seven methods of theological reflection presented by Graham, Walton and Ward (2005), from which three are of specific interest and relevance:

i. *Constructive narrative theology* focuses on the richness of metaphor in describing God and the practice and proclamation of faith, and God's presence in ordinary events or ritual practices.

   It describes how in research on human and divine stories, storytelling and biblical narrative can prove uncomfortable or disturbing, provoking challenge through the description of painful experience, and thus advocates accompaniment in the process by a pastoral agent.

ii. *Theology-in-action: Praxis* places an emphasis on orthopraxis (right action) in the interrelation of theory and practice and the discernment of God's activity now and through history.

iii. *Theology in the vernacular - local theologies* demonstrates that 'theology is culturally, temporally and spatially located, and that the gospel cannot exist independent of particular, embodied expressions' (Graham, Walton and Ward, 2005, p.200). However, this is more of an anthropological model of local traditions and cultural patterns other than those found in Western Christianity.

This sense of location and expression is significant for theological reflection in the community of a CE school. My study certainly reflects the geographically local; the catchment area and community of the school, its economic and sociological influences and characteristics, all combine within the physical location in which the God-talk (Astley, 2002a) will take place. Headteacher and priest will be drawing on local practice alongside a rich theological heritage within the Christian community; a tradition including but not limited to scriptures, worship, creedal statements and church history.

Individuals might incorporate these elements within their reflections (Killen and De Beer, 1994), whilst their own standpoint must also create room for newness. A core activity for participants is to attend to and explore a specific and tangible event or situation, intuitively identifying a theme for study (Green, 2009) or what lies at the heart of the matter (Killen and De Beer, 1994). This experience is brought alongside the Christian heritage to receive wisdom, looking to the emergence of new understanding

or perhaps 'a deepening confirmation of a truth we have long accepted' (Killen and De Beer, 1994, p.67).

Methods in this study are also centred on praxis and progressing to a new situation; the discernment of new understanding invites theology-in-action. This is illustrated notably in Latin American liberation thinking such as writing by Freire (1993) on education, empowerment and social action. It advocates a very dialogic approach; activity is *with* people not done to them, and a person's worth arises from a cultural action to transform reality, a desire to change both one's own self and the circumstances of the social group to which one belongs (Freire, 1993).

Action is rooted in hope, in a search jointly with others, through which hope leads to 'the incessant pursuit of humanity denied by injustice' (Freire, 1993, p.73). Freire's work is a powerful advocate for social hope and aspiration, imagining education as ongoing, prophetic and hopeful. It is significant that many liberation theologians have refined their approach into a methodology or pastoral cycle which brings theological reflection to the heart of the cycle, and that writers such as Green (2009) acknowledge the influence of liberation theology in their models of theological reflection.

The Doing Theology Spiral (Green, 2009), which I used during sessions with participants as a supporting structure for theological discussion, is consistent with the methods offered by Graham, Walton and Ward (2005) and Killen and De Beer (1994). Most importantly, it uses narrative and description and an interrelation between experience and tradition, whilst reminding those using it as a framework to be perceptive and sensitive in the initial phases of reflection on life experiences. The Doing Theology Spiral (Green, 2009) leads and encourages the 'doer' in discernment, moderation and reflection, based on a four-phase cycle: a process of hearing, exploring, reflecting and responding. The hearing and exploring phases capture questions and context and may include sourcing additional information for analysis, such as statistics to enrich the experience of reflection.

It is interesting that the words used for the cycle are not uniquely theological in themselves; they are more educational, relating to learning and development. However, the explanation of the stages of the cycle are well-defined to secure

theological understanding. For example, the reflection stage is advocated as bringing '… our faith traditions and our analysed experience of the world together into a creative mix that each may help interpret the other and that we may find God in both' (Green, 2009, p.81). It is the place where intuitive connections between Christian heritage and everyday experience are made that resonate; where for priests and school leaders, dialogue will begin to speak into local mission and school development priorities. It is a space in which an understanding of the divine and Christian faith traditions meet specific realities and situations, where theological reflection will affect planning and narration across both parish and school.

Thus far, in each example of a process of theological reflection, the author imagines a reader with responsibility in church leadership, seeking to mentor and encourage others in faith formation. This anticipates a discrete, skilled function, advocated to help a group 'develop the study, prayer and interpersonal skills that contribute to quality theological reflection' (Killen and De Beer, 1994, p.115). It is quite different to the softer facilitation I planned, although in neither circumstance is the position of facilitator imagined as seeking to persuade participants in relation to a particular position – nor to encourage them to repeat faith statements without openness to encounter or an understanding of the dynamic or breadth of Christian heritage. Principally, the approach I have selected and described (see Chapter 3, Section 3.5) emphasises the skills, knowledge and experiences that participants may bring, engaging them in a praxis model of discernment, inquiry and analysis in the quest for new interpretation and learning.

2.8 Gaining insights through Bourdieu

It is notable that Bourdieu thought of religion as being 'an ultimately unnecessary system of symbolic meaning that serves chiefly to perpetuate social domination' (Rey, 2007, p.6). He referred to laity as being dispossessed and limited to consumerism (Bourdieu, 1991), with the priest holding a favoured position as agent for the supply of salvific and sacramental goods (Rey, 2007). It may therefore appear somewhat unconventional or dissonant to apply the principles of his constructs of habitus, field and capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990) to elements of my method and analysis relating to theological reflection.

However, Bourdieu's work is located in the wider context of the relationship between human beings and broad social and economic systems, exploring how forms of domination are attained through the acquisition of cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1977). Correspondingly, I chose to employ these constructs within my study to gain insight into research participants' dispositions, as well as the cultural and sociological views inhabiting their interactions. Methodologically, the data gathered from participants are relatively easy to document and should provide an accessible representation of these constructs (Kloot, 2016) – therefore offering insights into the research participants and their context which might otherwise be hard to discover.

Looking at each construct in turn, *capital* is usually established in the context of economics and materialism (Bourdieu, 1990), and it is possible to see how the existence of capital can suggest a power relationship. Economic and symbolic capital are intertwined, the latter an accumulation of honour, prestige, networks and debts which can be linked to securing material profits. Bourdieu also makes a reference to capital within the education system, not so much through ideology 'but rather through the practical justification of the established order that it supplies by masking … the relationship … between the qualification obtained and inherited cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1990, p.133).

Field simply describes a sphere of interest, such as education or theology, where capital and habitus connect to the practical world. *Habitus* then enables an exploration of human action through a social and relational history, i.e. a person's conditioning, experience, preferences and dispositions from within a particular field. Thus, *habitus* is 'a socially constituted system of cognitive and motivating structures' (Bourdieu, 1977, p.76), in which agents will both produce and reproduce objective meaning, perhaps through unconsciously arising intentions and possibilities. It is a concept of embodiment, demonstrating the relationship between the body and the social world, including the way that the social world can be identified in the body through the specific practices of social groups (Nash, 1999).

When analysing the individual narratives articulated by priests and headteachers, I am interested in the layers associated with the concept of habitus, through which

participants might reveal both an individual history and 'the whole collective history of family and class that the individual is a member of' (Reay, 2004, p.424). It is a way of viewing structure within smaller-scale interactions (Reay, 2004) as well as broader social structures and does not rule out the possibility of action based on strategic choice, but 'is an open system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to experiences' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.133). The same habitus can generate different conduct and outcomes depending on the stimuli and character of the field in which the social action is operating.

2.9 Learning for methodology and method

From this literature review, I am able to advocate some key considerations and practical implications for planning a research methodology that incorporates theological conversation and reflection:

i. A primary intention is genuine conversation, with a purpose in mind. It is through this process of inquiry that priests and headteachers will discern and discuss leadership priorities relating to Christian vision and ethos in their school. Methods such as Green's *Doing Theology Spiral* (2009) are designed to facilitate theological conversation, take insights from liberation theology and focus on being transformative, which will support participants' learning and development.

ii. 'Doing theology' involves the interrelationship of human life experience (and reflections on it) with the Christian heritage and tradition. Emerging narratives form a bridge between 'ordinary' and academic theology; participants should be invited to see connections and correlation between metaphor, statements and interpretations – all of which reveal how they might perceive God's activities and discover new truths or meanings. Participants' experience of this process of reflection and noticing the activity of God will assist in generating considerations for designing a new approach to paired theological reflection for church school leaders and priests.

iii. I am interested in the participants' experience of participation and the process of inquiry and reflection and recognise that a reflective conversation might evoke the unfamiliar, surprising or uncomfortable. The research method must therefore be designed to prepare the researcher and participants for such a response.

iv. Both habitus (experience and dispositions) and cultural capital obtained by academic study or qualifications could prove a useful indicator of personal authority within the social relationship between participants. It will also assist in understanding the character of each participant's role in leadership and ministry within the church school community.

2.10 Chapter summary

This chapter explored the vision and mission of the Church of England in relation to education and the term 'church school', in which the Anglican foundation underpins the community and educational experience. It also argued for the place of Christian theology as being active in education because no approach to education can be ideologically neutral. In this way theology is experiential and rooted in practice, not a scholarly activity; illuminating and being inspired by the Gospel and the ordinary theology of school leaders.

I then critiqued some examples of previous research studies which relate a sense of vocation or faith commitment to aspects of teaching, learning and school leadership and management. I highlighted a certain lack of criticality and advocated for a more countercultural, reflective approach which draws on lived experience and facilitates a more challenging, prophetic voice.

Next, I focused on the conceptual framework of Ordinary Theology (Astley, 2002a, 2002b, 2013a, 2013b), a learning theology which explores narrative for spiritual insight. I explained how listening and the interpretation of data uncover ordinary beliefs which are theologically significant, drawing on participants' lives and their experiences of the Christian faith, and examined other empirical studies to validate Ordinary Theology as

an appropriate framework. Then, I examined further literature on the process of theological reflection; how by exploring a situation and drawing on the Christian heritage a participant may make intuitive connections to progress to a new situation or understanding. This is connected to an introduction to Bourdieu's constructs of habitus, field and capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990) which can offer further insights into understanding the characteristics of interactions.

Finally, I summarised four considerations applied to my research methodology, such that the process of inquiry, data collection and analysis would make it possible to capture genuine conversation between participants, their experience of participation, the dispositions, understanding and capital they revealed and any connections made between their life experience and Christian tradition and heritage.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This study engaged two pairs of participants (one priest and headteacher in each pair) in the practice of theological reflection within an educational context. It sought to explore what was revealed from analysis of their conversations and commentary which would help to understand the process of reflection, their role in leadership and ministry within a CE school community and how such inquiry might support reflection on priorities linked to Christian vision and ethos.

To answer this question, I employed an experiential methodology with two distinct strands; one focused on my exploration of the research participants' experiences and the other creating a reflective inquiry to engage the participants and create the method through which I could gather data. The overall approach was designed to generate knowledge about the substance of the participants' theological reflections and the reality of their context, to enable the recording of spiritual insights and seek to understand the dispositions that they brought to conversations. I adopted a multi-strategy design in which interviews and sharing of recordings, alongside participant perspectives and contributions regarding the research questions were ongoing, reflecting an evolving narrative. Thus, the inquiry acts within a stream of experience and itself becomes a source of knowledge - the epistemology is not static, as interactions may affect and change this.

In this chapter, I begin by describing how epistemological considerations have influenced the overall methodology, focusing on a knowledge of God and how theological reflection and a process of inquiry typify the idea of faith seeking understanding. This helps to consider the distinction between the methodology through which I understood the research participants' experiences (a narrative theological inquiry approach), and the practical research method, based on the *Doing Theology*

Spiral (Green, 2009), the latter supporting an interdisciplinary approach and engaging the participants in a piece of reflective inquiry from which data could be analysed.

Overall, the selected methodological approach stimulates an enquiry into the correlation between each person's lived experience and the Christian tradition, examining and envisioning the resources and gifts each might contribute to ministry and leadership within a church school community. It facilitates narration and description and is personal and reflective; the focus is continuously on hearing or looking for participants' 'ordinary theology and therefore for something that may count as *theological* or *theologically significant*' (Astley, 2002a, p.114). This elicits knowledge of their beliefs relating to the notion, purpose and function of theological conversation, as they reveal or reproduce meaning, which may be deliberate or arise through unconscious dispositions or intentions.

3.2 Epistemological considerations

In terms of the epistemological considerations for this study, prepositions are crucial; drawing a distinction between knowledge *of* God and knowledge *about* God. In other words, the notion of knowing God relationally and by encounter, as well as the essence of belief, versus factual knowledge relating to a faith tradition. This distinction replicates the way in which CE primary schools seek to develop vision and ethos; a vision that strives to discover what is meant by living life in all its fullness, in a community in which the 'ultimate worth of each person is grounded in being created in the image of God and in God's love and compassion for each' (The Church of England Education Office, 2016, p.9).

Through the process of gathering data, my purpose was to capture how participants related their work or ministry to a connection with God, i.e. how or whether they articulated divine inspiration. Would they demonstrate a sense of knowledge *of* God and knowing the purposes or will of God, an aspiration of 'grasping something that surpasses all immediate things' (Schumacher, 2011, p.227)? For church school leaders, theology that illuminates this 'knowing' is embodied in the doctrine of the Incarnation; 'If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him' (John 14:7, NIV UK).

3.2.1 A divine sense or intuition versus reasoning

I noted in the previous chapter that a sense of divine knowing or the idea of supernatural phenomena is subject to challenge by those seeking evidence achieved through reasoning, featuring strongly in the values and principles of non-religious groups. For example, humanists highlight that throughout recorded history there have been people 'trusted to the scientific method, evidence, and reason to discover truths about the universe' and state that it is possible to 'live ethical and fulfilling lives on the basis of reason and humanity' (Humanists UK, 2020). This view holds the contention that to possess knowledge, there is a prerequisite 'that one has a belief in the relevant proposition, and that that belief must be true' (Pritchard, 2014, p.4). By implication, the necessity of being able to justify a belief emphasises the importance of rationality and reliability, forming one's beliefs responsibly using a reliable, well-supported process.

Of course, if evidence is not required for religious belief, then that belief can be rationally held and amount to knowledge. Descartes (1968) linked his establishment of the existence of God to intuition rather than deductive reasoning, emphasising the powers of his mind and his existence as a thinking being: the principle of Cognito, 'I think therefore I am' (ibid.). Similarly, reformed epistemology draws on this perceptual paradigm; a suggestion that there could be an innate sensory capacity within human beings, a faculty referenced as a 'sensus divinitatis' (Pritchard, 2014, p.138) or divine sense through which we gain religious belief and knowledge.

3.2.2 Knowing about God and knowing God

Acknowledging the existence of God or an awareness of the divine could suggest that God as the object of faith might be known materially and formally through propositions and descriptions. However, it is not necessarily a means to 'knowing' someone fully and personally, which requires perceptual experience or encounter. So what if knowledge of God is predicated on faith that God exists; a faith that involves belief which is a 'trust in the God of salvation, confidence in his promises in addition to laying hold to revealed truths' (Brown, 1998, p.54)?

This question had implications for the selection of research participants, as well as the planning of a piece of reflective theological inquiry to advance their school's leadership priorities and deepen their understanding of Christian vision and ethos. If knowledge *of* God is gained by personal relationship, it could be argued not just that participants ought to hold a personal Christian belief, but that God's very existence is conjectural – 'incapable of coming under human observation' (Hodges, 1979, p.15). Of course, belief may be viewed as dependent on our impression and analysis of evidence at a given time (Swinburne, 1981) and only likely to change if the evidence compels us otherwise. Yet knowledge of God or 'belief' is an existential acceptance; an adherence to faith a choice in which 'one chooses that belief which allows expression to one's authentic self' (Hodges, 1979, p.175).

I am drawn to the idea of 'faith seeking understanding'; perhaps faith and rationality are not incompatible if faith has the goal of attaining understanding and 'is the force that propels the mind towards comprehension' (Schumacher, 2011, p.221). This supports an approach which comprises a cycle of theological reflection (Green, 2009); faith compels reaching the goal, with the mind drawing on existing knowledge to hypothesise about the knowledge it wishes to attain and believes it can, therefore working to obtain new knowledge. It incorporates a sense of human inquiry, a gradually extending cognitive 'toolbox', suggesting an interplay between faith and understanding. Understanding thus acquired draws the participants to a more informed faith and evidence, encounter and revelation lead to transformation.

Thus, a narrative begins to emerge that highlights the relationship of the knowledge discussion to any leadership and pedagogical themes imagined within the scope and process of participants' inquiry and conversation. Knowing *about* God can involve learning about topics or concepts that could emerge within a school's Religious Education curriculum or its approach to Collective Worship. Alternatively, in some school or parish contexts it could also take the form of cultural transmission; the insight or knowledge a faith community may wish to transmit, or a dispute over which 'truth' should be taught to children.

Since CE schools do not articulate an intent to proselytise, my research methodology steered clear of any practice or programme that is implicitly a transmission of faith, rather advocating an engagement that is authentic and where reference points are rooted historically, refined and tested (Wright, 1998). This methodological approach encourages conversation about matters of faith and Christian vision which might reveal cognitive understanding, express authenticity and become a source of growth and progress. It articulates a desire for openmindedness and a 'faith seeking understanding', that is not simply about the transmission of belief and tradition but supports a sense of prophecy, a quest for truth, a posture of critical reflection.

3.2.3 Theology informing practice

Through dialogue about leadership priorities, Christian vision and ethos, theological reflection can be used to inform practice. The chosen research process might be described as 'humanistic' (Luckcock, 2006), understood as being favourable as a mechanism for drawing on the ongoing narrative of a community. This is faith seeking understanding as a rational activity, a truth that a community is creating in and for itself. As with Luckcock (2006), my chosen approach pursued a fresh, ongoing interpretation of the contemporary context of educational policy, benefitting from a continuous reframing of knowledge in the light of 'doing' theology, whilst also declaring an awareness of 'responsibility towards the faith community of the Church of England' (Luckcock, 2006, p.263).

My study also exhibits characteristics of a small-scale but intensive narrative approach. In the same way that Jelfs (2010) emphasises the interrelatedness of the transmission of tradition, faith and values in church schools with an unapologetic stance held by leaders in children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, my understanding of knowledge is one that tells a story or purpose through an approach to ethos and vision across an organisation. Therefore the methodology used needed to pay attention to people in their unique cultural context, with the potential to bring insight into the reality of a specific social world, particularly one that is rooted in traditions and where social roles and understandings will be deeply internalised (Pring, 2015) - to focus on 'the

multiplicity of perspectives embedded … and… to understand and make sense of values and meanings' (Jelfs, 2010, p.32).

Two specific limitations could be levelled at research using a theological, narrative inquiry methodology. Firstly, that a quantitative research approach would have given a greater degree of procedural standardisation and control of variables (Hammersley, 2013), and secondly that because the researcher is operating in a parochial context, there is a potential constraint in explaining and translating activities and relationships within an environment that they may not usually inhabit. I reference validity and researcher reflexivity later in this chapter (Section 3.7), however the core ambition of the chosen research methods was to emphasise a relational dimension to the study and combine encounter and self-reflection. The theology is revelatory; it emerges from the narrative, whilst analysis becomes part of an ongoing dialogue with participants to capture and illuminate practice.

3.3 Understanding research participants' experiences: Narrative theological inquiry

I have elected to use the term 'narrative theological inquiry' to describe this strand of my research methodology, supporting this description by bringing together the contextual framework of Ordinary Theology (Astley, 2002a, 2002b, 2013a, 2013b) and the characteristics of narrative inquiry referred to as narrative turns (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007).

By establishing conversation and theological reflection between participants, the learners and their narratives are kept at the centre. Learning is not through enculturation or instruction by a teacher; faith learning emerges by placing one individual theology beside another in a process of inquiry. In this setting, narratives uncover the learning process of the participants, and narrative turns describe the orientation of a researcher towards particular characteristics and foci; in this study to 'embrace the assumption that the story is one if not the fundamental unit that accounts for human experience' (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007, p.4).

The functions of Ordinary Theology as an encompassing conceptual framework combine with and complement such an orientation: by providing insight into the position and status of participants within theological conversation, placing an emphasis on the language used to speak about the divine, providing a setting for narrative theology and by engaging with participants as they seek and explore shared truths about the Kingdom of God. Coupled with a process of critical reflection, this contributes to a methodology which encourages learning that is transformative, both personally and professionally.

3.3.1 Ordinary Theology and narrative turns

Words revealing insights

The concept of Ordinary Theology requires immersion in the content of discourse and will by its nature include detailed self-description. It can thus attract criticism for being primarily informative and lacking robust evaluation, although such rigour and a narrative approach are not mutually exclusive. Interpretation is key to discovering the theological implications of empirical studies and answering questions about Christian normativity; testing the articulation of Christian language and beliefs 'against doctrinal norms and rational standards' (Astley, 2002a, p.108). This language system of the Christian tradition exists in liturgy, expression and praxis. No performance of language (Chomsky, 1965) in this situation will constitute an exhaustive account of faith, but 'without the performance text of communities, Christianity is mute. Without the grammar of orthodoxy, the performance texts disintegrate into babble' (Schreiter, 1985, p.117).

Words captured through dialogue and interview will give an account of research participants' experiences, representing the complexity and quality of interaction. Ordinary Theology not only provides insight into the position and status of participants within theological conversation but places an emphasis on the language used to speak about the divine. It also enables the researcher to hear 'the ordinary language and logic of the religious believer' (Astley, 2002a, p.147); my interest being how a church school leader's theological thinking and reflection interacts with any academic or unfamiliar theology they might encounter within dialogue.

It has been helpful to examine other similar applications of the Ordinary Theology framework, for example where Neil (2013) researched language used by lay people associated with three of the Anglican sacraments (baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist). He sought to use a theoretical basis for narrative interpretation that would identify how *individuals* find expression for faith and borrowed the term 'inter-language' from Selinker (1972), adapting it as inter-theology, defined as a continual refinement of theological language in learning. He explored theological language and narratives using semi-structured interviews, focusing on recording what these sacraments and their associated liturgy meant to the interviewees and how the practices and language were 'fundamental to their theology' (Neil, 2013, p.31).

Neil (2013) probed deeply, taking care not to interrupt narrative flow whilst gathering data to analyse how ordinary Anglican churchgoers articulated faith and sacramental experiences. Similarly, a qualitative methodology is appropriate for this study as it is the only way to reveal the depths of meaning for those involved in theological conversations.

A focus on the local and specific

Characteristically, narrative inquiry is focused 'not only on individuals' experiences but also on the social, cultural and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed and enacted' (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007, p.42). It will thus signal 'the value of a particular experience, in a particular setting, involving particular people' (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007, p.21). Through empirical studies in specific communities, narratives can be captured relating to a *common* life. In this study, the theme of Ordinary Theology will not only encapsulate the idea of priests and headteachers as both the people of God and producers of theology which may be culturally defined (Hollenweger, 1995), but reveal something of the school community's Christian vision, identity and local self-awareness.

However, I accept that analysis of the experiences shared by the research participants may not be generalisable beyond the specific settings in which the research takes place; each participant will reflect on beliefs and practices that have a clear precedent within

CE schools and a Christian tradition that has a normative character (Schreiter, 1985), but of course 'different parts of the church construe that normativeness differently' (ibid., p.101) in the gospel that has been received. The broader application of such a study will more likely focus on approach; how it supports an exploration of narrative, including dialogue that takes place within a tradition to test or affirm emerging behaviours and practices (Schreiter, 1985).

An evaluative framework

A narrative inquiry needs some form of evaluative framework, or schema of interpretation. Macintyre (1997) advances that knowledge exists within the context of a narrative that gives it meaning, a narrative commonly shared by members of a community. This suggests the notion of embodied traditions espousing epistemological ideals, a 'way of knowing that provides the soundest basis for truth' (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007, p.27).

My study focuses on such a common life; blending the Ordinary Theology hermeneutic of interpreting meaning with narrative inquiry 'embraces an orientation towards God that involves, and is an expression of, learning how to live before God' (Astley, 2002a, p.55), whilst allowing an exploration of participants' traditions, vocation and ministry. Moreover, it describes the relationship between reflection on theology against human experience, testing it for empirical fit (Astley, 2002a). Its principle is about how the narrative is holding theology and giving a sense of meaning, whilst acknowledging that this meaning is contextual.

In the position of researcher I also need to be mindful, in applying the method used to gather data and during subsequent analysis, that knowledge of place or tradition is naturally deepened over time (Macintyre, 1997); that abiding in a place for a while can foster significant attachments and care for a place can increase the likelihood of our defending our perception of it (Rumsey, 2017).

This suggests paying attention to a number of factors. Firstly, the unspoken protocols of a school community, habits and relationships within a local church, and the level of

exposure to the tenets of belief and practices of Anglicanism. These will express something of a shared history and implicitly understood traditions; dispositions (habitus) or cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977) which need to be noticed and recorded. The length of service of the participating priest and headteacher and the interpretation of their context may also be revelatory – do they articulate the same prophetic voice and ambition for their shared community as one another? Similarly, I need to recognise any assumptions I am making about the research participants' narratives, and the 'habitus' I use to filter perceptions.

It may also be helpful to reflect on whether (or to what extent) questions or crises about knowledge are reflective of crises within a 'tradition' or context more broadly. For example, in educational traditions participants could hold conflicting views about policy or pedagogy – and within church traditions, these differences might be rooted in ecclesiology or views on human identity. Yet it is possible that they reveal frailties or anxieties being considered more generally within the regional or national narrative by educators and Anglican priests. This study will therefore potentially be dealing with a multiplicity of traditions, acknowledging that 'what constitutes a tradition is a conflict of interpretations of that tradition' (Macintyre, 1997, p.146).

3.3.2 Applying learning from the connection between Ordinary Theology and narrative turns

Any narrative inquiry will be open-ended, covering multiple modes of investigation. Stories themselves might capture layers of meaning for analysis, but ultimately will hold the insights into human lives that we hope to comprehend (Andrews, Squire and Tamboukou, 2013). As such, it might be expected that narratives within this study will be experience-centred rather than event-centred, although there may be some overlapping boundaries. In addition, I need to be aware how stories could be co-constructed, and that personal narratives may be shaped by larger social and cultural narratives or metanarratives.

In order to gather or hear these experiences, qualitative methods such as participant observation and individual interviews can provide rich data. Since the framework of

Ordinary Theology uses the concepts of God-talk, or speaking reflectively of the divine (Astley, 2002b), a key premise that must underpin interpretation is to acknowledge this as theology, because what is heard is an expression that holds theological meaning for the language users themselves. Understanding the participants' context and locating themes in the data will also assist in exploring relationships between individual narratives, analysing how narratives are expressed and theological thinking has been structured, and how the 'ordinary' is carrying any systematic usage of theological expression (Ward and Campbell, 2011).

3.3.3 An interpretivist approach

It is also important to acknowledge that, when implementing a research method for the participants' reflective inquiry, I may initially identify specific research questions and a broad discussion focus of 'church school vision and ethos', but have no further control over the narrative topics considered by participants. Narratives will be socially constructed from the interviews, conversational interactions and theological reflections, whilst I seek to be mindful of the relative balance between participants' intentions and my interpretations.

Thus, I believe that the hermeneutic approach of what I have termed narrative theological inquiry falls within an interpretivist tradition. Narrative theology and the process of inquiry are complementary, both highlighting the significance of narrative in contemporary theology and relating to the analysis of language, expression and story within inquiry and the theological framework. This approach can reveal participants' autobiographical stories and detail and suggest epistemological connections and questions (Hauerwas and Jones, 1997), whilst framing an aspiration towards common goals – in this study, the aim of their shared ministry in CE schools.

Correspondingly, the framework of Ordinary Theology helps to examine the nature of theology; its objective to link experiences and enable theological metaphors and stories to interact, using religious language to speak expressively about God. It places less emphasis on constructive narrative theology in which sacred stories, as expressions of human cultures, form cultural identities (Graham, Walton and Ward, 2005) or the idea

of narrative as a redemptive force for social renewal; rather narrative acts as a source of spiritual insight, a sense of cohesion in bringing 'contemporary experiences … into conversation with the divine story' (Graham, Walton and Ward. 2005, p.76).

The process of narrative theological inquiry thus makes a distinction between the story as a phenomenon and the narrative discovered through inquiry (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990). It is interpretivist because it realises the power of story to comprehend and make sense of experience, enabling research in a way that brings understanding to human events and situations. It is also shaped by language: by what is being consciously conveyed that is grounded in intellect, understanding and life experience and as expressions of meaning (Crotty, 1998), but also that which is subconsciously shaped by '*habitus*' (Bourdieu, 1977).

3.4 Discerning a methodology for the participants

3.4.1 Research participants and co-researchers?

Since the research participants would be experiencing and commenting on a process of inquiry and theological reflection, in a sense alongside the researcher in discovery and conversation, it was important to establish whether their role could be described as one of co-researcher.

This is an important distinction to clarify in advance of the data collection phase. Acting as 'co-researcher' indicates a position of being a joint contributor and investigator, and of course the narrative and considerations of this study are intended to be of direct relevance to leaders and clergy linked to church school education. However, although the intention of the practical research method and data collection architecture (see Sections 3.5 and 3.6.2) was to create flexibility and an ongoing narrative record, I retained a certain level of control over key aspects of the data collection process. For example, notwithstanding the semi-structured format of the interviews, I determined second questions, themes and critical follow-up during the interview process – and after the data collection phase, participants did not contribute to data analysis.

It is apparent therefore that collaborators in this study were not really equal, and references to the priests and headteachers as 'participants' or 'research participants' throughout my writing is appropriate.

3.4.2 The relationship between researcher and researched

Nevertheless, by planning a process of inquiry and dialogue about ordinary lives in CE schools, I recognised that the relationship between researcher and researched would be dynamic. Christian identity and theology are encountered most effectively when the story 'is found within the story of a "lived life"' (Astley, 2002a, p.134), and both parties bring a particular foreknowledge, history or worldview. This might be in the form of dispositions or habitus (Bourdieu, 1977) or, if entering as 'ordinary theologians', a biography and set of experiences and convictions which form the essence of their humanity (Astley 2002a, 2002b).

Since the focus on the lived experience determines a focus on interpretation and an understanding of meaning, I appreciated that it was possible for both researcher and participants to experience learning and change though their encounter (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007). Knowledge would emerge through interaction, and stories unfold through interpretations of narratives, which makes any sense of a static view of the self and the subject of research improbable. As a researcher I could still endeavour to preserve distance, retaining a sense of my own objectivity, yet should also acknowledge that my view of self or other may change.

3.4.3 Considerations for the research method

I determined that a practical, contextual application must be at the heart of discerning an effective and appropriate research method, whilst generating conversation and commentary which would enable analysis of the research participants' experiences; 'merely listening to people will not reveal their theology in a way that we can understand, unless we can get them to talk about what this theology means in their practice, in their lives and in their culture' (Astley, 2002b, p.18).

Accordingly, building on the methodological approach of narrative theological inquiry, I chose to highlight three key elements for inclusion:

i. Entering the field of research in a way that feels caring and empowering for participants but also a shared space.

Principally, and mindful of ethical considerations, it is important to recognise the spiritual and liberating features of a narrative theological inquiry approach - this kind of research process is likely to be consciousness-raising for participants. Such examination of consciousness in the process of reflection and recollection can affirm the power inherent in life experiences in offering meaning to people and also emphasise the significance of claiming their voice (Bruce, 2008). This must be undertaken in a place which is mutually constructed, 'a relationship in which both practitioners and researchers feel cared for and have a voice with which to tell their stories' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p.4).

Any limitation in this respect will be bound by the time taken by different research activities; it is important that collaboration and social interaction with participants is sufficient, especially to allow for their own reflection and insights on the data captured and analysed by the researcher.

ii. How using this method will lead to an exploration and analysis of language and story, using narrative as a tool 'to organise lived-experiences into meaningful episodes' (Isasi-Diaz, 2001, p.128).

There is an essentially practical element to this, relating to the accurate transcription of discussions and interviews and the approach to thematic categorisation and analysis of data, which is explained in Chapter 4. Additionally, I must endeavour to capture the meaning that is found within story and narrative that can be holding the experiential and the divine, taking care also in recognising the influence of my own theological perspective when describing that of another (Astley, 2002a). This kind of examination draws a connection with Christian spiritual disciplines, such as the Daily Examen, a

technique practised and advocated by St. Ignatius of Loyola for discernment of God's presence and direction, recognising God in our experience (Loyola Press, 2018).

It is an examination that offers a reflexivity on meaning; this reflective quality drawing together self-consciousness, tradition and experience, exploring the focus on the researcher and participants for knowledge and insight. Moreover, it is an examination that cannot be limited to a linear, inflexible research method and analysis method; in the process of narrative inquiry 'researchers listen to narratives, sift them, return to the narrators, and reflect again' (Bruce, 2008, p.329).

iii. How theology emerges in context from the narrative, as participants are 'speaking reflectively of the divine'.

In planning a research method and the sifting of narratives, I must also hold firmly the aspiration of supporting participants in reflection; in particular as leaders, as they seek to hear each other's prophetic voice within the church school community and to share interpretations and discoveries emerging from ongoing God-talk and reflection. Methods and approaches used should be structured in a way that offers assurance that emerging theology and the narrative context will be clearly recognised; for example it is important that research participants have opportunities to affirm how their theology might be traced back into tradition, scripture (biblical referencing) and experience. Furthermore, how might situated meaning (i.e. the way in which their theological language has been adapted to a particular context or situation) and the social or cultural model in which they are operating be understood? These tools of inquiry are helpful in building a sense of individuals' socially-situated identities (Gee, 1999).

3.5 Practical Research Method

3.5.1 The Doing Theology Spiral

I have noted previously (Chapter 2, Section 2.6.3) that study within the framework of Ordinary Theology requires the researcher to draw on other disciplines for tools of inquiry, theoretical insights and empirical methods (Astley, 2002b). As my focus

methodologically is on how theology emerges from narrative in context and participants speak of the divine from their lived experience, a natural research method to use and explore with the research participants was the *Doing Theology Spiral* (Green, 2009), since one of its key aims and features is 'helping to discern God's presence with us in our experience' (Green, 2009, p.133).

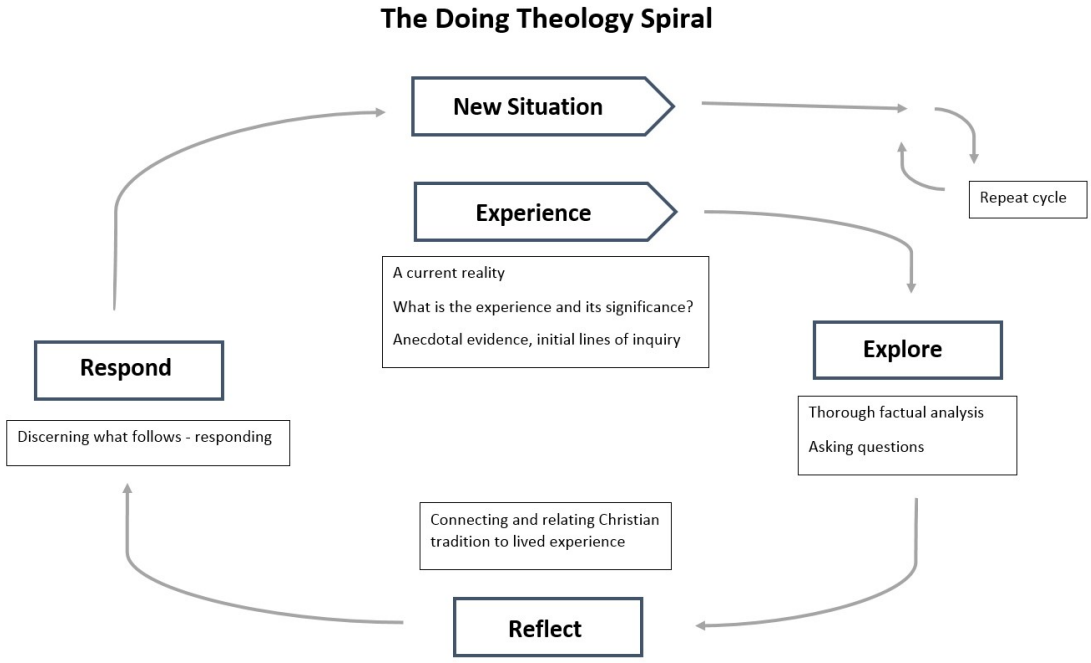
The *Doing Theology Spiral* (Green, 2009) is a method of doing theology that incorporates theological disciplines to encourage the 'doer' in discernment, moderation and reflection. It appears to suit an educational context in that it seeks to create a dynamic of reflection and action from which developmental praxis might emerge. In addition, it offers scope for extended conversation and analysis, within a clear structure that participants will be encouraged to critique. It is appropriate for undertaking qualitative research since it offers an interconnected approach; it is possible to engage with secular disciplines in the analysis of data, examining and identifying causal relationships, then proceed to theological reflection. The implication of 'doing' theology describes the whole process, with theological reflection centred on that particular phase of the cycle, whilst 'the work in each and every phase must constantly refer to the lived experience' (Green, 2009, p.26).

As a praxis model, the *Doing Theology Spiral* is one of shared group encounter, interpretation and response, a process of discerning the will of God and committing to action. Being attentive to its characteristics, it is appropriate to use the language of *correlation*, since it reflects a connectedness between personally held beliefs and scripture and tradition, with 'praxis' (as 'reflective practice') representing an interaction between these elements and the lived experience. In this interaction and discernment and in the presence of God, truth is discovered that can be prophetic or inspire service or nurture; truth that reflects a unique context and yet will be located unmistakeably within a framework of Christian belief.

I chose to structure the phases of my data collection loosely around the overall method of the *Doing Theology Spiral*, which is based on a four-phase cycle: starting from experience, engaging in exploration, theological reflection and a commitment to responding. Since the process itself was to be subject to analysis in terms of suitability

and operation (through participants' experiences of the process of inquiry), it seemed prudent not to require participants to conform strictly to a given structure. This enabled me to design a research approach that emphasised narrative and was centred around conversation and relationship between school leader and parish priest. I guided the participants in identifying a contemporary practical question or educational issue relating to their context to facilitate a fluent opening to dialogue, then the ensuing flow of the cycle was intended to capture how participants endeavoured to talk, using theological language, about the school 'focus' they had discerned. Recordings, reflections and analysis would then provide me with an emergent understanding of the contribution of theological conversation to leaders' understanding of both their values and underpinning vision in relation to Christian education, and of one another's ministry within the school community.

Diagram (i) The Doing Theology Spiral



3.5.2 An outline of the data collection sessions

I anticipated that the data collection activity, comprising one cycle of the *Doing Theology Spiral* followed by semi-structured interviews to capture paired rather than individual reflections, would be split broadly over four sessions with each pair of research participants.

Session 1: Introduction (starting from experience)

The first session encompassed listening or hearing; it was facilitated by me as researcher and included explaining the process and discerning a focus for reflection, drawing on the participants' experience. I imagined the activities (outlined below) would take approximately one hour and the session was audio recorded. Resources provided to participants were an aide-memoire of the four-phase cycle of the *Doing Theology Spiral*, copies of the research questions and notebooks to use as reflective journals.

First activity: Sharing the research questions and process

The opening activity within the introductory session offered an opportunity to outline the research questions and explain the four-phase cycle of the *Doing Theology Spiral*. The foundation for engaging with the *Doing Theology Spiral* is openness and affirmation, so ordinarily a leader would be clearly identified and would make every endeavour to create an expressive and participatory group. This might include setting ground rules in the early stages, such as valuing all contributions and allowing participants to be active or passive.

In the context of my study an observation of process and dialogue, alongside analysis of the method, was more important than maintaining expected behaviours. Introducing parameters around engagement or content would affect the methodological approach and data analysis, specifically the extent to which participants' preconceptions or dispositions were being brought into the stories and narrative.

Second activity: Discerning the focus, which should be a practical question or educational issue relevant to the development of vision or ethos within the school

This task was one that could not be rushed and may have required some prompting. Enabling participants to discern the focus helps to secure commitment, but also ensures that the matter is manageable and defines a current reality for the school. Once the focus was agreeable for both participants, it was important that they shared first

thoughts or impressions, building up a picture of their experience and forming initial lines of inquiry.

Third activity: Introducing Session 2

Between Session 1 and Session 2, participants were invited to source additional information for analysis and discussion e.g. documents, pictures and statistics and had the opportunity to add to their reflective journal.

Session 2: An extended conversation (exploring)

In terms of practical arrangements, resources for participants in Session 2 included an aide-memoire of the four-phase cycle of the *Doing Theology Spiral*, copies of the research questions and reflective journals.

The session was designed to provide time to move on 'from those impressionistic anecdotes into factual analysis – from generalized sketches to specific description' (Green, 2009, p.60). I anticipated positive learning from this conversation; perhaps a tool for developing understanding, or to inform and change policy and practice in the context of Christian vision and ethos - there is 'no doubt that practitioners value conversation as a medium for learning' (Hollingsworth and Dybdahl, 2007, p.163).

It was also intended as a free-ranging, extended conversation between the pair of participants, self-guided in character and using any materials collected between the sessions. Whilst titled 'exploring', participants were not required to remain within this phase of the *Doing Theology Spiral*, so could begin to engage in reflection and response. The session was audio recorded, with the researcher present (and taking field notes).

Between Session 2 and Session 3, participants were offered a copy of the audio recording from Session 2 as a means of reflecting on the process and their experience.

Session 3: Reflecting and Responding

This was an audio-recorded paired session in two parts: continuing the extended conversation, then reflecting on the process and experience, in the form of a group discussion facilitated by the researcher. The time allowed was approximately one hour in total, and resources for participants were the same as the previous two sessions.

Reflecting

The reflective stage of the cycle is significant in securing understanding; advocated by Green (2009) as bringing '… our faith traditions and our analysed experience of the world together into a creative mix that each may help interpret the other and that we may find God in both' (Green, 2009, p.81). It is the place to be open to God's perspective and where intuitive connections between Christian tradition or heritage and everyday experience are made that might resonate.

This connection between Christian tradition and lived experience is critical in examining how theology is being applied to bring insight to educational matters and ideas, and whether theological conversation and reflection has assumed a place at the heart of planning, narrative and response. Where connections resonate and lead to intuitions, albeit open to change and reconstruction, I might discover the place where clergy and headteachers are speaking prophetically as part of the local Christian story, responding and building knowledge in alignment with the will of God.

Responding

The aide-memoire outlining the *Doing Theology Spiral* invited participants, in the 'respond' phase, to discern what faithful action might ensue (Green, 2009). It was anticipated that through this approach, new praxis would emerge from the juxtaposition of reflection or analysis and the Christian gospel, so prompting a right response (orthopraxis) as participants moved from interpretation to committed action - where 'theology is understood as the product of the continual dialogue of these two aspects of Christian life' (Bevans, 2002, p.72). Orthopraxis acknowledges and seeks the partnership

of God; it is an expression of faith that becomes truly relevant to a particular context.

Therefore, having sought to get to the heart of the matter, reflecting on how their experiences encountered the Christian tradition in a process of correlation, participants would have an opportunity to determine what followed. This step of 'articulating what we take away from reflection is crucial to growing in the life of faith' (Killen and de Beer, 1994, p.67) - whether a call to action, an alternative perspective, questions for study or a shift in attitude.

Between Session 3 and Session 4, participants were offered a copy of the audio recording from Session 3 as a means of reflecting on the process and their experience.

Session 4: Individual reflections

Session 4 marked a clear distinction between using a framework to stimulate theological reflection, to the gathering of data about the research participants' experiences of the process of inquiry and building on their commentary and conversation. It was important to review field notes and audio recordings from the first three sessions, to draw on themes raised by participants around leadership priorities and their role in expressing Christian vision and ethos, as well as immediate reflections from the group discussion. These informed the direction and content of questions for the individual interviews, to 'help to arrive at new interpretations, achieve a deep understanding, obtain rich description, and synthesise an accurate narrative of events' (Rubin and Rubin, 2012, p.169). Follow-up questions would be based on areas which were unclear, incomplete, too general or apparently contradictory; moreover would allow the exploration of new material and build a sense of thoroughness (Rubin and Rubin, 2012).

In addition to covering emerging themes and questions, the individual semi-structured interviews would seek to gather the participants' insights into the overall experience of engaging in a process of paired theological reflection. Each participant was asked to reflect on elements of the research questions, including the purpose and function of theological reflection and whether such conversation assisted their understanding of the character of their colleague's role in leadership and ministry within the school community.

3.6 Characteristics of the data collection and method

3.6.1 Intended pilot study

It was intended that data collection would commence with a pilot study using a single pair of participants (one headteacher and one priest). This phase would test the method and materials, eliminate ambiguities as far as possible and give insight into what the process might yield. However, given the richness of data emerging from engagement with participants from the first school, alongside a desire to keep within the timeline for data collection, I decided not to amend the practical research method.

3.6.2 Data collection architecture - an ongoing narrative record

The method for my practical research was designed both to have a sense of progression, but also to emphasise the process of construction and reconstruction, as well as a sense of change through time, which the connotation of narrative carries.

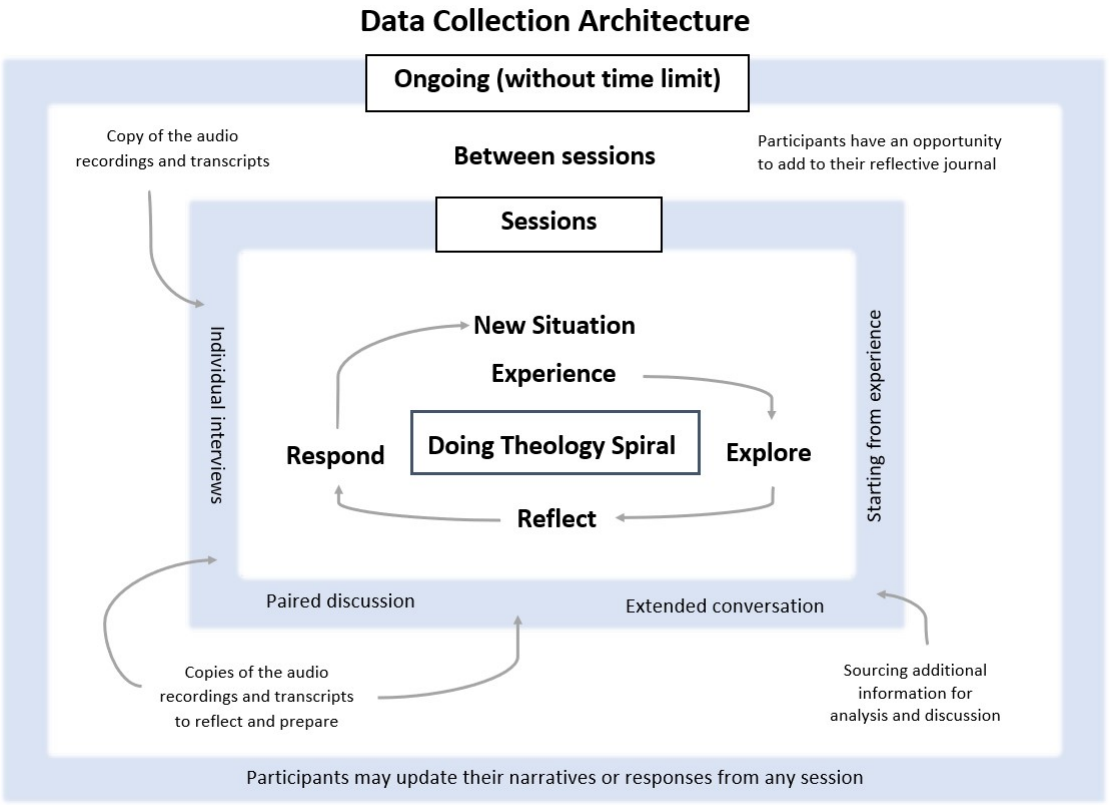
Reflective journals were offered to participants to record reflections outside of the scheduled sessions, providing another dimension about what was going on in their experience. They were invited to reflect on how they were feeling, their experiences of God and any sense of God's activity, as well as the role of theological conversation and their school/church context and culture in any thinking about Christian vision and ethos. The journals could also, with agreement between participants, have created the opportunity to reflect on one another's writing, giving exposure to further conversation. However, although participants were given encouragement to complete the journals, they chose to leave them largely unused.

I was also open to continued refinement in the research process, since emerging understanding informs methods, and I was mindful of managing sources and handling data such that my evidence base provided an ongoing narrative record. In between sessions, I returned to participants with copies of interview transcripts and audio recordings, meaning that the narrative record was reviewed (checking both the meaning intended by participants and my interpretation). I also emphasised that the participants'

narratives did not come to a halt after the final session; ongoing reflections, additions or amendments to their stories, contributions and interview responses would be welcomed and included prior to completion of the final written draft of the study. My intention was to strengthen plausibility and validation by inviting them into an ongoing reflection on the process, thus indicating 'whether or not the data appropriately reflects and expresses their experiences' (Bruce, 2008, p.327).

This 'data collection architecture' is summarised below:

Diagram (ii) Data collection architecture – facilitating an ongoing narrative record



3.7 Ethics

It was imperative that ethical considerations for my study included technical correctness, particularly in the clarity of documentation and arrangements, but it was equally important to acknowledge a responsibility within human and organisational trust and relationship. How research participants gathered material and data, in addition to the extent to which they were open and willing to self-disclose, would reflect the quality of relationship they experienced (Josselson, 2007). A copy of the Research

Ethics Review Application which I submitted prior to commencing research is included at Appendix A.

3.7.1 *Ethical considerations relating to the research method*

The key consideration throughout the data collection sessions was to confirm (at the commencement of each session) the research participants' freedom to withdraw at any point without needing to provide an explanation, as well as arrangements for the storage of data and access to transcripts. The sessions were open and conversational, designed to avoid making excessive demands on participants and to put them at ease. I was alert to each participant's willingness around audio recording and they were given the option to pause the recording if they sensed any unease or unwelcome demand. Similarly, each interview process was designed to be conducted carefully; there was an opportunity afterwards to reflect on the experience of the interview and its meaningfulness to participants, during which I could note any change in their cooperation or focus of interest.

3.7.2 Position of self

As DDE for an Anglican Diocese I am an advocate for CE schools and senior officer to the Diocesan Board of Education, which holds a statutory responsibility for promoting education within the diocese, including promoting religious education and religious worship in schools and giving advice to governing bodies and site trustees of educational endowments. This raised questions around the ethics of research within church schools where the DBE is the religious authority, mindful that transparency about interests will lead to a positive research alliance. In particular, I needed to consider the process for selecting schools, in view of being seen to privilege a small number, and how to articulate the benefits they might get from participation. Moreover, I wondered if selected schools might feel under duress to participate due to my diocesan position. Gratefully, this proved not to be the case, as explained in Chapter 4 (Section 4.1).

Being aware of the position of self also requires reflexivity; being explicit about how, in the role of researcher, my background and past experiences may influence both the

direction of the study and interpretations (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). I therefore needed to be vigilant of my positioning, as well as any interests that might influence the research process or the acquisition of insight into how knowledge was being produced (Pillow, 2003). Such reflexivity promotes ongoing self-awareness and expects questioning of interpretation; it is conscious of the research relationship and whether it contains mutual interest or benefit.

Likewise, it is important to pay attention to the validation of the research process, 'to demonstrate one's awareness of the research problematics' (Pillow, 2003, p.179); not choosing to transcend or simply observe these problematics, but allowing them to cause discomfort and engage in reflexivity that offers an ongoing critique. For example, looking ahead to describing the context of data collection, principles for data analysis and developing narratives, I was conscious that the narrated accounts should be 'as informative as possible and … provide insights into the means and circumstances of their production' (Elliot, 2005, p.155). I acknowledged the need to step back from the gathered data, heeding advice to 'attend to ourselves as individuals doing the analysis and responding to the narratives that have been collected' (Elliot, 2005, p.159). Knowing that some of the analysis would be intuitive, and that I would approach it with a particular theoretical view and personal or professional history, it was important to remember to pause and ponder why I noticed particular elements of the emerging accounts.

3.7.3 Selecting schools and approaching participants

Within my DDE role, engagement with schools focuses principally on advocacy and liaison. However, our Diocesan Board of Education has a closer connection to Academy Trust governance through the framework of company law, in particular appointing Members and Directors to Trusts. I therefore sought to recruit headteachers and parish priests whose schools are maintained by the Local Authority, to reduce any potential conflict of interest.

Additionally, my research method engages participants in 'doing' theology, reflecting on their experiences and on God; thus, in recruiting participants I only considered those

school leaders and clergy who self-identified as Christian. For clergy participants, I regarded it sufficient that they were ordained as Church of England priests and held a Licence from the Bishop to officiate within the diocese. For headteacher participants, I began by listing those known to worship at an Anglican church within the diocese.

These parameters already reduced the scope of potential participants to self-identifying Christians, worshipping within an Anglican setting and linked to CE schools maintained by the Local Authority (either Voluntary Aided or Voluntary Controlled). I determined that should further balance prove necessary, I could select similarly sized schools located within different Archdeaconry areas.

The next step was to approach an identified pair of participants discretely and separately (i.e. without notifying the other potential participant), affirming the confidentiality of the research process and making sure that the practice of obtaining voluntary informed consent was clear. In addition, I was alert to any contrast in willingness to engage, since the headteacher and parish priest needed to be involved in the study together.

3.7.4 Power Relations

As DDE I have regular contact with the Diocesan Episcopal Staff Team (the Bishop, Archdeacons and Diocesan Secretary) and senior postholders within the Local Authority's Children, Young People and Education Directorate, which holds responsibilities for school organisation and performance. In addition, my role may be seen as representing the operation of SIAMS; consequently, I was mindful of where selected schools were within the SIAMS inspection cycle and discounted those anticipating an inspection within one year.

Both sets of connections may have caused participants to ask questions about authority, influence or reporting. I therefore made my role as researcher explicit, emphasising the objective of generating new knowledge in relation to developing leadership priorities for Christian vision and ethos, to benefit the participants themselves. I also affirmed that participants' identities would be protected throughout the research project and within any future publication of the study's findings.

There is an inherent link between the participants themselves that also must be acknowledged. Where a parish priest is an ex-officio member of a CE school's Governing Body, they act as part of this corporate body in undertaking responsibilities relating to the employment of all staff, including the headteacher. I did not expect this connection to form a risk, as it is mitigated by an emphasis on the benefit of jointly generating new knowledge and the fact that there is no direct or individual line management relationship between the participants. However, it may have had the potential to influence the way in which the headteacher and priest interacted in a theological conversation, or the role they chose to represent.

3.8 Insights from Bourdieu

The four phases of the practical research method were designed to reveal the function and content of participants' theological reflection and conversation, and the dynamics of their language and interactions. It was also possible that they might reveal a set of dispositions which they would bring into dialogue, i.e. cultural and sociological views and practices through which they filtered perceptions. Accordingly, I selected elements of Bourdieu's 'Outline of a Theory of Practice' (Bourdieu, 1977) to help examine and explain social influences on participants and their interactions, drawing insight from the three key constructs of habitus, field and capital.

3.8.1 Habitus, field and capital

Habitus will reveal an individual's epistemological ground and locate the ideas and principles of their religious belief. It is formed and reinforced through cultural, collective or individual practice, reflecting the harmonisation of peoples' experiences. It brings a sense of homogeneity, or cultural identity; certain practices and behaviours can become predictable or foreseeable because of this cultural 'habitus' – they become the 'product of dispositions' (Bourdieu, 1977, p.81). To take this a step further, where individuals have been the product of the same conditions, it can lead to a social or cultural habitus and therefore a system of shared dispositions.

It would therefore seem reasonable to expect a degree of uniformity, or of cultural identity amongst headteachers and similarly amongst Anglican parish priests; that each group might espouse foreseeable attitudes and responses because they have become the product of a shared set of experiences and dispositions. For example, we might presume that a parish priest will enter into theological conversation with a background in academic theological training and parochial ministry, whereas the headteacher might well present as an educational expert, with experience of pedagogical research and school leadership theory.

Yet although habitus will offer an insight into such relationships and systems of meaning, there could be both variations (such as a headteacher with a theology degree or in lay leadership within the Anglican church) and commonalities from the priest and headteacher's shared community. An educational habitus may be common for a group of headteachers and an ecclesial habitus for a group of clergy, but each will bring a degree of familiarity with the varied traditions and practices within regional CE schools and Anglican churches. Furthermore, pairs of participants will be acquainted with the same CE primary school environment, and the practices and habits that the local church and school have shared over time. A further, underlying complexity is that revealed dispositions may not necessarily capture the entire scope of a particular habitus; also the relevance of dispositions is determined by the researcher and may depend on the focus of study (Costa, Burke and Murphy, 2019).

The term *field* helps as a descriptor for the areas of theology, education and theological reflection, and offers a reminder that the participants will carry a certain level of *capital,* such as experience or reputation, from one or more of their respective fields. Power relations within a particular field are affected and determined by the aggregation of capital. In the field of theological conversation this could be symbolic (clerical dress), cultural (a person's standing in the community), resources (theological training) or social influence (networks). If there is a perception that intellectual or faith-related capital, or a greater sense of worthiness, is held by undertaking academic theological study, could simply the presence of a participant with related capital unconsciously diminish the other?

During the process of data collection, analysis and interpretation I was alert to how much capital participants relied on (or believed they possessed) within the field of theological reflection and conversation, and to what extent they believed the *Exploring* and *Reflecting* phases of the research method represented a competitive or imbalanced engagement. A commentary on social and cultural capital revealed by individual participants during the process of inquiry and reflection is found in Chapter 6, Section 6.3.4.

3.8.2 Using Bourdieu's constructs within the study

There can be a tendency in educational research to introduce habitus as a reference or concept prior to collecting data, thus 'Bourdieu's challenge to use the concept as a way of interrogating the data is ignored and habitus becomes an explanation of the data rather than a way of working with it' (Reay, 2004, p.440). This is a question of bridging the gap between theory and method – whether Bourdieu's constructs are employed as a methodological choice or an application made to fieldwork (Costa, Burke and Murphy, 2019). I sought to apply them in both, but principally through narrative analysis, in the following ways:

Methodologically, to frame questions for the individual interviews. For example, an opening question framed around each participant's professional and personal paths, or their discernment of ministry, became a way of understanding the character and evolution of their social and cultural capital within their respective fields. Further questions on the theme of theology were designed to discover the extent to which participants entered the study with the intellectual capital of academic study, or even a sense of worthiness. As discussion focused on Christian vision and ethos, I was alert to participants feeling reticent or disempowered because they felt a deficiency in either theological or educational experience and training.

In *fieldwork and data analysis.* Firstly, identifying where participants' narratives or reactions revealed dispositions or alluded to capital, i.e. they adopted views or practices from specific cultural fields, which were 'objectively organised as strategies without being the product of a genuine strategic intention' (Bourdieu, 1977, p.73). Secondly, by

observing whether through the research participants' interactions, conversation and commentary their dispositions were perpetuated, or whether they showed the potential for modification and change.

3.9 Chapter summary

In this chapter I sought to articulate the sort of knowledge to be gathered through a process of inquiry and established the two strands of my methodological approach. The first strand relates to how participants were engaged in paired theological reflection by using a research method based on the praxis model of the *Doing Theology Spiral* (Green, 2009). This method is characterised by a cycle of identifying a current reality, undertaking a factual analysis, reflection and then forming a response, and I demonstrated how it was adapted for my data collection sessions. The second strand was narrative theological inquiry, through which I understood participants' experiences and which I have proposed sits in an interpretivist tradition. I explained how this clear separation within my approach emphasises how the priest and headteacher were engaged in the inquiry, but not classed as 'co-researchers'.

In outlining epistemological considerations, I suggested that the cycle of reflection undertaken by participants encompasses a sensing of the divine; an example of faith seeking understanding, through which emerging theology might illuminate leadership priorities for vision and ethos for the priest and headteacher. I also explored the conceptual framework of Ordinary Theology further, in relation to the role of language and social and cultural context and how these may affect participants' experience-centred insights and therefore their learning.

I described how, within the process of inquiry and reflection, a planned 'data collection architecture' would facilitate the opportunity of keeping an ongoing and flexible record of narratives. In addition, I referenced ethical considerations relating to my professional role as DDE, reflecting on positioning during the recruitment of schools and the data collection process. Finally, I explained how Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, field and capital were used within the study. I outlined the significance of these concepts and

Bourdieu's theory in the inquiry process, as well as the way in which participant dispositions might be evidenced.

In Chapter 4, I focus on the data collection phase of my study and the approach I developed for data analysis.

CHAPTER 4

Data collection and analysis

Having described my methodology and chosen practical research method, this chapter reports on the data collection phase of the study with the research participants. It commences with an explanation of how participants were selected, then describes from the researcher's view the preparation undertaken for each session and understandings gathered via field notes. Subsequently, I explain my approach to analysing the data collected, to gain insights into the participants' conversation and commentary.

4.1 Context: selecting and approaching participants

4.1.1 Introduction

In Chapter 3 I set out the parameters within which I planned to select the two pairs of participants; each pair being the headteacher and parish priest representing a CE primary school within the diocese. Defined slightly further, the school leader should self-identify as Christian and be worshipping within an Anglican setting, and the CE school should be maintained by the Local Authority (either Voluntary Aided or Voluntary Controlled).

Most notably, these parameters were purposively based on the themes of paired theological reflection and leadership priorities for school vision and ethos which my research questions seek to address. Thus, the rationale for selecting a school would be 'because it illustrates some feature or process in which we are interested' (Silverman, 2017, p.269). The latter parameter about school status was significant due to a potential conflict of interest regarding schools which are academies; in many cases I act for the Diocesan Board of Education within their governance structures (as an Academy Trust Member or Director) and wished to eliminate any perceived position of authority or power relating to this representation.

Narrowing down over 100 church schools within the diocese based on Local Authority maintained or academy status was a straightforward task; however, to discern further which headteachers might self-identify as Christian was more complex. Such a disclosure might only emerge through their recruitment process, conversation at training events or school visits, or be information I had gleaned through personal and professional relationships or from knowledge held by colleagues.

As a tool to support my work and responsibilities within the diocese, I have access to a Contact Management System (CMS) which summarises named contacts and roles within parishes. Due to some hesitancy around making an assumption about the faith position of church school leaders, I decided to search this database for individuals who were headteachers, but also held positions within a parish, which would suggest active membership of an Anglican church and a commitment to its Christian life. This information on roles is publicly available via individual parish websites, thus I determined that such an action was a reasonable and intentional use of an available search tool, rather than an undertaking which could be perceived as accessing privileged information.

This search procedure resulted in a list of three schools, which I supplemented with two further possibilities where I had knowledge of the headteacher having regularly attended either an Anglican or other denominational church, although with some uncertainty about present commitment to a Christian congregation. I acknowledge that this created inevitable limitations on my sample; additionally, it is worth noting that the final pairs of participants consisted of two men of similar ages with young families and two women with an age difference of approximately 15 years, one being close to retirement. During the sessions and interviews, it also transpired that both priests were qualified teachers.

4.1.2 Selecting School R

As an introductory note, the reference to each school as 'School R' or 'School P' is to maintain confidentiality. I chose to refer to them using a letter from my surname - it does not denote the initial letter of the school's name.

For School R, the headteacher met the latter criteria of familiarity with the Anglican tradition and known previous attendance, although I was unaware of any present commitment to a church. However, I chose to approach her first as she holds a strong reputation and profile as a church school leader, engaging proactively with diocesan networks and training on Christian character and vision. I sent an introductory email accompanied by a participant information sheet (see Appendix A), and on receipt of a positive response arranged a telephone call to describe the research process and likely commitment further, as well as answer any queries. I followed the same process with the parish priest, then facilitated arrangements for the first session via joint emails, leaving decisions on timing and venue to the participants themselves. I was interested in the rationale behind their choices, which could feature and be explored in later interviews.

Initial communications suggested a willingness of both participants to meet either at the vicarage or at the school. To fit in with after-school clubs and mindful of needing a confidential space, they settled on meeting in the headteacher's office in the school.

4.1.3 Selecting School P

During the process of selecting participants, School P was about to embark on a unique chaplaincy arrangement with the parish in which the school was situated. The aspiration for the role was to explore common mission and ministry opportunities in service to the children and families associated with the school and within the wider community. Administratively, it would be rooted in the usual tenure for parish priests holding fixed-term positions, but unusually would be funded by both parish and school budgets.

This felt sufficient to meet the parameters for selection outlined above, however I also made use of CMS as a search tool, which indicated that the headteacher held a formal position relating to parish finances, thus confirming his connection to a local Anglican church. I decided to invite the priest and headteacher to participate and independent email communication was established, although it took a period of four months to obtain co-ordinating responses. Gladly, both agreed to involvement in the study and a date for the first session was agreed, the participants choosing to meet at the rectory.

4.2 Practical research method: planning the sessions

4.2.1 An overview of the sessions

Session 1

Prior to each of the first sessions I prepared individual resources for the research participants (outlined in Chapter 3, Section 3.5.2) and planned an outline of the session for my own reference. This was to ensure that administrative and ethical requirements were covered and that I could follow the intended content and structure, the core intention being to discern the focus for discussion, exploring a 'current reality' for the participants in their context. Key elements of the running of the session were as follows:

i. Securing consent from the participants: an opportunity to discuss, read through and sign standardised consent forms
ii. Sharing the research questions and the overall research process
iii. An explanation of the four-phase cycle of the *Doing Theology Spiral*, on which the sessions and overall research method are structured. I emphasised that participants could progress in one direction through the Spiral or revisit any of the stages; movement through the cycle was their decision, with guidance if requested.
iv. An overview of the first and subsequent sessions

Sessions 2-4

After a relatively structured first session, I imagined the subsequent sessions as being semi-flexible; using whatever time participants had available, but not actively proposing an agenda or time allocation for any phase of the discussion. Interestingly it transpired, through a combination of natural breaks in participant conversation and phases within the framework used, that the sessions for each pair of research participants followed the same pattern:

Session 2 An extended conversation exploring the issue or focus

Session 3 A continuation of the extended conversation, confirming the response to the issue discussed, followed by reflection on the process and experience (a discussion facilitated by the researcher)

Session 4 Individual interviews

4.2.2 Planning for interviews

Prior to the third session with each pair of participants, where I would begin to hear their immediate insights into the process of inquiry and theological reflection, it was important to work through the transcriptions and recordings of the first two sessions. I sought to gather my own reflections, mindful of employing an iterative design process which requires the researcher to be responsive and adapt to changes or new circumstances within the field. My objective was to determine a set of questions for the interview with both participants, and begin to draft possible questions for individual interviews, deciding which might be most appropriate in each context.

I supported this activity during the data collection phase with further reading on interviewing for qualitative research. I was reminded that the key to my interviews would rest not only 'upon the interviewers' skills and situated personal judgement in the posing of questions' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p.82), but also active listening and the depth of my topic knowledge from which to craft subsequent questions when following up an interviewee's answers. Employing a method of semi-structured interviews would require setting out a possible set of questions and topics, drawn from my research focus and participants' responses to date, yet without a rigid set of procedures or sequence – and supplemented by a confidence in asking second questions. I also considered the format of the questions; whether the research focus would lead 'to questions concerned with *facts,* with *behaviour,* and with *belief* or *attitudes*' (Robson and McCartan, 2016 p.286).

Each element of the interview should be imagined as helping to answer the research questions, although I noted advice not to ask the research questions directly (Silverman, 2015), instead intentionally translating them into interviewer questions. Consequently, I prepared a guide with default wording for questions and an idea of the topics to be covered, which could be modified depending on the progress and direction of the interview and responses. I included ideas of possible probes and prompts and focused on open questions for depth and flexibility. An example of a set of interview questions is included in Appendix B.

4.3 Field notes and reflections: School R

4.3.1 Session 1: Current reality

I was perhaps most apprehensive about this aspect of the first session; allowing participants to discern the focus for conversation and reflection independently, whilst keen that the question or issue emerging was manageable, relevant to developing leadership priorities for Christian vision and ethos and agreed by both participants as a 'current reality' (Green, 2009) for the school.

I noted however that the discussion advanced steadily and confidently, and my contribution became twofold. It encompassed periodic prompting that acted as a brief plenary, confirming evolving questions and lines of inquiry, and also holding a space (which sometimes encompassed silence) that allowed the participants to engage in conversation, sharing their experience across church and school and linking common threads.

4.3.2 Sustaining the narrative

Once the participants' initial lines of inquiry were formed, it seemed appropriate to create a connection to the following session and overall narrative. I supported them in following the practical research method; firstly, by asking where they might look for evidence, data or literature between the sessions and secondly by affirming a sense of continuity and inclusiveness. Sessions were distinct and linear in terms of time, but the narrative could

be developed and sustained through reflective journal writing, contributions between, during or after sessions and the availability of audio recordings to support reflection on the process and experience.

Session 1 concluded with a review of the outline and intentions for the second session, agreement on venue and date, and to avoid delay, circulation by email of the audio recording.

4.3.3 Session 2: Extended conversation

The planning and design for Session 2 was minimal, since the aim was to allow time for participants to be immersed in the 'exploration' stage of the cycle of reflection, through extended conversation, factual analysis and considering questions. The session commenced with a brief refresh on the cycle and I sought understanding on the usefulness of sharing the recording of the first session for reflection between sessions.

I used field notes made during the session to identify themes that might prove of interest during the third session and individual interviews, which at this stage included:

- Participant engagement with the chosen focus between sessions, including listening to recordings and sourcing evidence and documentation
- How accessible participants (and other adults mentioned) found theological language and concepts, and the nature of their engagement with the school's Christian vision
- Perceptions of who holds expertise in the language of Christian ethos and vision

The participants recognised the point in the session at which 'exploration' had reached a natural lull, so it was decided collectively that it would be useful to allow time prior to the next session to listen back to the audio recording and reflect further on the discussion. The third session would therefore commence with participants again sitting awhile in the 'respond' phase of the cycle; a chance to review their proposed actions and responses before commenting on the process.

4.3.4 Session 3: Reviewing response and actions, paired interview

Session 3 began with deliberations from the previous recording, to identify anything which might have led to further reflection. After this, I guided the participants in clarifying the actions and responses that would complete the cycle of theological reflection, leading them to a 'new situation' (Green, 2009).

This was followed by the semi-structured interview with both participants. The interview topics covered the process of inquiry, their experience of theological reflection within the cycle and questions relating to the development of a leadership priority connected to Christian vision and ethos. I also included possible follow-up questions exploring themes I felt might be emerging: how discussion might be deemed as 'theologically informed', the use of Christian language, identifying shared experiences and the benefit of listening to recordings. The interview section concluded with an opportunity for participants to elaborate on or amend their responses. I confirmed that I would again provide a transcript of the session, with an invitation to update or amend the narrative, then we arranged times for the individual interviews.

Afterwards, I recognised that there had been a few moments and responses during the interview which felt a little frustrating, principally on occasions when participants repeated previous discussion or lines of thinking. There were also occasions when I sensed that questions had been misinterpreted, or that I had perhaps lost the thread of conversation. Yet these characteristics are important in the assembly of narrative, helping participants to locate or clarify their thinking; an interviewer's question must be treated 'not as (possibly distorted) gateways to the authentic account but as part of the process through which a narrative is collectively assembled' (Silverman, 2015, p.102).

Mindful of scaffolding this building of narrative, I revisited the audio recordings and transcripts prior to the individual interviews, reflecting on the clarity of questioning and whether my language and the way I framed questions adequately supported the intention of the questioning. My field notes also provided a rich source for determining factors to help critique the 'quality' of the interview in terms of the suitability and flow

of questions; whether I was picking up adequately from what participants were saying and therefore whether my questions enabled flexibility to expand on emerging themes.

Are you doing theology?

One of the promptest reactions to a question, which at the time felt like an incredibly pivotal moment in terms of perceptions of theological conversation, was the headteacher's response to whether they had been 'doing theology' throughout these sessions. She offered a firm 'no'! I am aware that I responded with a (slightly defensive) recollection of mentioning the framework of Ordinary Theology in one of our earlier sessions. Was this a response to my personal view being disturbed?

Interestingly, it became a route, prompted by the priest, into both participants exploring the concept of theology as everyday and practical, and drew me to thinking about people's definitions and perceptions of the term 'theology'. Discovering a narrative about reactions to (and understanding of) the word proved to be significant in drawing out considerations for a new approach for priests and headteachers to work together theologically in relation to Christian vision and ethos (see Chapter 7).

4.3.5 Session 4: Individual interviews

Prior to the paired interview, I was still uncertain as to the precise way I would approach an analysis of the data of recorded conversations and interviews. However, themes were emerging such as a divergence in each participant's understanding of theology, and a commonality of experience across school staff and the church congregation regarding people's hesitation over aspects of Christian language. In addition, I was aware that whilst the headteacher had spoken for a greater percentage of the time during the sessions, the priest had played an important role as a partner in dialogue.

I reflected that my analysis could initially map each participant's path through the sessions, capturing an individual story before seeking to discern themes across the separate narratives. This would honour each participant's story, focus on their particular contributions, highlight any revelations about their cultural habitus and

identify whether their narratives expressed commonalities from within the shared community of School R.

To anticipate this kind of themed narrative analysis, my planning for individual interviews imagined the character of narrative interviewing as both assembling a narrative (Silverman, 2015) and capturing a story rather than general answers (Clandinin, 2016). As researcher, I should 'give the subjects ample freedom and time to unfold their own stories, and follow up with questions to shed light on the main episodes and characters in their narratives' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p.131). Consequently, I designed an instrumental dialogue that would encourage both description (such as explanation, interpretation and reporting) and specificity (providing detail relating to certain examples and experiences).

From listening through the recordings, I identified several topics through which individuals' stories might unfold:

- individuals' professional, personal or ministry paths – how did they get where they are now?
- reflections on discerning and understanding the 'current reality' (Green, 2009) or focus for discussion
- exploring people's knowledge and familiarity with Christian language, including their confidence in its use (in either the church or school context)
- reflections on their role and contribution to the conversations – did they feel ownership of the emerging actions?
- perceptions of the word 'theology', does it feel accessible?

Practically, the interviews were scheduled to occur within two weeks of the third session, to maintain a flow for the narrative and allow sufficient time for reflection. However, this chronology was amended due to the priest requiring recovery time from a medical procedure.

At this mid-point of the data collection phase, I noted some lines of enquiry to pursue, both in engaging with the second pair of research participants and the overall analysis

of all participants' experiences and conversations. These were to explore the role and value of the audio recording, including sharing the recording with participants immediately afterwards, in addition to the function of my presence during the reflective activity, which seemed to be facilitative rather than intrusive. Discussion around these points can be found in Chapter 6 (Sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.5).

4.4 Field notes and reflections: School P

4.4.1 Session 1: *Current reality*

The participants began a conversation about their current reality and experience with ease, an echo perhaps of corresponding discussions they were already having about the relatively new chaplaincy post and its connectivity into the leadership and activity of the school. They made references to the development of the school as a hub of community, creating spaces and experiences to help the community connect with the sacred, and of new groups for prayer and exploring Christianity.

Shortly after the session, I listened to the audio recording alongside the transcript to reflect on my contribution and the overall discussion. My instinct was that it had proceeded in a similar way to the equivalent session at School R; in terms of field notes, I had logged key phrases and summarised headlines on emerging themes, anecdotes and experiences to ensure that I was able to give plenary information or clarify if required. By the close of the session, the participants had also agreed that they would either focus on the staff (providing space for spiritual reflection and developing their confidence in leading worship) or on creating opportunities for adults to worship alongside children.

I also noted that in places I had strayed slightly from the more scripted elements of my planning outline, for example I used the participants' aide-memoire rather than my notes to outline the purpose of each stage of the cycle. In addition, I had used questions to guide the participants' dialogue, seeking to clarify rather than affirm their lines of inquiry. I wonder whether I was intuitively trying to prepare for the second session, capturing the lines of inquiry to sustain focus and to facilitate or even prompt movement

through the cycle of reflection? Participant contributions certainly felt open and inquisitive, covering a broad range of issues; on re-reading the transcript, I made the decision to abridge the document, as the final 15 minutes of recording were tangential to the research questions and the preceding discussion.

4.4.2 Session 2: Extended conversation

Further to my reflections on the first session, and as a reassurance to myself that participants had received appropriate, accurate instructions, I prepared a slightly more comprehensive recap of the current realities and experiences that were discussed, alongside a brief refresh on the cycle of reflection, editing some of the wording on the aide-memoire to offer clarity on the process. I emphasised that the first, 'experience' phase was anecdotal, and that participants should determine one aspect to explore, accompanied now by an analysis of facts, documents or policy.

During the session I was conscious of waiting for participants to initiate or reference movement through the cycle, recognising 'the challenge of ensuring that the purpose of the research was aligned to the narration while, at the same time, making adequate space for narrative flow and accuracy' (Costa, Burke and Murphy, 2019, p.26). Reviewing the audio recording, it was interesting to note how the reflection phase continued after a response and actions had been decided; the participants continued questioning and discussing practicalities, still focused on the agreed theme.

4.4.3 Session 3: Reviewing response and actions, paired interview

The participants affirmed their intent to create regular opportunities for children and their parents and wider family to worship together, where possible centred around festivals in the Christian calendar. The logistics had been considered in a meeting within school, and a date set to celebrate Candlemas during Collective Worship, so the first contributions to the discussion reviewed progress ahead of the event. This was followed by some reflection on other possibilities of engaging families within the church setting, which offered an opening to introduce some of the questions prepared for the semi-structured interview.

For consistency, interview topics drew on the key themes of theological conversation, vision and ethos and the framework provided by the *Doing Theology Spiral*, with potential follow-up questions. These would explore: whether participants considered their discussion to be theologically informed, their experience of the 'reflection' element of the cycle, the expertise they felt they brought from their role and what ministry they were trying to establish jointly with local families and the community.

At the conclusion of the interview, participants were offered an opportunity to amend or say something more about their responses, and we confirmed arrangements for the individual interviews, which by coincidence would take place after the Collective Worship for Candlemas planned during the sessions.

4.4.4 Individual interviews

Reviewing the audio recordings from the sessions, it became apparent that there were several common themes, but also some references or comments through which participants' individual stories might unfold.

I decided to begin each interview by asking about participants' professional, personal or ministry paths, as this provided rich information in School R relating to context, personal values and dispositions. Interviews then explored the concept of the school as the hub of community, an aspiration both participants expressed, followed by more distinct lines of inquiry.

For the priest, additional topics examined the issues of respect, authority and hierarchy within a school, including whether the experience might feel different for the priest (as chaplain) and headteacher. I also explored his role in developing the conversation around children and parents worshipping together, and his use of the word 'invitational' when describing an approach to engaging children and families with spiritual matters. In terms of the process of inquiry, I sought to understand whether he felt that it encouraged thinking about God; prompted by comments he made in Session 3 about whether participants had reflected enough on scripture, been rooted in the Bible and open to the Holy Spirit.

During the interview with the headteacher, I asked him whether he felt there was a difference between his and the priest's role in developing faith and discipleship within the school, and how he felt about introducing new spiritual practices and engaging parents in worship. I also sought to understand specific relational aspects: the idea of *equitable* dialogue, what was distinctive about the process of inquiry and reflection being undertaken with the chaplain, and whether the latter had influenced both his spiritual life and the spiritual life of the school.

On the day, the headteacher chose to fit the interview around other management responsibilities and the rhythm of the school day, meeting in his office on site. However, it was uninterrupted and unhurried, achieving the scope I had set out, and was followed by a similarly rewarding interview with the priest at the rectory. Summaries from these interviews are found in Chapter 5 (Sections 5.3.4 and 5.4.4).

4.5 Developing an approach to data analysis: an introduction

The key to developing a coherent data analysis approach was to ensure consistency with the methodology of narrative theological inquiry, both tracking the participants' journey through the data collection phase and securing understanding of their conversation and commentary. I therefore needed to decide whether I was concerned with studying the dynamics of verbal interaction, the semantics and structure of narration, tracking discourse or taking a wholly topic-centred approach. Primarily, I was interested in the events and experiences described by participants. I was seeking to uncover patterns and connections through their reflections on Christian tradition, lived experience and a discerned school leadership issue – and was somewhat less concerned with (but not discounting) technicalities and people's methods of producing the interactions.

To develop this, it made sense to ascertain whether I was adopting a naturalist or constructionist approach, or a mixed model. A naturalist approach treats narratives as a medium through which the lives of the storytellers emerge (Squire et al., 2014). This can be illustrated particularly in relation to interview data; for the naturalist approach, participants' responses may describe either facts (external reality) or feelings (internal experience), for which it is possible to check accuracy via triangulation (Silverman,

2017). Adopting a naturalist approach means that data analysis will be happening throughout the process of data collection; 'the fluid and emergent nature of naturalistic inquiry makes the distinction between data gathering and analysis far less absolute' (Patton, 2015, p.630). Furthermore, it involves being mindful of testing the appropriateness of the method of data analysis, i.e. is it suggesting appropriate questions, and is the theoretical perspective working well? (Silverman, 2017).

Alternatively, in a constructionist approach, narratives are analysed as a means of social construction (Squire et al., 2014). For example, the approach 'treats interview data as accessing various stories or narratives through which people describe their world' (Silverman, 2017, p.327). Thus, one might expect to hear a range of voices from a single respondent, understanding that 'we are active narrators who weave skilful, appropriately located, stories' (Silverman, 2017, p.329).

I took a pragmatic view that my analysis should examine the narrative aspect of stories and data through both naturalist and constructionist approaches. Within my study, the data collection phase of group sessions, interviews and reflection is predicated on a topic-centred narrative, that brings recount or snapshots of events into an ongoing discussion. Meanwhile, I am also seeking to discover knowledge which may have features of being contextual, conversational, relational, linguistic or socially constructed in interactions (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

4.6 Terms, definitions and using codes

Prior to explaining how I reached decisions about my data analysis approach, I will outline the terms and definitions used, followed by a description of the practical application of analysis on the transcripts from each session.

4.6.1 Terms and definitions

Codes	Codes consisted of a category, subcategories and elements to define the subject or intention of sections of participants' contributions. For example, T/DE/SCH represented the category of 'theology', subcategory of 'definition' and an element of defining theology which refers to scholarly or academic study (See Example Code List at Appendix D).
Annotations	Annotations were my reflections and explanations written in the margins of the transcripts (See example at Appendix E).
Canonical narrative	The 'big picture' narrative revealed by participants within the process - the reality and issue they were exploring.
Key narrative	Equivalent to the term 'theme'; a recurring or repeated theme identifiable within a personal narrative (Boyatzis, 1998).

4.6.2 Using codes

The application of codes to transcripts was central to my data analysis. These codes were a process tool, not analytical headings – a mechanism for decision-making to consider and uncover individual narratives. I used annotations and codes to explore the text, a way of being able to discern and voice the individual narratives as well as helping recurring, 'big picture' narratives come to the fore. This distinguishes the approach from grounded theory, which develops theoretical ideas in careful steps (Crotty, 1998) and has explicit procedures for the analysis of qualitative data, moving back and forth between field and analysis, continuing until 'categories' are saturated with data. Equally, I did not want to predetermine all codes for analysis, but to allow some to arise through the language used in participant responses.

I developed codes differently, depending on their application. For the process of inquiry followed by participants in Sessions 1-3, codes were linked to key questions, the phases

of the cycle of reflection (Experience, Explore, Reflect, Respond), the conceptual framework of Ordinary Theology and Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field (Bourdieu, 1977). Codes for the semi-structured and individual interviews were linked closely to the thrust of each question.

I endeavoured to achieve a balance between pre-determined codes and ones which reflected participants' language and expression, being constructed from their words (through reading and re-reading the transcriptions), which could open up a broader analysis of the data. Key to the process of coding was being able to map the account of each individual, reflecting an aspect of narrative study in which themes could be connected to form a storyline (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

I analysed data sequentially, i.e. according to the chronology of sessions and interviews with the participants, in order to capture the developing narrative from each individual and school. My preference was to code contributions from individuals first, to focus on their individual narrative, then examine connections between the transcripts as to how the key narratives had emerged for each school.

The sequence of coding and analysis was:

- Code [Headteacher, School R] and write their narrative
- Code [Priest, School R] and write their narrative
- Create a summary of key narratives across School R
- Code [Headteacher, School P] and write their narrative
- Code [Priest, School P] and write their narrative
- Create a summary of key narratives across School P

For each transcript I read through the whole text, thinking about any underlying meaning and writing memos or annotations in the margins. I kept a list of emerging categories, applying or creating subcategories and elements as appropriate. As a guide to how much text should be selected when coding data, I considered it adequate where the data was relatively self-sufficient (even where the context was not fully clear),

conveyed meaning that made a coherent point, or was a distinct element within a narration (Dey, 1993).

On completion of this phase, I reviewed each school's code list including abbreviations (i.e. the code name) and re-read the transcripts. This was to ascertain whether any new categories, subcategories or elements could be identified. I compared the code lists, canonical narratives and key narratives for each school, noting any clear interrelationships; this was in preparation for developing conclusions about the process and for considering the findings within a new approach to theological conversation. I was aware that this would require a decision about making connections; whether they would be defined by concurrence (consistent or common codes or narratives), or whether connections would be based on hunches and hypotheses emerging from the analysis (Dey, 1993).

4.7 Principles of Data Analysis

In determining an approach to data analysis, I discerned two distinct stages or layers. Firstly, a phase of narrative analysis to identify themes and context, followed by an interpretation of the uncovered narrative. The second stage of interpretation is then about attaching significance; inferring, illuminating the hidden and explaining irregularity (Patton, 2015).

This approach is underpinned by the following principles:

i. To understand situated meaning and undertake a close examination of narratives in context.

This facilitates the role of acting as a 'hearer' in relation to the cultural context or tradition (Schreiter, 1985), interpreting how a message interacts with the environment. Since the context of this study is paired discussion and reflection between priests and headteachers, I sought to hear how their narrative was indicating theological reflection, attentive to the social context and background from which each narrator was drawing. In addition, I was mindful 'that 'local contexts' (meaning the immediate context in which

the interview takes place, including the interviewer-interviewee relationship) and wider, societal contexts are inextricably linked' (Phoenix, 2013, p.74).

On a practical level, the aspect of understanding meaning also implies making decisions on whether discourse and/or content analysis would be undertaken on the data set, as well as the extent to which I would examine paralanguage and visual elements in narrative. Discourse analysis is primarily hermeneutic and maintains a strong linguistic character (Wodak and Meyer, 2001, Gee, 1999), whereas content analysis requires detailed coding and the establishment of unambiguous and explicit rules for category definition (Stemler, 2001). Additionally, I would need to pay attention to small stories (encounters and interactions, almost in passing) and broader stories, making sure that analysis was attentive not simply to what participants (as narrators) said, but how they drew on wider cultural connections (Phoenix, 2013).

ii. To consider insights from Bourdieu's constructs of habitus, capital and field in exploring the dynamics and content of each conversation.

The constructs of habitus and capital have been expressed as category entitlement (Phoenix, 2013); a way of establishing authority to speak on a particular topic within interview and discussion through positioning or self-disclosure, drawing on experience or identity. Habitus holds key ideas of agency and embodiment, an important factor in understanding considerations for designing a new approach to theological conversation and reflection for priests and headteachers. Would participants demonstrate a predisposition to act in particular ways, with these dispositions representing or emerging from opportunities and restrictions which characterise their previous life experiences (Reay, 2004)?

Throughout the process of data collection and analysis, I needed to maintain an awareness that participants might be shaping responses such that they 'actively determine, on the basis of these socially and historically constituted categories of perception and appreciation, the situation that determines them' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.136). Furthermore, it was necessary to keep alert to any potential connectivity between their occupation of the fields of education and theology, their

position and possession of power or capital, and any profit or advantage that might be available to them within that structure (Bourdieu and Wacqaunt, 1992).

iii. To examine canonical and key narratives

A canonical narrative is a big picture narrative or social/cultural understanding; applied within this study, a focus on the participants' current reality or issue relating to school vision and ethos. Relating this understanding to the Christian faith and tradition would help to 'illuminate how narrators draw upon contextual understandings, including of the listeners to their narratives' (Phoenix, 2013, p.75). The key narrative aspect is a recurrent theme or repeated narrative, embedded in a personal narrative and through which a canonical narrative might be discussed, with associated claims linked to identity or beliefs. How each participant makes meaning and constructs identities 'indicates how key narratives can direct researchers to research participants' concerns and local and wider narrative contexts' (Phoenix, 2013, p.79).

4.8 A narrative thematic analysis

I describe my approach as following a narrative thematic analysis, appreciating that narrative carries meaning, with some contextual, historical and social limitations on how it might be understood. This approach focuses 'on themes that develop across stories, rather than just on themes that can be picked out from stories' (Squire et al., 2014, p.9), thus creating a balance between a theory and data-driven approach.

My aspiration was to retain a sense of a single, coherent narrative, looking at each participant's responses from sessions or interviews as a complete entity. Socio-cultural analysis would examine the broad frameworks used by participants to understand or interpret incidents and episodes within their lives (Grbich, 2007) - in this study, centred on theological reflection in connection with school leadership issues, rather than a personal story. In addition, I also sought to identify dispositions and social context; maintaining some element of examining the organisation and dynamics of verbal interaction, although more in the sense of structuring meaning and any evidence of 'habitus' and 'capital' revealed by each participant.

This application of Bourdieu's constructs within the study would not simply explore participants' dispositions and agency, which may influence their capacity or willingness to contribute to theological discussion. It would also examine what narratives revealed about their occupation of the educational or religious field, or their interaction with related structures. An example of this would be to discern whether anything in the analysis revealed information about the context for either participant in terms of professional or ministerial training, or their role and the institution with which it is connected. I also recognise that some form of competition might exist within the field and that 'the hierarchy of the different species of capital (economic, social, cultural, symbolic) varies across the various fields' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p.98), depending on how that species of capital might be employed and its overall benefit or volume.

I intended to achieve two key outcomes in this area within the analysis. Firstly, a consideration of the positions revealed by the participants in either field; interpreting their point of view, how they sought to produce or create effects and any struggle for authority, equality or dominance. Secondly, an analysis of the habitus of each participant, or dispositions they brought. In addition, I planned to look at the functional qualities of each individual's contribution, in terms of what it served to emphasise or illustrate. Were there moral tales to discover, or success stories, or clues as to how participants were telling, framing and making sense of particular experiences? (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Similarly, I wished to be attentive to chronicling, particularly in the retelling of participants' careers or ministry paths - what were the key events, key social actors and influences?

4.9 Winnowing data for analysis

The idea of 'winnowing' data (Creswell and Creswell, 2018) highlights a practical point about whether or not to reduce the raw information used for analysis. I wanted to ensure in-depth contact and familiarity with the data, but was conscious about the volume of transcripts and the implication of affecting the overall narrative if any parts of the data were disregarded. However, I was using a blended rather than purely data-driven approach, which meant choosing not to create a statistical commentary about

differentiation between themes. I was interested more broadly in the whole narrative, with different themes emerging that might inform a new approach to theological reflection for priests and headteachers. I therefore made some decisions about editing small segments of the audio recordings prior to transcription, where discussion was tangential to the participants' agreed issues and associated discussion.

4.10 An approach to categories and coding

4.10.1 The coding process

Boyatzis (1998) offers a helpful and workable set of definitions for categorisation and coding. He describes the process of thematic analysis as encoding qualitative information, a *theme* being found in the information as a categorised or directly observable pattern and a *code* as the list of themes. For consistency, I have adapted these terms to sustain an emphasis on narrative (see Section 4.6.1).

The process of coding data involves organising data for analysis and generating concepts from and with it as an aid to interpretation. The intention is to open up an inquiry, raise questions and move towards an interpretation, which is an essential procedure within the analytical framework. This opening up, rather than simplifying data, is to increase the scope and dimensions for analysis (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996).

Coding also allows the researcher to explore possible categories and narratives with discipline and direction, alert to the level of detail being taken into account. Dey (1993) describes three broad levels in terms of approaching the coding and categorisation process: to get a general comprehension of the issues (holistic), a common-sense categorisation that allows for either refinement or linking (middle-order) or a more time-consuming, detailed approach.

Equally, a researcher must recognise and decide where coding sits on the continuum between being theory-driven or data-driven. Theory-driven codes emerge 'from the theorist's construction of the meaning and style of communication or expression of the elements of theory' (Boyatzis, 1998, p.33). These have the advantage of being

consistent, beginning with a particular framework or view, although they are 'relatively more sensitive to projection on the part of the researcher and to the impact of his or her cultural bias' (Boyatzis, 1998, p.35).

I endeavoured to secure a balance along this continuum: between code lists derived from session and interview transcripts and those emerging from the research literature and conceptual framework of Ordinary Theology. I also acknowledged that some variables had already been identified through the research questions, including the degree of participants' understanding of theology and theological reflection and their perception of mission and ministry within the context of the church school community.

4.10.2 Code definitions

Codes are fluid in that their organisation may change as ideas develop, leading to reordering. They are tools to accompany thinking (Coffey and Atkinson, 1987) and in which 'flexibility is required to accommodate fresh observations and new directions in the analysis' (Dey, 1993, p.111).

I was careful that labels within the codes did not require a conceptual step from the raw data; this would imply interpretation, which happens during the application rather than the development of a code (Boyatzis, 1998). One way to mitigate this risk would be to consider working with an initial sample of transcripts to test labels and definitions (Rubin and Rubin, 2012); however, with a relatively small sample of transcripts (five per school) I decided to proceed chronologically through the sessions, but allowing for a review of codes prior to drawing conclusions.

To work out consistent definitions for codes, Boyatzis (1998) suggests applying five elements: labelling, securing a definition, a clear description so that the code can be recognised in transcripts, knowing what is excluded from the code and finally framing an example. Subsequently, a coding procedure can be applied to structure the task of coding, organise a system and develop pools of meaning (Tesch, 1990). This is carefully layered, so that the researcher begins with grasping a sense of the meaning of the data,

followed by listing or clustering subcategories or elements, then moving to grouping these into categories and showing key narratives and interrelationships.

4.10.3 Annotation of transcripts

Researcher notes, as annotations in the margins of transcripts, can help to reflect on process or consider how personal experience may shape the interpretation of results. I opted to use annotations as they are a key element of reflexivity, plus could help to shape development of key narratives and codes. Moreover, the use of memos or annotations offers a freer, more creative mode for analysis, involving recording insights against the data – and I considered it worth combining this approach with a more disciplined coding to 'continue to capture the impressions, insights and intuitions which provide us with fresh perspectives and new directions for analysis' (Dey, 1993, p.93). I have included examples of annotated transcripts at Appendix E.

4.10.4 Categorisation

When seeking to define categories and other classifications within codes, it is advisable not necessarily 'to begin with our own categories at the outset but to understand participants' categories' (Silverman, 2017, p.323). In practice, labelling terms will then often reflect their actual language (Creswell and Creswell, 2018), which lead to categories and key narratives for analysis. It is also possible to use an opening list of preselected codes prior to the coding process which accord with research literature, key questions and the theoretical framework (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). A key question for my study was whether to use just codes emerging from information, or any pre-determined codes, or a combination.

Essentially, each category must be meaningful and rooted in data. Pre-determined categories will reflect the original research questions and prior reading of relevant literature, whilst others emerge through review and annotation of data and are subject to amendment, redefinition or extension. Overall, when creating or refining category distinctions, a researcher must be able to say confidently 'that these distinctions are

sufficiently grounded conceptually and empirically to form a useful framework for analysis' (Dey, 1993, p.105).

4.11 Chapter summary

This chapter explored the practical outworking of my research method, focusing on the selection of participants, the data collection phase of the study and my approach to data analysis. I explained the structure and rationale of the sessions with participants and indicated how field notes and reflections helped in adapting and developing the data collection process, in addition to my approach to conducting individual interviews and my role and contribution as researcher.

I also presented a coherent data analysis approach; one that was designed to support a narrative theological inquiry methodology, and which required an analysis of the participants' conversation and commentary. This approach encompassed a process of coding, designed to uncover patterns and connections within individual narratives and experiences and to capture how participants discerned leadership priorities. Meaning could then be derived through a process of narrative thematic analysis, which would provide insight into the process of inquiry and participants' experiences - and forms the substance of Chapter 6.

To provide insight in advance of the thematic analysis, in the next chapter I summarise the narratives from each school to demonstrate the varied perspectives from individuals, supported by specific evidence and quotations (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p.194).

CHAPTER 5

Summary narratives

Guidance note on referencing:
Both Chapters 5 and 6 reference documents which are transcripts of the sessions and interviews. These documents are not included in full within the Appendices, however I have recorded the relevant references below and appended the transcription protocol and one example of an interview transcription (Appendix C) as well as two examples of annotated transcripts (Appendix E).

Documents for School R	***Documents for School P***
3.1 – Session 1	*3.6 – Session 1*
3.2 – Session 2	*3.7 – Session 2*
3.3 – Session 3	*3.8 – Session 3*
3.4 – Individual interview (headteacher)	*3.9 – Individual interview (priest)*
3.5 – Individual interview (priest)	*3.10 – Individual interview (headteacher)*

Introduction

The summary narratives from each school seek to capture what was generated by the methodological process. I have separated the narratives of priest and headteacher to provide a sense of representation, i.e. the different meanings, experiences and voices that were captured in the data (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996).

School R

5.1 The Headteacher's narrative

5.1.1 Session 1: Introduction and exploring the current reality

At the commencement of the first session, the headteacher presented a clear line of thinking about staff confidence in articulating the Christian vision and using Christian language, suggesting that this was connected with their position in terms of personal

faith and their levels of 'knowledge' of the vocabulary required to explain the school's Christian vision and its rationale. She was solution-focused, also acknowledging that 'there's nothing wrong with them [staff] believing whatever they want to believe, because that's the whole point of a church school' (Document 3.1, line 89).

Several ideas and questions surfaced during this early dialogue, indicating the nature of some key narratives which could develop. These included expectations around staff and governors in upholding the school vision and how this relates to a personal faith or privately held belief. The headteacher signalled support for the idea of signing up to the school's vision as a governor, employee or parent; mentioning SIAMS, the diocese and the Church of England as both external influences and sources of what is expected if one is to understand the vision, ethos and practice of CE schools.

The headteacher described her previous church school leadership experience, including an appointment in a different diocese. Her narrative indicated a higher proportion of staff who were practising Christians and an environment in which more overt Christian activities and expressions felt characteristic of the school. She revealed something of her perception of theology; as the teaching of biblical knowledge and discovering and understanding underlying meaning, more than simply hearing the language or repeating specific words and phrases.

Recognising the need to empower staff and make the school's vision accessible, the headteacher also acknowledged the dilemma of creating shared conversations about vision which could cause discomfort for those feeling inferior in their comprehension of matters of faith. She considered a number of practical actions, whilst recognising that the task was to think about process. Encouragement to draw on statements or documentation relating to SIAMS then led her to reference the *Church of England Vision for Education* (The Church of England Education Office, 2016), 'What is the aspiration? Where are we aiming for? There must be something in the Vision for Education… something that talks about the vision being shared and articulated' (Document 3.1, line 546).

The headteacher expressed a clear aspiration of staff feeling at ease talking about vision and associated Christian language, acknowledging that they must be equipped appropriately, yet knowing that this may put staff out of their comfort zone. She gave an example of a recent experience of improvisation during staff music training – 'if they can't do that, they're not going to talk about their perception and understanding of salvation are they?' (Document 3.1, line 730).

5.1.2 Session 2: An extended conversation

The headteacher had undertaken some preparation between sessions which was aligned with the 'Explore' phase of the supporting structure for conversation. She recapped on the current reality discussed previously and drew attention to the section in the *Church of England Vision for Education* (The Church of England Education Office, 2016) that summarises its Christian inspiration; not necessarily recognising it at this stage as a theological voice speaking into education, but reflecting on its potential within the big picture narrative of engaging the school community in articulating vision. She highlights a reference to John's gospel and Jesus' gathering of disciples, noting that 'His first words to his disciples were the fundamental question, for any learning community, what are you looking for? What are you searching for?' (Document 3.2, line 38).

Developing how the *Church of England Vision for Education* document might be used in engaging staff, the headteacher recognised her leadership responsibility of embedding the discussion about vision and how it should underpin school policy and practice. She applied this to specific examples including policies for induction and performance management, suggesting how by modelling the use of language and questions she could engage in one-to-one discussions with staff within established processes. These would be 'at a very simple level about the vision… how do you want to contribute to making sure that we are developing life in all its fullness. What would you want to offer? What would you want to develop? What is it we can do for you that feels like you're flourishing?' (Document 3.2, line 172).

The headteacher also reflected on how the school's vision could be explored through staff training; by securing additional feedback from staff about the SIAMS inspection

experience, then enabling groups to explore what the school's Christian vision and heritage might mean to staff in different roles. She wondered whether this would facilitate engaging with the vision at a deeper level, making people more at ease because it applies to roles rather than studies words, with a further comment that 'Just by going over the vision again and again is not going to make people feel more comfortable about it' (Document 3.2, line 382).

Whilst pausing to consider which phase of the cycle the participants had reached, the headteacher reflected on the process of conversation which had prompted other lines of thinking and potential actions. A comment about headteacher appraisal framed the peculiarity of her individual experience within the rich, overall narrative of empowerment and how vision should underpin policy and practice: 'we have all this lovely discussion, we won't do data targets except for the headteacher. You can still have one. Oh, great, thanks. The flourishing for everyone else, but not the head.' (Document 3.2, line 430).

5.1.3 Session 3: Exploration, reflection and response

During this session, the headteacher summarised the participants' discussions during the 'responding' phase of the cycle and reflected how others might be engaged in the agreed actions and ongoing dialogue. She recognised particular roles, such as the Chair of Governors, and challenged others' assumptions of authority, particularly in relation to deciding documentation on performance management processes.

5.1.4 Paired interview

The third session continued with a paired interview, using planned researcher questions about the process and whether it helped and stimulated thinking about Christian vision and ethos in the school setting.

The headteacher was positive about leadership learning emerging from the discussion and aspects of the data collection architecture. She referred to the specific example of a training day focused on the school's Christian vision, surmising, 'I guess that's an

example of how the reflection has helped. Almost changes the course of the way you do something' (Document 3.3, line 520). Yet when I asked whether the headteacher felt as if she had been engaging in or 'doing' theology, she baulked at the idea. A full discussion of her reaction and follow-up remarks, which explore the idea of how theology can be seen as ordinary, practical and everyday, is included in Chapter 6 (Section 6.3.2).

5.1.5 Individual interview

The headteacher's narrative contextualised the story of her current headship, describing how she was drawn to the role, 'I thought that would be a really interesting challenge and this just felt like an unpolished diamond when I came around' (Document 3.4, line 45). She described it as a place where she imagined possibilities and a key narrative of Christian vision underpinning policy and practice is evident, including how this is measured by a statutory inspection framework. Interestingly, she did not articulate her second headship as a personal success story, but offered it as a comparison to her first headship experience in terms of cultural differences in the staff and emotional effects: 'that's what has made this job joyful in a way that my first headship never was, because the relationships and the people … Everyone is so positive and there's such an incredible atmosphere' (Document 3.4, line 97).

As she described the task of defining a current reality within the first session, the headteacher acknowledged the timing of the school's SIAMS inspection and meeting the outcomes stated in the inspection report as an influence in her thinking. I asked a specific question about people's confidence, knowledge and familiarity with Christian language, which she immediately linked with being churchgoing or being a practising Christian. She referenced their 'personal lack of knowledge and understanding and just knowing simple things that you would possibly assume might be knowledge that somebody would have who has either been to a church school or worked in a church school, basic Bible stories, links that you can make, concepts, people just don't have that' (Document 3.4, line 148).

This appeared as a recurring narrative; the headteacher suggesting that since the level of knowledge amongst staff creates hesitancy about articulating the school's Christian vision, how can the vision underpin policy and practice when staff are unable to make those connections? Furthermore, she questioned whether governors genuinely understood the relationship between the school's Christian foundation and its vision, values and practice. She offered a supporting example about the rationale for providing a range of after-school clubs and sports for inclusive participation of a child in a wheelchair: 'they never go back to, well because we know that every child is made in God's image. They just don't make that link. Once you say the link, they're like yes, yes, but they just don't make that link' (Document 3.4, line 239).

Summarising the headteacher's reflections on the overall process, explored further in Chapter 6, she described a sense of openness and joint endeavour, supported by the different perspectives offered by each participant. She affirmed the helpfulness of the data collection architecture, in particular receiving the audio recordings, as facilitating an ongoing narrative record, and began to imagine how barriers to accessing Christian language and theological discussion might be overcome.

5.2 The Priest's narrative

5.2.1 Session 1: Introduction and exploring the current reality

Much of the priest's narrative in the first session was gleaned from responses which were relatively brief. These included questions or remarks which supported and intentionally developed the headteacher's contributions and connected with the canonical and key narratives, but with limited introduction of new topics. The individual interview with the priest, summarised later in this chapter (Section 5.2.5) and explored further in Chapter 6, drew out how she viewed her role in the discussions, perhaps helping to understand her approach and moreover her sense of place in the context of the field of education.

Referring to her experience from parish ministry, the priest offered examples of the connection between people's church or faith background and a confidence in using

Christian language. She cited the view of Christianity being a private faith rather than public, as well as people not sharing faith due to a lack of knowledge and being 'a British thing because you don't talk about religion' (Document 3.1, line 66). Later she added further reflections on peoples' reluctance to share faith; whether they might feel hypocritical, not want to stand out, go door to door to evangelise or 'be seen as religious nuts' (Document 3.1, line 120).

In doing so, the priest showed an understanding of the potential quandary for staff in relation to placing personal beliefs alongside an expectation to articulate the school's Christian vision. Subsequently, she introduced what became a repeated narrative about the extent of individuals' experience of church traditions and their relationship with church. She spoke about people who had considered attending church services but been reluctant, displaying empathy for a position of not knowing what might happen and imagining a similar context for herself, 'It's like me going home to go to a bingo session. I wouldn't have a clue what to do…' (Document 3.1, line 214).

Once the participants had established their current reality of needing to develop staff confidence in expressing Christian vision and values, the priest's comments were succinct but played a part in developing discussion. This was evident as guiding statements which prompted reflections by the headteacher, or a series of questions to help discover why the related language might not be accessible to staff and how to explore their perceived discomfort. This is both practical and searching, such as asking whether the headteacher would consult staff individually or in a group, and enquiring 'Are some of them more thoughtful than others?' (Document 3.1, line 432).

The priest expressed many of her responses within a context of human reaction and relationship and was the first to identify some broader connections or queries about emerging ideas. For example, she speculated whether Christian language (and perceptions of it) could be acting as an impediment and identified a possible link between staff choosing not to participate in a discussion about vision (believing it is not their role) and their availability due to job responsibilities, or the timings and purpose of school meetings. She drew a parallel with practicalities in the church context, 'We

cannot run Lent groups in the evening because we haven't got the people to do it' (Document 3.1, line 612).

5.2.2 Session 2: An extended conversation

The priest confirmed that she had undertaken some preparation for the 'exploring' phase of the cycle; listening back to the recording of the first session, writing some notes and reading two publications from the Church of England. She described one, the *Church of England Vision for Education* (The Church of England Education Office, 2016) as 'full of theological stuff' (Document 3.2, line 25), and her comments gave a sense of how this document could be helpful in expressing the voice of theology in education. For example, she highlighted the repetition of the phrase 'life in all its fullness', suggesting that such recurrence and reinforcement served to make the language more accessible.

As in the opening session, the priest made regular, brief remarks which helped to enhance the headteacher's operational response, whilst also developing narratives. For example, she revisited the narrative of accessibility and of understanding the meaning behind phrases such as 'life in all its fullness', with a sensitivity that any approach to staff discussion about vision should be non-threatening, open and welcoming. After the headteacher had articulated practical ways in which to engage staff in discussion about Christian inspiration, the priest again raised a question about the opinions of staff who may not usually be engaged. In an example referring to the site manager, the priest commented, 'that might encourage him to … see that what he does do is contributing to the whole' (Document 3.2, line 350).

Later, it is the priest who drew the participants' attention to which phase the discussion had reached according to the cycle of theological reflection. She hinted at a disposition relating to her role in the process and the discussion about steps to address the issue, saying to the headteacher, '*You've* done a lot of thinking about it' (Document 3.1, line 408, my emphasis). Nevertheless, she continued to guide the subsequent conversation about embedding vision discussions into the appraisal process, sensitive to the

perceived issue around staff confidence and supporting thinking about how school senior leaders are themselves equipped to lead on discussions about Christian vision.

5.2.3 Session 3: Exploration, reflection and response

Prior to the paired interview, participants were given the opportunity to summarise the issue they started with, resulting actions and how these might be recorded. The priest continued to adopt a passive but receptive and gently facilitating role. She affirmed key narratives of staff confidence and the Christian vision underpinning school policy and practice, allowing the headteacher to comment on management and operational matters.

5.2.4 Paired interview

The priest spoke positively about the process experienced by the participants and referred to the supporting data collection framework, particularly appreciating the possibility of returning to listen to the audio recordings. Her comments suggested that she would usually take notes in meetings for reference, but that whilst unfamiliar, this different approach was useful and 'it was okay once you got used to it' (Document 3.3, line 474).

As questions relating to theology unfolded, the priest became more proactive. She helped to explore how the participants' discussion could be viewed through different interpretations or perceptions of 'theology' i.e. as potentially both practical and scholarly, offering examples of how leaders in a church school engage with theology in their everyday context.

One of the areas in which the priest made an extended contribution was when asked about shared experiences that emerged from the conversations. She mentioned the local church's strapline and commented: 'I've been thinking about sort of mission … whether our vision to know Jesus Christ to make him known should be more sort of up there really. And more in people's consciousness' (Document 3.3, line 747). She suggested that the church vision and action planning for mission needed to be refreshed,

illustrating how the participants' discussion about vision in a church school could be applied in a church context.

For the priest, the feeling of a shared experience also resonated in terms of the use of Christian language. She reflected that members of the church congregation would be reluctant to engage in a faith conversation or use words such as theology; she could not imagine many practising those conversations, that 'most people probably run a mile from conversations or language like that' (Document 3.3, line 829). Her narrative suggested a reality or issue that goes beyond a straightforward matter of people's level of theological knowledge and is combined with a lack of confidence.

5.2.5 Individual interview

The early stages of the individual interview with the priest provided a helpful narrative around her early career and experience, including connections with schools and the field of education. As she began to speak about the initial session and process to identify the school's current reality, she revealed some trepidation; divulging that she came to the meeting with no ideas, and glad that the context of a recent SIAMS inspection created possibilities for discussion. She did not assert her own role in the decision-making about a theme for exploration, referring to the choice as something that had occurred to or inspired the headteacher.

Subsequently, the priest opened up quite considerably about people's knowledge and familiarity with Christian language, her comments covering themes of church culture and shared experiences. She expressed regret that many people see attending church on a Sunday as a social activity, rather than contributing to discipleship, and described their reticence to talk about faith. She also rejected the idea of faith as a private matter, 'I would say, it's not private. It's personal. You have a personal relationship with God' (Document 3.5, line 118).

This appeared to connect with her reflection on how different the church's culture was prior to her arrival, and her comments inferred a parallel experience with school leadership and the issue of people responding to change. Evidently, trying to get

congregation members to talk about faith and establishing conversation about the school's Christian vision both require the creation of a safe environment in which this can happen – 'we actually decided we would do Dwelling in the Word because it's less threatening than what's God been doing in your life recently' (Document 3.5, line 148).

The priest's reflections on her role on the school's governing body revealed similar challenges in bringing vision and Christian language together. She described an occasion on which she had endeavoured to use accessible theological language to explain the school's vision strapline. The priest was surprised by the response from governors, 'apparently, the governors just totally didn't understand it and I was quite amazed that even though I'd written what I thought was quite simple language, they didn't understand' (Document 3.5, line 215).

The latter part of the interview explored the experience of sharing in conversation, rather than doing theology as an individual, including the method used during the sessions. My examination of the priest's participation in dialogue, comments on the research framework and reflections on the characteristics and accessibility of 'doing' theology are included in Chapter 6.

School P

5.3 The Headteacher's narrative

5.3.1 Session 1: Current reality

The headteacher opened the first session by describing ongoing conversations with the priest in the context of the latter's role as both parish priest and school chaplain, an arrangement still relatively in its infancy. Invited to consider aspects of vision or ethos they had been thinking through, the headteacher referenced a prayer group which used to run and introduced a question about spiritual nourishment for staff – 'if we're expecting them to you know sort of, deliver a Christian education to our children, they need to feel spiritually fulfilled themselves I think' (Document 3.6, line 119).

It proved a helpful introduction to his articulation of a vision for the partnership between parish and school, involving a common ministry within education and the idea of being community together. The headteacher also raised issues of respect and authority within the school community, citing school policy on homework as an example of a perception of authority that can cause tension amongst both staff and parents due to differing views. The headteacher clearly felt that the school was under pressure to secure the best test outcomes for children, with certain measures and policies to achieve this conflicting with opinions held by some parents – and 'whatever you do to try and address it, it doesn't make people happy' (Document 3.6, line 246).

The headteacher then made a connection between school ethos and his aspiration for the wider community; the matter of 'rights and responsibilities is something that we talk about with our children about trust, compassion, fellowship, friendship. But … do we see that from our whole school community, is that lost at some points?' (Document 3.6, line 253). This was to emerge as a significant narrative (Chapter 6, Section 6.2.1); the participants appeared to share a sense that through mission and ministry together in an evolving social context, the parish and school could assume a community role in providing consistent values, which they felt were at risk of being lost.

Subsequently, the headteacher referred back to comments made by the priest relating to how worship demonstrates the values of the school community. He described the previous Leavers' Service for pupils as giving thanks for the contribution of retiring staff, as well as being 'a real nice community time to come together as family, to come together with the children' (Document 3.6, line 368). Through this value of family and community, I captured a first glimpse of the participants imagining a new situation; of the church being used not just for similar one-off events but 'throughout the year and parents coming and worshipping with their children' (Document 3.6, line 379). The headteacher also reflected on how Christian festivals in the church had been themed and refreshed; a desire for them to be deep in faith, rooted in the Christian tradition and 'to have awe and wonder, we want them to be a special occasion' (Document 3.6, line 399).

Continuing the subject of preparation and discipleship, the headteacher posited that 'part of our job within the school, everybody's job, is to prepare our children, our families for the next phase' (Document 3.6, line 440). This next phase was not determined; however, he was clear in his rationale that people would over time become more disconnected with their communities and with one another, with the church offering a constancy in its presence. The headteacher also inferred that the school ethos offered similar stability and sanctuary; creating space and a sense of peacefulness influencing children's learning; 'you know that children are going to learn the best when they are in the most comfortable situation, when they are able to declutter their mind from all that is being thrown at them' (Document 3.6, line 553).

The value of education and children's learning was revisited by the headteacher slightly further on in the discussion. He referenced a group of what he described as low/middle attaining pupils, affirming the value of their cultural capital and ensuring their fullness of life, 'it's about raising aspirations, about career opportunities, things that they're going to be fulfilled in life' (Document 3.6, line 631). It is interesting how this narrative of helping children to secure educational capital in terms of skills immediately referred to those which are technical or practical, compared to the headteacher's experience, 'I couldn't change a light switch, or you know plumb or build or whatever, but I've been to university' (Document 3.6, line 635). He was clear that these are not lesser roles, emphasising children's learning as a gateway to their aspirations and the usefulness of being able to apply skills in a real-life context. This leads to work, he suggested, which is ultimately fulfilling.

As the session began to focus on clarifying the participants' current reality, discussion was theoretical as well as practical. The priest and headteacher identified how the proposal of children and families worshipping together might be different to the present worship format, the potential influence of children in encouraging their parents to attend a worship event and the opportunity to create a sense of togetherness. The headteacher responded to a comment about staff confidence in leading worship, acknowledging the potential for disconnect between the faith position of individuals and expectations of supporting the school's ethos, 'when I joined the school there were sometimes, people were like, I don't have to join in worship, I'm not going to pray and

that almost goes against what we felt as a school' (Document 3.6, line 818). This seemed to leave a residual question or reservation for the participants about introducing (and gauging staff reaction to) new spiritual or worship practices, which the headteacher referred to in their third session.

5.3.2 Session 2: Extended conversation

After the priest had summarised discussions from the previous session and both participants had agreed to pursue an ambition of parents and children worshipping together, the headteacher reflected on the difference between their proposed format and a performance *to* parents. Whilst worship remained invitational, the headteacher's comments indicated a significant expectation on adults attending, 'actually you are joining a service, a worship alongside and you know your children will be leading you through it because they know what they're doing' (Document 3.7, line 194). It is worship to be enjoyed together, but with children passing on their knowledge from a position of familiarity with structure and content.

Further reflections were gleaned on current practice; whether there was anything similar to the proposal and how they presently structured worship services to feel invitational to parents, drawing on any understanding they might have about what made people uncomfortable in worship. The headteacher spoke about logistics and making faith-talk natural; he suggested that parental familiarity or engagement with faith traditions and practices could lead to their own exploration of faith and spiritual development, which in turn would create the prospect of sustaining the child's spiritual journey.

Discussion subsequently entered a planning phase for a specific opportunity for children and families to worship together, with a link to the Christian festival of Candlemas. The headteacher identified a potential issue of disengaged parents, acknowledging that the format of 'having … a sit-down service worship might be a bit more in your face' (Document 3.7, line 531). He drew on his experience of Messy Church, an expression of church which engages with people on the periphery of the church family and holds values of 'being Christ-centred, for all ages and based on creativity, hospitality and

celebration' (BRF, 2020). The headteacher noted that the informal nature of Messy Church makes it more difficult to draw parents into activities – perhaps conscious of how worship can be both marketed and pitched differently according to the anticipated attendees.

Within this time of planning, the participants spoke of making the school a hub of community; an idea articulated with a sense of joint endeavour between school and church, sharing a social context and seeking to provide solace and support for families. The headteacher recognised the demands faced by parents from daily life as well as social and community pressures, and imagined worship as offering peace and refreshment; time to reflect on what is important, which for most he suggested would be their family. He thought logistically about making it easier for parents to participate, about scheduling at pupil drop-off time and creating a feel of a family occasion. By inviting parents or grandparents to come with their child, the headteacher envisaged that 'you could have that multi-generational worshipping together. Which would be very powerful' (Document 3.7, line 857).

5.3.3 Session 3: Reviewing response and actions, paired interview

Asked at the beginning of the session whether participants wished to share any further reflections, the headteacher affirmed their planning for an act of worship for children and families. This would capture not only the idea of children and adults learning together, but thinking about faith in the home, 'We talked about Candlemas and possibly taking something away … a blessed candle away so that there's some sort of symbolism … when parents, families get home as well' (Document 3.8, line 23). The headteacher referred to this act of worship as a joint venture, a continued sense of partnership in ministry. He reported a positive reception from staff, and was ambitious to see this become an example of good institutional habits, 'it's going back and saying actually that worked really, really well let's make sure that it's regularly in the calendar to worship in church. Not just for a special service' (Document 3.8, line 119).

During the paired interview, the headteacher was asked to comment on his experience of the process of inquiry and reflection. Although he did not overtly reference the

method used for the sessions, he was positive about the practical aspects, highlighted the importance of dialogue and reflected the priest's perceptions on how discussion was theologically informed. He also stressed the importance of modelling ideas of theological reflection, giving an example of when staff discussed a bible passage for the school vision. In that case, modelling and allocating time led to 'really fantastic conversation going on between staff members about you know, what it means, how accessible it is for different people' (Document 3.8, line 272).

The headteacher articulated his leadership role and purpose in a similar way; exemplifying the vision to staff, parents and children alike, keeping everyone on the same journey by 'Making a vision, setting the vision, reforming that conversation' (Document 3.8, line 284). He also spoke about his preferred style of 'distributing' leadership and of empowering others; referring to the priest, the headteacher described his role as directing leaders back to scripture. This is powerful in the unique context of the school's chaplaincy arrangement, in which the priest's frequent presence in school serves to illuminate the church/school partnership.

A further example of a partnership or shared experience was parental engagement in services and activities, through which the headteacher expressed both hope and disappointment. Whilst hopeful for the new worship proposals, he also believed that parents felt a dwindling sense of responsibility, that 'generally there's a lot put in place for them, they're becoming more passive' (Document 3.8, line 534). The headteacher connected these ideas of responsibility and passivity with the participants' ambitions for parental engagement in worship. He expressed a desire for parents to be more active, to take 'some responsibility to be with your child at this particular time and worship alongside them' (Document 3.8, line 547), to support their children's spirituality and therefore the vision and ethos of the school.

Towards the close of the session, the headteacher's narrative broadened, imagining efforts to tackle what he saw as society's problems through core principles reflected in the school's ethos. It became apparent that the commentary around worship and opportunities for peace and reflection was a key narrative, but more likely a contributing part of the participants' overall reaction to aspects of perceived malaise in the

community or society in general. Thus, the canonical narrative became more holistic, touching all areas of school life; the school and parish in a community role, in an evolving social context, seeking to provide solutions to tackle this apparent malaise or shift of values.

5.3.4 Session 4: Individual interview

Invited to speak about the professional and personal paths which led him to his current post, the headteacher outlined the moral and political beliefs which underpinned his discernment and career choices. In addition to referencing his socialist principles and Christian values, he articulated his preferred leadership practices such as collective decision-making and seeking guidance from the priest as chaplain.

This was accompanied by comments about people's position of faith; the priest was described as 'deep in faith', and school staff 'may not have as deep faith as me, or certainly not Reverend … or whoever, and we hope that they will be respectful to that' (Document 3.10, line 86). The headteacher inferred that the faith position of staff, alongside other dispositions (such as not always following the rules), may affect their behaviours when a new spiritual practice was introduced. He articulated a feeling of some personal vulnerability in these situations, however remained unapologetic about expressing the school's Christian ethos.

It was interesting to hear the headteacher's interpretation of the word 'invitational', where it had been used in relation to engaging children and families with the spiritual; he described it as a position of 'opting in' but also emphasised other expectations in the context of worship. He repeated a concern about how parents might engage, 'I think sometimes, the parents can be the catalyst for the poorer behaviour' (Document 3.10, line 115), and emphasised the key narrative about children, already connected into the school's expectations, helping parents to learn.

Reviewing the concept of children and families worshipping together, the headteacher summarised his aspiration about community, coming together and the spiritual development of families. He connected into previous experiences of school services

arranged for Christian festivals and their related logistics; reflecting on endeavours to develop worship in different spaces and for different purposes so that the format and liturgy felt familiar and the space felt comfortable. Yet whilst developing the concept with the priest as a joint venture, it is interesting that the headteacher consciously placed himself mostly in an enabling and operational role, rather than contributing to the liturgical or spiritual aspects.

During subsequent discussion about equity between participants when engaging in the sessions, including the headteacher's views on how and what they contributed, I noted how he tended to defer to the priest's understanding of spiritual or biblical matters. He also described how the framework and cycle used was both powerful and helpful, and elements of the process such as physical location and facilitation supported deeper conversation. It was clearly important in terms of Christian vision and leadership that the dialogue was between priest and headteacher, suggesting that theological conversation may be dependent on the participants' association with the school – for example, the headteacher reflected that current conversations with the Chair of Governors tended to focus on management and operations.

Nonetheless, the headteacher recognised the possibilities formed from the process of dialogue, of bringing divergent roles and gifts together to develop practice. He articulated the big picture narrative, 'In a way we're sort of solving some of society's issues at the moment … we're trying to give our parents a bit of time with their children to just stop and take a breath and be at peace' (Document 3.10, line 375). The headteacher believed that engagement between participants had been both useful and the beginning of something new. He hoped that it had given the priest 'confidence in developing his leadership within the school' (Document 3.10, line 403) and imagined further possibilities for worship - 'it would be equally great if again, we carry on the model and are able to offer our families time to worship with their children as a family in school time as well. It is very distinct, it's very different' Document 3.10, line 395).

5.4 The Priest's Narrative

5.4.1 Session 1: Current reality

At the beginning of the session, the priest reflected on the role and influence his own primary school had on his faith formation. He also expressed fascination both at the priority placed by senior leaders of School P on Christian distinctiveness and parents' decisions to select the school for their children, as it was likely that the majority had no faith commitment. This led him to explain some of the features of his chaplaincy role, such as establishing relationships with parents who may be wary of authority figures and seeking ways in which the school might serve the community.

I asked for examples of experiences when the school community had felt connected together, safe and hospitable. The priest immediately referred to acts of worship, which he described as natural, a good enactment of community with staff and pupils together, and a space in which children were aware of how they should conduct themselves. He applauded how the school 'gets children used to contact with the sacred, of living within the neighbourhood of the sacred' (Document 3.6, line 403). Much of his positivity was rooted in the nature of worship at the school; not avoiding Christian vocabulary which might be deemed difficult, yet remaining distinctive and accessible. Nevertheless, he also hinted at another motive, one of familiarising children with churches or sacred buildings, since it is not their usual experience; 'from my point of view, … we live in many respects in such secular times, that many children aren't getting that experience of what it's like even to go into a church. Let alone to pray or to light a candle' (Document 3.6, line 422).

The priest developed this idea around weakened cultural and societal connections, concluding that churches and Christian schools are becoming increasingly counter-cultural in the context of peoples' declining affiliation with the Church of England and declining historic networks (such as the Mothers' Union).

Within the sphere of education, the priest recognised further issues of an 'overstuffed curriculum'; quantity of learning and knowledge taking precedence over quality, with

the risk of children feeling limited in their abilities. He acknowledged the importance of assessment, but 'there's the deeper character stuff, building curiosity, building aspiration you know' (Document 3.6, line 607). The priest advocated an approach in which all children can find a safe space and are encouraged that they have a vocation, whilst recognising social issues including a lack of engagement that can arise from difficult family circumstances. Creating aspiration, he proposed, includes encouraging children to see that work as an activity is good, 'it's good to work to provide for yourself and any dependents' (Document 3.6, line 660) - comments placed within the canonical narrative as a counter to the prevailing culture and perceived malaise of 'the whole celebrity culture obsession' (Document 3.6, line 681).

Towards the conclusion of the session, when asked to summarise tangible ideas for further discussion, the priest conveyed an interest in 'giving the children more worshipful experiences in the church' (Document 3.6, line 748). He signalled agreement as the headteacher began to explore the practicalities of the idea, especially when possibilities evolved into a broader plan for parents and children to worship together. The introduction of a potential leadership issue (staff lacking confidence in leading worship) prompted both participants to revisit earlier narratives. Whilst the headteacher pondered opportunities for the spiritual development of staff, the priest's final contribution almost assumed the functional quality of a moral tale. He narrated how he felt that a diminishing respect for adults representing authority was at the heart of their (staff) stresses, and for teachers this was exacerbated by both the demands of the profession and external agencies, but also parents who lack respect for their role.

5.4.2 Session 2: Extended conversation

The priest opened up the session by summarising the two areas participants had discerned as their current reality; developing the leadership of the spiritual side of the school and examining opportunities for parents to worship alongside children. He indicated a preference for the latter, commenting that it 'feels quite fresh, just having come through Christmas and having seen a lot of worship within the school and the school within the church. But also, some of the church services where I noticed a number of school families came' (Document 3.7, line 22).

The priest then unpacked how children's experiences of faith traditions and practices at school may permeate into the home; for example, where children realise that prayer might prove another resource for dealing with the difficulties of life. Nevertheless, he is mindful of how this might be viewed by parents, '… How much are the parents on board with that as well, how much, how comfortable?' (Document 3.7, line 128). The priest likened this to the discomfort felt by the headteacher when introducing prayer into staff briefings, due to an uncertainty about how people might respond.

Drawing on personal experience, the priest revealed his own evolving dispositions towards prayer. He recalled an absence of prayer growing up in his parents' home, then how it has progressed through his vocation as a priest and father. The priest observed the dilemma that 'the spiritual is outside the school as well and affects the family. It constantly needs to be invitational' (Document 3.7, line 168). It confirmed a new key narrative within the participants' discussion - translating school faith practices into home practice – with the priest's rationale that these worship and prayer habits enabled people to experience fullness of life.

As the conversation progressed, participants returned to the logistics and characteristics of a service where children and families would worship together. The priest offered his reflections on the 'Welcome Service' arranged for parents with children starting school in Reception class, that parents 'may not have felt oh this is a Christian act of worship. But I could really feel the engagement with what you [the headteacher] were saying, what the service was about' (Document 3.7, line 273). He spoke about building on what feels familiar; that possibilities could emerge not by removing boundaries between school and church relating to logistics or expected customs, but simply not seeing them. Thus, the venue for worship becomes less relevant than being together in one space.

The priest affirmed that the keystone of his suggestions was the desire to engage members of the community with the Christian faith. As the participants approached the planning stage for a first act of worship with children and families together, he worked out the next Christian festival (Candlemas). The priest explained the intergenerational connection with the biblical narrative of Jesus being presented in the Temple, and believed this would facilitate a connection with home, 'traditionally this is

when people bring candles to church and have them blessed to take home. And I thought actually you know people love candles' (Document 3.7, line 479).

As the discussion continued, the priest recounted an occasion where he was contacted unexpectedly by a bereaved family, because they had historic links with the school. He reflected how church and school could play a pastoral role in community; agreeing that the worship they were planning was about providing solace and rest, but also emphasising what he longed for as a rediscovery of faith. He summed up his ideas about the importance of worship; that worship has a horizontal, sharing characteristic which joins people together, but with a vertical aspect connecting the human with the divine.

5.4.3 Session 3: Reviewing response and actions, paired interview

In the opening comments of the session, the priest affirmed a sense of working together and equitable partnership between the participants, alongside his keenness for the arranged worship format (children and families worshipping together) to become a regular feature, or institutional habit. He also identified a potential issue with fatigue; where initiatives are met with excitement but 'then they become like a one-off thing and it fizzles out … we want things like this worship to become hopefully an established part of our common life' (Document 3.8, line 112). From the dialogue, I inferred both a desire to increase families' connection with the local church and his acknowledgement of the limitations of Sunday worship for their work/life balance; hence the implementation of joint worship opportunities, which bring flexibility and promote relationship.

The priest subsequently commented on the process followed in our sessions, wondering whether enough time had been spent reflecting on scripture. He agreed that discussion was theologically informed and supported by the data collection architecture, but also offered his view of using a specific bible passage as a focus for orientation of vision or mission, noting that the beginning of Chapter 15 in John's Gospel was chosen as a basis for the school's vision statement. He explained how this connected with parish missional thinking; ways in which people in the church were seeking to achieve

something similar in terms of an openness to the Holy Spirit and a rootedness in the bible.

As the subject matter of the paired interview shifted to participants' shared experiences within the process, the priest spoke about attitudes to spirituality and the divine. He reflected that children seemed to have a greater openness to the spiritual and found it easier to believe in a loving God; that adults should have higher expectations, particularly with regard to God's presence, that 'when we turn up in church God is going to show up as well' (Document 3.8, line 400). He gave an example of worship behaviours in the context of children and families gathering together at Messy Church held at the school; noticing how parents tended to remain on the edges, preferring to watch their children and engage in the experience though the screens of mobile telephones or tablet computers.

5.4.4 Session 4: Individual interview

In describing his personal and professional pathways to the present day, the priest began with a summary of his faith formation, leading into detail about his training as a teacher and then as an ordinand at theological college. He suggested that he had experienced a hankering for theology, preferring to think about theology as stories rather than analytically. By this the priest meant 'what is the story of the world. What is the story of a human life? And I'm fascinated by these stories and for me, Christianity tells the best, the truest, the most beautiful story' (Document 3.9, line 77).

The priest was confident that school and church together could speak into the evolving social context; expounding a Christian view about living in community and determining an identity for the locality, with faith and God a key element of the solution to any malaise. He believed that his chaplaincy role allowed him to step back and be reflective, vocation and theology combining to shape his activities. Theology in this context was the 'big story' or broader interest in community relationships, pupil and staff well-being rather than data, as well as the practice of prayer as an everyday response. The priest stressed the importance of prayer, 'because it's that space and you're stepping out of

the business of the secular world and just thinking towards God in the light of scripture, thinking about people, situations' (Document 3.9, line 264).

Building on this idea and thinking specifically about the process followed in the sessions, I asked the priest about the method used for theological conversation and previous comments he made about the place of scripture within it. He associated his dispositions relating to biblical study with the characteristics of theological training colleges he attended, acknowledging that his position has shifted, however emphasised that 'we need to take that seriously that God speaks to us through scripture' (Document 3.9, line 298), as a reminder of our part in the 'big story'.

5.5 Chapter summary

The separate narratives set out within this chapter were valuable in gaining clear insights into the leadership and ministry role of each research participant, their place in the conversation and their individual nuances on aspects of Christian vision and ethos. Assembling these narratives has also offered a holistic view of the data from each school, enabling me to discern a canonical narrative and identify the complementary key narratives. Noting how these narratives and participants' other contributions and commentary developed through the data collection sessions helped to shape the overarching thematic analysis, which blends findings together. This is detailed more fully in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 6

Discussion

Having engaged priest and headteacher participants in the practice of paired theological reflection, articulated an approach to data analysis and summarised individual narratives, this chapter commences by considering the canonical and key narratives emerging from each school (Sections 6.1 and 6.2). It then provides a thematic analysis (Section 6.3) which brings the commentaries and findings from the two schools together.

This overall structure helps to frame the responses to my research questions. Through the schools' canonical and key narratives, I share an understanding of the participants' context, leadership priorities and experiences of inquiry and reflection. These experiences are explored specifically (Section 6.3.1), supplemented by a discussion of particular aspects such as the concept of 'doing theology' and the accessibility of Christian or theological language (Section 6.3.2). I evaluate the nature of the leadership and ministry roles exercised by the priest and headteacher in each school (Section 6.3.3), noting the significance of Bourdieu's concepts in understanding individual participants' social, theological and educational capital (Section 6.3.4). Finally, I reflect on the role and influence of the data collection architecture which supported the inquiry approach (Section 6.3.5).

Throughout the thematic analysis, I also introduce considerations for devising a new approach to bringing priests and church school leaders together in theological conversation and reflection on the subject of Christian vision and ethos. These considerations are outlined in Chapter 7.

6.1 Canonical and Key narratives – School R

6.1.1 Canonical narrative

I discerned the canonical narrative (as defined in Chapter 4, Section 4.7 as a big picture narrative or social/cultural understanding), as involving the whole school community in understanding the school's vision, accompanied by an expectation to support and uphold what this means in practice. This corresponds to the Evaluation Schedule for SIAMS, which expects leaders to give coherence to the Christian vision and ensure that it 'is maintained, remains discernible and is effectively applied' (The Church of England Education Office, 2018, p.3).

This big picture narrative began to emerge early in the first session, as participants discussed a current reality for the school in the light of their most recent SIAMS inspection report. During the inspection process, leaders would have been asked how staff members have 'opportunities to develop their understanding of Church school education' (The Church of England Education Office, 2018, p.3), and the headteacher acknowledged that staff 'need to be more confident and more comfortable about talking about the Christian vision and using the language' (Document 3.1, line 20). Other related questions and ideas surfaced during this early dialogue, including: how the school vision should be held corporately by the governing body, whether staff considered faith a private or public matter and how it might be possible to develop confidence in talking about sharing vision and belief.

The headteacher suggested how text from the *Church of England Vision for Education* (2016), or extracts from it, might play a part in both engaging staff with the biblical context and helping them to verbalise Christian vision, relating directly to the context of the school. Her proposals inferred community involvement and togetherness – 'I think there's something very powerful about doing it together as a whole staff' (Document 3.2, line 80) – and a continuing affirmation of the ambition to find practical ways of securing participation and addressing limitations.

The SIAMS *Evaluation Schedule for Schools and Inspectors* (The Church of England Education Office, 2018) conveys how church schools seeking to be judged 'Good' or 'Excellent' should be shaped by Christian vision. School R discovered how challenging it is for this to permeate across the entire staff body, but also recognised the importance of treating them 'with dignity and respect as people created in the image of God' (ibid., p.11). Therefore, when drawing together considerations which could be included in a future approach to theological conversation, it may be worth pondering how to facilitate broader participation of other leaders and staff members.

6.1.2 Key narratives

During the sessions and interviews, participants explored the canonical narrative through other key narratives (defined in Chapter 4, Section 4.7 as a recurrent theme or repeated narrative). Within the following commentary, I have italicised each key narrative identified and offered an example of the context in which it occurred.

At the beginning of the opening session, which focused on a 'current reality' relating to vision and ethos, participants straight away referenced the school's recent SIAMS report. This generated discussion on the issue of the *accessibility of the school's vision to staff.* The headteacher expressed their aspiration well - for staff to feel comfortable and confident when talking about the school's Christian vision. She identified that this would require managing any limitations, including those self-imposed by staff (such as not imagining it as part of their role) and those inherent in the day-to-day running of the school. Speaking of support staff, she noted, 'So, by hierarchy or even just the way they participate in activities, are they almost being – unintentionally excluded?' (Document 3.1, line 607).

The priest suggested a connection between staff being comfortable discussing the vision and *individuals' relationship with church and church traditions*, including whether they were Christian or had a church background. Her subsequent responses implied the offer of a rationale rather than criticism, linking the matter with her experience in church of people's attitudes to sharing faith. She recognised how similar issues arise within the church context, including the logistics of attending Lent groups when these only operate

during the day, drawing together the themes of people missing out and language – 'I hadn't really thought of that being one of the reasons why people can't talk about religion, but it must be. It's not just the language, is it?' (Document 3.1, line 639).

In discussing accessibility, the participants also recognised the importance of e*nabling staff confidence and understanding (or empowerment).* Whilst exploring how staff might engage in and respond to training about vision, the priest evoked a connection to the human element of dealing with people. She again recalled what the same dilemma looked like in the context of the church congregation, 'You see I can give them teaching and I do give them teaching but … if they're not open, they're not going to hear it' (Document 3.1, line 487). She was able to imagine human reactions and saw an opportunity for qualitative understanding, 'I think it would be good to ask the staff how it made them feel, that question' (Document 3.1, line 529).

There is a strong connection here to an assertion made by Astley (2002a) within the context of the content of Initial Ministerial Education, advocating the 'need to *meet* people in their own context and to *listen* to them' (Astley, 2002a, p.146, original emphasis). In this description, Astley (2002a) emphasises that hearing experiences and motivations is central to respectful and effective dialogue. Although the setting he illustrates is one in which this dialogue is undertaken with believers, relating to their living Christian tradition, it seems applicable to school staff in terms of understanding something of the values and beliefs they hold and their perspective on Christian vision.

The priest and headteacher spent time considering the possible foundations of confidence in speaking about vision, especially the *importance of knowledge - including a person's level of knowledge, their acquisition of knowledge, and a perception of needing to know the 'right' answer.*

The headteacher reflected on the need for deep rather than surface-level understanding, focusing initially on factual, biblical knowledge. She connected this with whether a person brings a Christian or non-Christian perspective to questions of values and ethos; suggesting that this Christian perspective, which brings about the ability to link words and meaning, can be learnt through the teaching of knowledge. Her narrative

also held an assumption that staff might think 'there must be a right answer' (Document 3.1, line 385). This led to a proposition that feeling comfortable in a faith-sharing or vision-sharing conversation could prompt a sense of hierarchy or superiority. In essence this would create an expression of cultural capital within this aspect of church school education, which may impact on staff participation in dialogue about vision. Thus 'it would have to be open ended otherwise you're making an assumption and then they're assuming an inferiority' (Document 3.1, line 428).

In addition to comments about staff knowledge and perspectives, participants indicated that *staff or governors may not see the school's values as being Christian-based.* This narrative was most evident in the headteacher's response when questioned whether governors found any conflict between corporate or personal views about the school's Christian vision. The headteacher aligned her response with previous comments about their narrow understanding of vision and ethos, 'I don't think it's a conflict or a tussle for them. I just think they genuinely don't take them as Christian based' (Document 3.4, line 212).

This brought a fresh view on the narrative of accessibility of the school's vision and *vision underpinning policy and practice,* indicating perhaps that some leaders (including governors) and staff did not identify school values as being rooted in Christianity, or could not intentionally make that link, irrespective of their level of knowledge. The priest reflected on a shared experience relating to holding a corporate understanding of vision; suggesting it would be equally difficult for church school governors 'to say, I don't agree with all this bible stuff' (Document 3.5, line 162) as for members of a Parochial Church Council 'to say, I think you're having too many prayer meetings' (Document 3.5, line 165).

There is clearly a potential difficulty in holding alternative views in a primary school in which there is a corporate expectation of *understanding church school distinctiveness*, exhibited in supporting ethos and practice. The priest understood the dilemma for staff of reconciling personal beliefs with the sharing of a Christian vision, but also expressed dissatisfaction with the idea of the two being compartmentalised. She indicated an element of commitment required when staff joined the school, since there is a choice;

'new people just have to sense whether they feel it's a place they can come and work in or not' (Document 3.1, line 158).

A final key narrative that emerged from my analysis was *learning through discussion.* The priest gave the illustration of grasping how God-talk, encountering the divine and listening to God can frame a practical, theological response. She described this practical, everyday theology as involving speaking to other Christians and sharing experiences, moreover taking the step to allow God 'into your life, or into a situation or into a school, but then actually acting on it, or acting on what he's saying to us or what we're learning' (Document 3.5, line 387). She used the context of living a Christian life and what outcomes might be seen, 'Okay, you say you're a Christian but how does that change? Does it change? Does it change how you relate to people?' (Document 3.5, line 358).

In summary, the key narratives in School R signal the importance in their process of inquiry of drawing in the perspectives, knowledge and experiences of others in an understanding and application of the school's Christian vision and ethos.

6.2 Canonical and Key narratives – School P

6.2.1 Canonical narrative

For School P, I refined my understanding of the canonical narrative throughout my time with the participants, initially conceiving a notion of the school being a hub within the community. I then broadened the idea as they imagined parish and school acting together; taking a community role in an evolving social context and furthermore providing solutions to tackle perceived malaise or shifting values, with part of that solution being that people made a commitment to the Christian faith. They articulated an understanding of how faith can support the common good – that public theology can provide positive social capital, the creation of a 'faith-inspired hospitable culture' (Cooling, 2010, p.65).

Throughout, both participants revealed an ambition to meet the challenge that a parish should be two things. Firstly, 'characterized by the interpenetration of sacred and

secular' (Rumsey, 2017, p.183), such that the buildings of church and school are radically opened and welcoming within a sense of neighbourhood. Secondly, a place where the local church reflects and transforms culture and accommodates new types of local ministry, thus meeting contemporary missional challenges.

The headteacher exemplified the canonical narrative from the school's perspective towards the end of the second session:

> *there's so many sticking plasters you know, there's so many people to sort out problems but actually not to give sustainable solutions to that problem. And I think … giving our parents and our children the tools to be able to you know in those really difficult times to pray or a place to go and pray or … to find some sort of solace in a really tricky time, is actually more important than just bailing them out at once* (Document 3.7, line 650).

Alongside a section where the headteacher expounded the school's approach to lunchtime, with characteristics of sitting down, sharing, talking and listening together, I inferred that the school had adopted a position of 'filling in' for the community, of forming habits no longer evident in the home.

Later, the headteacher continued to express how the school ethos responded to changes in culture, by being counter-cultural, 'because I suppose what we've done … to a certain extent … is gone against some of what, has started to happen or what is happening in society and families etc. which is about creating spaces where children can have time to think, be quiet, reflect' (Document 3.6, line 520). He suggested that where society is so hectic and demanding, the school's ethos provided space for quiet and contemplation in the busyness of children's lives.

The emphasis on spiritual or social habits (especially within families) being contested by a counter-cultural stance contrasts with other views of critical challenge (Luckcock, 2006, Armstrong, 2013). These authors use examples of being counter-cultural which urge questioning of policy or regulation, whether using the 'resources of theology in order for church school education itself to critically and creatively challenge secular

education policy' (Luckcock, 2006, p.265), or proposing that 'the views of ordinary theologians are well placed to indicate when current propositional, doctrinal or academic expressions are at odds with the underlying regulative principles' (Armstrong, 2013, p.71).

Rather, the canonical narrative in School P raised the question or possibility of a counter-cultural challenge flowing from discernment of the guidance of the Holy Spirit for and within the community, holding a sense of service in practical, shared ministry. This ministry is articulated by the headteacher in the context of breaking down barriers between church and school and the relationship between him and the priest (as chaplain). This has been at the heart of joint conversation and enabled new ways of working, with the idea of family worship coming 'out of lots of issues, observations about society, about community' (Document 3.10, line 184). Yet it could also be contended that conversation and perceptions held a deficit view of the local community, suggesting for example parental defensiveness towards authority figures and their use of technology such that it impedes their relationship with their children (see Section 6.2.2). The participants offered a countercultural challenge, but perhaps conversation also enabled them to reinforce shared views without challenging their own culture and dispositions.

The priest spoke with excitement 'about creating more opportunities for families to worship together, whether that's in school time, a school service in the church or whether it's a church service in the school on a Sunday' (Document 3.7, line 322). His overarching ambition was clearly to engage people with the Christian faith; his narrative extending beyond imagining the influence of the school or church with community, personal and social issues, but specifically that the Christian faith would provide at least part of the solution. The priest framed solutions within talk of God and a need for faith, advocating that the 'Christian faith wouldn't magic everything away and solve all your problems. But it certainly would give you resources for dealing with some of these issues' (Document 3.7, line 331).

It is principally the priest who pondered solutions to what he described as a modern secular life in which people are distracted by material possessions. He suggested that

one antidote could be found within worship, which could contribute to supporting people in an evolving social context because 'it's that stepping back from the busyness of life. It's about getting a perspective on things and recognising or beginning to recognise what is making my life better, fuller' (Document 3.7, line 778).

The priest was confident in Christianity's resources to answer significant questions about sin, death and evil that are encountered within its story, an assurance which appeared to correspond with the canonical narrative. He believed that God should necessarily form a part of the solutions to breakdown in community, the church working alongside other institutions to encourage reconnection. The priest also asserted that the local institutions of school and church provide identity for a village which could so easily be swallowed up by the nearest town; they 'can be places of real human community in a sense that they are places where people come together face to face and relate to each other' (Document 3.9, line 122).

6.2.2 Key narratives

Key (recurring) narratives are again italicised within the following commentary and accompanied by an example of the context in which each occurred.

As the participants presented initial ideas about Christian vision and ethos, the priest began to unpack his relationship with the school and referenced some of the activities which had characterised his chaplaincy role thus far. He introduced what became a key narrative about *school as the hub of community*, intentionally engaging the parents as well as the children. He also reflected how the playground experience might be intimidating for parents, and how dynamics in adult groups can be reflected in the behaviour of children; learning drawn from his experience of working in a children's home.

Both priest and headteacher raised associated issues relating to *responsibilities, respect and authority*. The headteacher acknowledged the power or authority teachers might hold without being fully aware; that parents may have an 'impression, perhaps historical you know experiences of perhaps a poor schooling experience where they were told off

by their teachers' (Document 3.6, line 168). He explained how the school had resolved to ease this kind of situation through visibility of staff and conversation, but recognised the social context in which 'there's a social hierarchy within a school, within a community' (Document 3.6, line 182).

The priest concurred with the headteacher's comments about social hierarchy and some parents' defensiveness towards authority figures, suggesting 'We are naturally liberals now and hierarchy is almost like a dirty word' (Document 3.6, line 190). He added to the key narrative of respect and authority, suggesting that respect for teachers is counter-cultural due to a contemporary suspicion of authority figures, and inferring that 'creating and getting back to genuine human community' (Document 3.6, line 213) relies on a return to lost principles. I asked a question about his perception of authority, trying to ascertain whether parents perceived the headteacher and priest differently. The priest is always known as Rev. [first name], but otherwise did not feel a great difference; nevertheless, he also acknowledged that his agenda and activity within school was quite different to the preparation constraints and pressures on teachers. He recalled his 'own work that I carry around, but one of the things I can bring into the school is a bit of headspace' (Document 3.9, line 234).

Participants associated some of the disconnection within community with *the influence of technology on society*. The priest compared his own children's experience of growing up with his childhood, implying that a greater sense of freedom and adventure had been lost due to the influence of technology. He argued that the bonds of community were weakening, a deterioration exacerbated by virtual connections and bombardment from media voices and images – 'how do you know what your own thoughts are, because you're constantly receiving so much information' (Document 3.6, line 548).

Both priest and headteacher shared views of parental engagement in Messy Church; regretting parents' tendency to stay on the periphery, assuming that the service was aimed at children. The priest questioned whether parents were so used to experiences being mediated through mobile telephones or screens, that 'to see their kids perform is almost like watching a YouTube video' (Document 3.8, line 566). Concluding his contributions to the recurring narrative of the influence of technology on society, he

reflected how encouraging face-to-face communication might deal with what he termed a 'constant distraction' of mobile telephones.

From this discussion about current realities emerged the desire to see *children and families worshipping together*. Participants' comments resonated with the aspiration for innovative approaches to worship outlined in the *Church of England Vision for Education*; 'we should host discussion, share good practice, and sponsor research in this area so that worship in schools promotes theological and religious literacy' (The Church of England Education Office, 2016, p.10).

It was certainly an area of mutual interest; the headteacher speculating about possible opportunities and the priest capturing the contrast between school services which seemed like performances and those which were considered worshipful. In the notion of sharing together, the priest advocated an approach in which 'the emphasis would be more on the parents and children enjoying the worship together. So not so much the children doing something for the parents' (Document 3.7, line 69).

The headteacher echoed this distinction, mentioning the school's Christmas and Easter services and repeating that 'none of our services involve really the children and the adults, you know the parents participating together' (Document 3.7, line 235). He reflected on the dilemma of logistics, but also focused on knowledge exchange, 'the children aren't teaching the parents, the parents aren't learning from the children ... They're not learning together' (Document 3.7, line 263). Through worshipping together, the headteacher was focused on giving the children a key leadership role in which they would be 'sitting with and leading their parents in that worship' (Document 3.7, line 97).

This infers that the s*chool and children are helping parents and family to learn about worship including worship behaviours*. The participants hoped that parents and families would become familiar with the shape and characteristics of the acts of worship usually experienced by the children. Yet the proposed approach was also distinctive because children would be passing on something to the adults in their family about the faith tradition of the school. Additionally, if worship became accessible through structure, routine and predictability, the headteacher believed this could lead to growth and

change; that parents might find 'some sort of consistency in their own way of praying or worshipping and hopefully you know the family worships when we do get them' (Document 3.8, line 487).

Reflecting on these ambitions, I noticed similar ideas to *Growing Faith* (The Church of England, 2019) and the more recent *Faith at Home* campaign (The Church of England, 2020b). Both promote partnership within the spheres of church, home and school in faith development in children and young people - *Faith at Home* aims to provide experiences, resources and networks for parents, church leaders and school leaders, and *Growing Faith* recognises the significant influence parents have in matters of faith at home. The latter hopes that adults will engage more intentionally in this responsibility, encouraging 'help and ideas for parents, grandparents and godparents to pass on faith to their children/grandchildren/godchildren' (The Church of England, 2019, p.5). One significant difference is notable, however, which is that the priest and headteacher participants focused on the agency and experience of the children within the school, which raises a question in offering considerations within a fresh approach. How might participants capture the voice of children and young people, and how might it recognise the interplay between church, school and home?

The priest unpacked how these *children's experiences of faith traditions and practices at school may be translated into home practices.* As the participants planned an event for the Christian festival of Candlemas, he emphasised how this recalled the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, a gathering of generations together. He introduced the theological understanding of 'missio' (Latin) or sending; what would the parents be taking home, and how is the connection being made between worship and habits at home to support the spiritual development of families? The priest suggested that families could take a candle home with an accompanying prayer, although was sensitive to how this might be construed by parents. Alongside a sense of mission and a desire to see learning in faith, both the priest and headteacher were clear that any new approach should be invitational in character and that any parental presence at worship (or any follow-up activity) remained optional.

The discussion on worshipping together led naturally to thinking about *the spiritual development of staff and families and their pastoral care*, as well as *the spiritual journey of children*. This drew out some reflections on ministry which expressed the relationship between church and school, including an example from the priest describing a telephone call from a bereaved couple, who articulated a desire to light a candle in the church after the sudden collapse and death of a family member. Their child had attended the local school, and it was this feeling of connection that triggered contact. For the priest, 'it just struck me that for somebody in that extreme state of anguish, the church could offer something' (Document 3.7, line 629). A later contribution by the headteacher connected with his experience of leading worship, recalling how a Year 2 child, responding to a question about who they might turn to, said 'Jesus, God… I pray' (Document 3.7, line 338).

What each participant described was a ministry interested in faith stories and experiences, responding to pastoral need and encouraging what the priest termed 'fullness of life'. I conjectured that by providing sharing opportunities for adults and children in worship, they anticipated that speaking about elements of faith would become more commonplace or natural – correspondingly, the headteacher commented that children have 'got a better chance of continuing a spiritual journey if their parents understand' (Document 3.7, line 429).

6.3 Thematic Analysis

6.3.1 Participant experiences of the process

This section explores, across both schools, what narratives reveal about participants' experiences of the process of inquiry and reflection.

The value of the structure and character of discussion

The quality of participant engagement in a process of theological reflection is dependent on the structure of any model. For example, the *Doing Theology Spiral* (Green, 2009) is rooted in a process which encourages discovery and transformation, not a method of

control – and the interplay between reflection and action encourages a habitual emphasis on experience and praxis. It is also important that the process acknowledges context and the background of participants; Astley (2002a) reminds us that Ordinary Theology, coming from those adults with little or no theological education (within a university or academic field), 'reveals and recognizes its learning context and nature much better than does scholarly, 'theologically educated' theology' (ibid., p.59).

There is evidence that participants were learning through the process; that there was significance and meaning to them, a resonance of values, attitudes and purpose (Astley, 2002a). For example, the headteacher of School R spoke of opportunity and conversation; how the process had demonstrated learning coming from discussion, through the time offered 'to have a conversation about something that we probably wouldn't have a discussion about in that greater depth' (Document 3.3, line 391). She reflected on the contrast between this deeper thinking and something which is more targeted and action-orientated in character, '…it was so much more open, and there wasn't an end point goal as it were.' (Document 3.4, line 332). The headteacher mentioned how leaders are often encouraged to take time away from school as an individual to focus on leadership matters and how useful this can prove, 'But there's also benefit in having a discussion with somebody' (Document 3.3, line 415).

Similarly, the headteacher of School P recognised the distinctiveness and importance of the features and purpose of theological conversation with the priest; blocking out time to 'have those more deep conversations and root them in scripture rather than those operational conversations of almost a tick list' (Document 3.10, line 283). He referenced the physical location of the sessions and the presence of a facilitator offering 'almost a coaching style of refocusing' (Document 3.10, line 313), all contributing to a peaceful, focused and powerful process. The headteacher reflected a sense of vocation, leaders being encouraged 'to draw on their own spiritual experiences and the narrative of the accumulated wisdom of the Christian community' (Luckcock, 2006, p.271).

During the study, one priest also spoke positively of the approach as a way to frame discussion and make sure that it actually happens between participants, as well as noting that 'it's helpful because it's very simple. I like simple, but I think you know I mean it

makes sense' (Document 3.3, line 388). She highlighted the importance of structure, being offsite and the time allowed for discussion, but also the aspect of a facilitating presence from outside the school, noting that there were times when she would have valued greater involvement of the researcher in a facilitation role. As well as indicating an appreciation of the openness of the process, she recognised the movement between phases, commenting that their actions and ideas 'will take us to our new situation, having done it' (Document 3.2, line 593).

Using Scripture for reflection

I noticed that discussion about the presence or place of the Bible as a tool for reflection (as opposed to the accessibility of theology discussed in Section 6.3.2) was more prevalent in one school (P). Prior to the paired interview, and without prompting, the priest turned to the process underpinning the sessions and asked 'have we reflected enough on scripture? Our understanding of Christianity I think is informing every part of our conversation' (Document 3.8, line 160). This echoes other references, such as the use of Lectio Divina in school, which the priest used as an illustration of 'getting into this habit of allowing you know scripture to speak to us' (Document 3.8, line 173).

When responding to whether the framework for conversation encouraged thinking or reflection about God, the headteacher in School P affirmed that the time had been well spent; that the method revealed complementary shared values, particularly his and the priest's feeling 'that community is the essence of the school and the church and within the scripture, within the Bible, within God's teaching. So, it [the model] has been really powerful and useful' (Document 3.10, line 261).

Data showed that throughout the sessions, all participants narrated or described their experiences openly, allowing reflection that would move them towards insight. It is evident that they were also encountering and paying attention to feelings, with their insights leading to action (Killen and de Beer, 1994). However, in gathering considerations for a future approach to theological conversation, there is a question to ask relating to discovering God in the Bible – having explored their current reality linked to Christian vision and ethos, should participants have guidance on how to let Scripture

interpret this contemporary situation (Green, 2009)? This reveals a complexity for future study, since a response depends on the faith position of participants – a consideration noted below in the individual reflections from priests and headteachers as participants.

A joint endeavour

I inferred a strong willingness by the participants to commit to the process because it included another voice and reflections other than one's own. Whilst the headteacher of School R provided lengthier contributions to the sessions, she also had a sense of joint endeavour – 'as part of the discussion, we got there together' (Document 3.4, line 305). Similarly the headteacher of School P, responding to a question relating to how the process facilitated thinking about vision and ethos, described an attitude of an open, shared experience, taking the view that 'the whole idea about this worship has come about through a dialogue between both of us where it's been equitable' (Document 3.8, line 222).

Individual reflections from the priests and headteachers as participants

This is one area in which the principles of Ordinary Theology as a conceptual framework need to be explored carefully, because whilst it 'does engage in a personal form of theological reflection aimed at thinking through the meaning of God' (Astley, 2002a, p.61), it is broadly a *lay* theology. Each participant in the process will have evolved a lay theology during their lifetime, but we cannot ignore the presence and engagement of the Anglican priests, on whom *their* Ordinary Theology has been overlayed by a specific course of training for ministry pre- and post-ordination.

Yet in School R, the priest was cautious about her overall contribution, recognising a disposition of listening rather than talking and even downplaying her role. She conveyed a feeling that she didn't have 'any great insights or revelations between sessions or through the process' (Document 3.5, line 319), at one point deflecting a question about ownership of the process by affirming the responsibility of the headteacher in relation to operational decisions. In comparison, the headteacher articulated an expectation

that any discussion involving the vicar would have an underlying faith element, with quite different characteristics to a school improvement or organisational discussion. She offered insight into how participants' roles brought a different perspective to the conversation, suggesting that the method of facilitating discussion could welcome other voices, as long as the key feature of openness remained unchanged.

I explored the idea of including others in theological reflection with the priest from School P, asking whether the method might be more challenging to apply in a context where the headteacher of a church school was not a Christian. He replied that 'the Holy Spirit can be in people's lives, even if they don't consciously sign up to the Christian faith' (Document 3.9, line 404); emphasising the value of conversation and sharing stories instead of seeing difference as a barrier. The priest also imagined that agnostics and atheists would be sympathetic to his articulation of the breakdown of human community; moreover the 'big story that we tell ourselves might differ, but we can still look at the same things and find common ground and common cause' (Document 3.9, line 431).

I recognise his view, which focuses on relationships and living well together (The Church of England Education Office, 2016), whilst deliberately placing it alongside an understanding of theologising as articulating or conceptualising revelation from God (Hull, 1977). The question of whether theological scrutiny of education must be rooted in a religious consciousness is beyond the bounds of this thesis. However, in Chapter 7 (Section 7.2) I reflect briefly on the faith position of participants, among my considerations for a new approach to theological conversation between priests and headteachers in relation to Christian vision and ethos in church schools.

Summary of considerations

Overall, participant experiences of the process suggest that a new approach to paired theological reflection should continue to emphasise the value of a joint endeavour, sustaining an orientation towards action in the interweaving of belief and experience. There are questions to consider in terms of facilitation and processes for stimulating

theological reflection, particularly to ensure the inclusion of participants who are committed to the vision and ethos of CE schools but may not self-identify as Christian.

6.3.2 'Doing theology' and the accessibility of theology and Christian language

Reflection and discussion as theological

Where the practice of theological reflection and discussion is often applied within a community of faith to support discipleship and nurture (Hull, 1977), its form as planned within this study was quite different. Participants were not engaging in catechesis but seeking divine insight to support them as priests and church school leaders in their understanding and development of vision and ethos. It was intended as ordinary, 'a form of theology that is fundamentally religious and spiritual, and therefore closely connected to personal faith' (Astley, 2002a, p.39).

Interestingly, a key insight from the headteacher participants was not necessarily linked to personal faith, but the sense of personal 'capital' they felt they possessed in the field of theology (see also Section 6.3.3). For example, during the paired interview for School R, I asked whether the process felt like 'doing theology'. As already noted in Chapter 4, Section 4.3.4, this initially drew a most emphatic response from the headteacher, 'No, no absolutely not. I mean I haven't done theology so you know that's not, I wouldn't know what to compare it to. [Referring to the priest] Obviously you've done theology officially' (Document 3.3, line 526). She expressed a clear disposition; that the practice of doing theology was formal, with the evaluation of someone's theological literacy being a measure of their level of scholarly attainment. She affirmed this with the priest, 'You went to college and got the certificate … I mean I did Religious Studies A-level but that was it' (Document 3.3, line 532).

This appears to be closely aligned to a description which separates what theologians speak into education (connecting theology with education via a scholarly approach) and 'doing' a theology of education (Hull, 1977). Nonetheless, although the latter is for those who are religious and wishing 'to articulate their participation in education in

terms of their religious consciousness' (Hull, 1977, p.19), the headteacher appeared to have delivered a firm challenge to the concept that everyone can 'do' theology.

Having amended my question to enquire whether she thought the conversation was theologically informed, the nature of the headteacher's contributions changed slightly, as she listened to the priest describing the conversation as a context for practical theology. Her remarks then exposed a reaction to the language, 'It makes it sound quite scary, if you say you're doing theology' (Document 3.3, line 564), carrying a suggestion that theology was difficult, outside of the domain of the school leader. Nevertheless, this reinforced the participants' reflections that conversations were theological if they included certain language and concepts, and also how the headteacher's dispositions connected directly with the 'current reality' the participants were seeking to explore.

It is worth including one response from the headteacher's individual interview in full:

> *I guess, I don't see me as having theological discussions about anything. That to me, as you said it's too much of a churchy word. That's not something I do, vicars do that, priests do that. Which maybe that's my concept and my perception and maybe I am having those discussions with staff. You know when we're talking about Collective Worship or RE or whatever, maybe they are actually theological expressions, but to me they're not. That sounds too difficult. (Document 3.3, line 612).*

During the final phase of the same interview, the headteacher echoed her scholarly view of theology, as 'stuff you do at college where you have very highbrow conversations with people who've got degrees and are very experienced priests, or have the most incredible knowledge' (Document 3.4, line 396). She could not imagine herself in this space, but posited that a frame of reference, such as watching a video of a theological discussion and thus understanding what it looked like, might make theology more accessible. Perhaps in advocating considerations for a new approach to paired theological reflection, it will be important to make a clear distinction between scholarly and practical, 'doing' theology, placing an emphasis on divine listening and a clear application to school leadership issues.

In School P, the headteacher seemed partially in agreement that their discussion and reflection had been theological, with the added suggestion that 'scripture would give us a greater focus' (Document 3.10, line 325). However, a further question on identifying theological elements of the process prompted some uncertainty. The headteacher was aware of drawing on his own Christian tradition of leadership in a church school and a personal faith, yet also sought to lean towards the priest's view, 'I don't know. It's difficult. I think some of it could have been, but it's how we define where it becomes just a normal reality and where it is spiritual or is based in theology. Again, I suppose I'd be looking to [priest] to guide in that' (Document 3.10, line 332).

On the contrary, the priests' contributions to discussions reveal a more confident explanation of the place of theology in the process of reflection. The priest from School R offered an illustration of how their discussion could be viewed as practical, everyday theology, 'I think it is theologically informed, because we're talking about something that Jesus said, life in all its fullness which comes from the Bible, which is theology. So, we are unpacking that and putting it into a practical you know into school … I mean that is really doing theology' (Document 3.3, line 548). This response is consistent with Hull's use of the term *theologising,* taking place within the community of faith and hermeneutical in 'the way in which the Bible does or should or might impinge upon the religious consciousness' (Hull, 1977, p.7).

The priest from School P articulated similarly that the structure used for dialogue and the participants' experience had both been informed by theology. He referred to their chosen focus of children and families worshipping together being intrinsically God-focused, 'stepping out of the flow of kind of secular time. Stepping into the presence of God' (Document 3.8, line 263). During his individual interview, I enquired whether the process of inquiry had offered enough 'thinking about God'. He reiterated that the approach taken, by its very nature a Christian theological conversation, would be enhanced by drawing further on scriptural study and reflection. Interestingly, the priest did not express a preference for how these reflective exercises were led or by whom, rather he expressed a desire for bible passages which demonstrated resonance and connection, and an openness to being stimulated and surprised.

Elements of this overall narrative highlight an issue which I had not expected. I had imagined participants conceptualising in the light of biblical insight or revelation from God, understanding that they were 'doing' rather than studying theology, within the framework of Ordinary Theology which is interested in religious language as used by ordinary believers. Yet the language of theology contained in dialogue about Christian vision and ethos may prove to be a hindrance outside the context of a community of believers, depending on people's view of its accessibility and/or their engagement with any form of theological education.

Conversely, I had anticipated that participants, in identifying elements of theological significance, might engage in discussion about what could (or could not) be considered orthodoxy or conforming to scripture, given that there are wide interpretations of this within the Church of England. Critical discourse was low-key if not absent – where was the debate about the locus of authority within the church and therefore doctrinal norms, and what Christians do actually believe (Astley, 2002a)? Perhaps suggestions for a future approach should include an element of critical evaluation, including how to frame this interpretive process as a joint endeavour if participants hold a differing view of the theological capital they hold.

Accessibility of theology and Christian language

Insights into the narrative of accessibility of language are found principally in the data from School R, most likely because the participants' discerned issue focused closely on the accessibility to staff of the school's vision. Leaders were keen to keep the staff *as learners* in sharp focus; to engage them in cognitive, contextualised learning about religion and understanding of concepts (Astley, 2002a), although not in the context of drawing them to a position of faith.

Leaders recognised that there were 'peculiarities about religious language' (Hull, 1977, p.6). Indeed, the priest posited that Christian language (and perceptions of it) could be acting as a barrier to staff, wondering how it could be made more relatable - 'Trying not to use churchy words but using words that they can relate to more easily. Because Christian language can be very… it is its own language that nobody understands'

(Document 3.1, line 653). She later compared this with a view of children's attitudes to language; that they display a confidence because they come with no preconceived ideas, and 'don't have to do any unlearning' (Document 3.1, line 694). Similarly, the headteacher speculated whether a common language around vision might emerge through being more manageable and understandable by staff. However, she resisted the notion of simplifying Christian language, acknowledging it as 'a barrier, but does it mean that you take the barrier away or is it, you give people somehow the tools to get through the barrier?' (Document 3.1, line 677).

For the priest, the idea of practical, everyday theology made theology accessible, such that anybody can 'do' theology. However, her comments also contained implicit caveats: motivation and aspiration might be different for Christians and non-Christians, particularly where theology is an academic subject, and people's perception and definition of theology can be a barrier. I sensed that the definition of theology, whilst helped by the priest's explanation of connecting God with the everyday, became a hindrance to the headteacher; yet by expressing her view about not having enough knowledge to 'do theology', she found connection and empathy with staff anxiety when asked to talk about Christian language and vision.

Any reflections on a possible new approach to theological conversation should evidently consider the use of theological language. In essence, language that helps to describe the ordinariness of theology (such as everyday or practical) seemed to make theology feel more accessible or comfortable. However, this depends on individuals, who will continue to be influenced by their own dispositions; as well as having choices demarcated by constraints or opportunities, they are 'also circumscribed by an internalized framework that makes some possibilities inconceivable, others improbable and a limited range acceptable' (Reay, 2004, p.435).

6.3.3 Nature of the participants' leadership or ministry role in the school

During this study, it was evident that the nature of the relationship between headteacher and priest, particularly how the latter might exercise a leadership or ministry role within the school, was influenced substantially by the parish context and

the character of interaction between church and school. SIAMS suggests that 'a distinctive feature of the school is that it understands itself as a partner with the local church and diocese' (The Church of England Education Office, 2018, p.3), and for both priest-participants they held an ex-officio position as a foundation governor on the school's governing body. This brings with it an expectation of possessing the skills to contribute to effective governance and to ensure that the school's religious character 'is preserved and developed' (Department for Education, 2017, p.16).

In School R, the priest spoke about engaging in conversation with the headteacher, regular school visits to lead Collective Worship and a distinctive leadership role on the governing body. I inferred a stable role in the school, participating in agreed activities and contributing a voice speaking into education, rooted in the local church and representing the Christian faith. Her description was consistent with findings by Jelfs (2010) in terms of school/church connections: explicit links with the faith dimensions of the school and leading worship or visits to the church, with special events or festivals 'considered important opportunities for families to encounter the Christian faith' (Jelfs, 2010, p.34).

In writing more extensively about the church/school partnership within School P, I acknowledge that participants found greater opportunity within the process of inquiry to articulate expectations for this relationship, including how leadership priorities might grow naturally from shared interactions. Its context, specifically the priest's role within the school, provided far broader scope for developing practical theological encounter and response at school level, demonstrated as participants provided an example of school leaders and parish working effectively and innovatively together to develop Collective Worship (The Church of England Education Office, 2018).

The priest as chaplain offered a frequent presence for the local church within the school, connecting the two communities and creating familiarity. The headteacher recognised the priest's social capital in terms of insight gained from his daily work and ministry, but also insight into others' stories which connected the community together. Therefore, proposed activities to build on this familiarity felt natural and complementary; the priest

commented that ‘a lot of those families, they’ve been into that church already. It’s not such a scary prospect, you know crossing that threshold’ (Document 3.7, line 310).

The headteacher also indicated that he viewed the priest’s engagement as intricately connected with the leadership of the school, signifying a shared ownership of the role of spiritual leader, although adopting an almost deferential position in terms of experience and religious capital. At one point he said to the priest, ‘it’s about learning from you. Because you have that deep faith … that subject knowledge that I don’t’ (Document 3.6, line 60). The headteacher commented how the priest had influenced his spiritual life and the spiritual life of the school, not in terms of bringing academic or theological knowledge, but offering observations and conversation, ‘just by him expressing his own spiritual thoughts and opinions, that helps to guide me, helps to guide the school as well’ (Document 3.10, line 68).

As the participants planned activities through their dialogue, I noticed how the headteacher spoke both of this eagerness to receive guidance and his authority to distribute leadership. Often, he saw his distinct role as functional or logistical, enabling from a school perspective and helping everyone come together, without adding any burdens to the staff. Given other responses, I interpreted this as drawing on others’ expertise to empower them, a humble appreciation of others’ gifts and experience rather than a straightforward distribution of responsibilities.

As they reflected on their vision for this connection between parish and school, particularly the development of the priest’s chaplaincy role, it was noticeable how the participants envisaged a cohesive endeavour. Elements of ministry and worship were not limited to specific times or places, as participants spoke of shared space and removing boundaries. Through this idea of cohesion, the headteacher further emphasised how the context of chaplaincy had given a strong sense of partnership and shared vision in ministry – ‘it just struck me, just what an important job the school can do in the faith, in the nourishment, in the discipleship … we’re not working in isolation … we’re working together’ (Document 3.8, line 415).

Nonetheless, amidst the planning for the Candlemas event, the headteacher did made a remark which suggested that worshipping together in school time was not just an inherently positive way of expressing the school's Christian ethos and supporting a child's spiritual journey, but formed a stepping stone of engagement with Sunday worship at the local church. This idea of recruiting children for church attendance is described by Cooling (2008) as a mistaken understanding of mission. It should instead be about what we imagine for pupils of the future in terms of discipleship – 'people who can carry forward the mission of the church … and act as co-workers with God through serving and transforming the culture around them' (ibid., p.11).

I recall being surprised that the headteacher's language suggested some kind of hierarchy or insufficiency, rather than the proposal forming an equally valid element of the shared ministry between church and school. However, in a later session, he used different language to suggest a bridging role, 'hopefully this will be a good springboard to involve some of our other families' (Document 3.8, line 137).

6.3.4 Social and cultural capital revealed during the process of inquiry and reflection

Bourdieu's theory of practice (Bourdieu 1977), from which I sought to apply the three constructs of habitus, capital and field to secure insights into individuals' participation, is intended to be applied in the social world and describes individuals engaged in a struggle for symbolic capital, success and/or domination in different fields (Rey, 2007). Whilst my study imagined participants as seeking to cooperate rather than dominate in the fields of education and theology, it is helpful to draw attention to the different forms of capital identified during the data collection sessions and how participants engaged, possessed or esteemed the different types.

School R: Operational capital

I am using the term 'operational capital' to denote where data suggested that participants felt they held authority in decisions relating to the day-to-day operation of the school, or where they positioned themselves authoritatively on these matters within conversations.

For School R, this was clear-cut. The priest seemed content for the headteacher to take a lead on describing practical ways of engaging the whole school community in discussing Christian vision, adding occasional comments. Some of her responses created an interesting juxtaposition, for example she emphasised the helpfulness of the process of talking together, yet affirmed that 'what I liked was that … you came with some ideas last time' (Document 3.3, line 106). My inference is that the priest valued the discussion element, with ideas emerging as they talked together, but assigned capital to the headteacher in providing input for the organisational response. In her individual interview, the priest acknowledged the headteacher's expertise and in-depth knowledge, due to her role, 'she's got her finger on the pulse much more than I have' (Document 3.5, line 294). Similarly, the headteacher assumed her own capital in making operational decisions, 'So yes, so I've actually put some things in place that are different to last year, because of what we talked about' (Document 3.3, line 54).

School R: Educational capital

Despite her modest contributions to planning operational solutions in the paired sessions, the priest revealed meaningful educational capital within her individual interview. She spoke about undertaking a teacher training qualification and working in both secondary and junior schools, as well as connections with schools when involved with parish ministry. From the latter perspective, she described varied engagement from rarely taking assemblies to regular visits, reflecting her encounters with both schools showing little desire to engage with the church and (as currently) a far more reciprocal and welcoming relationship.

In her individual interview, the headteacher also gave a brief resumé of her professional and personal path to the present. Through this, I learnt something of the habitus and capital she had brought into the previous sessions; her Christian faith and a background of being brought up in a local church, a period in educational consultancy across a number of different schools and further experience in the leadership of learning and teaching as a Deputy Headteacher.

Equally, she understood how staff participation in dialogue about Christian vision (and therefore the richness of discussion) could be affected by people's anxiety or a perceived inadequacy - a lack of educational capital due to their specific role in the school. The headteacher recognised that once these barriers exist, they are hard to dissipate.

School R: Theological capital

I have explored the headteacher's reaction to the question about 'doing theology' in Section 6.3.2 – suffice to say, she found it rather difficult to imagine any possession of theological capital! If dispositions are the product of possibilities, opportunities and restrictions framing earlier life experiences (Bourdieu, 1990), then evidently the headteacher saw 'doing theology' as improbable and in turn unthinkable, or at least not one of her possible practices. This created an interesting contrast with the priest, who had accrued educational capital within her professional experience, yet did not choose to see possibilities in the context of discussion about operational and strategic school matters.

In terms of theological capital, the priest affirmed that she went to theological college, and her commentary suggested that she sought to identify with the headteacher's perception that academic study provided a route into theological understanding, thus making it easier. Moreover, she facilitated further conversation by offering an example of how the headteacher had 'done' theology in discussions about Collective Worship and Religious Education. By emphasising the nature of theology as ordinary and everyday, the priest began to explore the headteacher's own reservations with the language of theology, supporting her in seeing it as something that could be accessible, or 'more within your grasp' (Document 3.3, line 680).

School P: Social capital

I have applied the term social capital to examples aligned with the canonical narrative, where participants revealed something of their perceived role and influence in securing provision or support for the local community.

I described some of the participants' perceptions in Section 6.2.2, within the key narratives for the school, as they discussed the growth and changes envisaged if the school were to act as a hub of community. Their motivation and sense of capital was evidenced during their individual interviews. The priest advocated the Christian faith as a resource to tackle social malaise, and the headteacher spoke of a disposition to socialism from an early age, articulating a belief 'in the state supporting its people' (Document 3.10, line 14) and that education was for supporting families into future generations.

The headteacher also acknowledged the capital inherent in holding a position of leadership, noting that headship in a school had allowed him to 'create that picture of what I would like to see of working with children to get the best out of them, supporting parents to help them' (Document 3.10, line 21). In describing an equitable partnership with the priest, he displayed an eagerness for him to hold similar capital; a sense that the chaplaincy role required autonomy, but that both leaders could fulfil their responsibilities together for the benefit of the community. The headteacher perceived this arrangement as unique, 'it's not just me making the decision, it's a collective decision, which is quite different to perhaps a normal school structure' (Document 3.10, line 57).

School P: Theological and educational capital

Articulating the expertise he brought to the conversations, the priest mentioned his theological training and work in churches, alongside capital gained from pastoral experience and insight from being a parent. During his individual interview he also alluded to educational capital including attending a grammar school, working in a children's home and training to be a teacher. The priest encapsulated this capital within his present role, 'this is my first fully fledged vicar type post and it's this beautiful blend of my teaching background so that I can bring that into this role' (Document 3.9, line 54). He clearly viewed this as being complementary to the expertise and capital of the headteacher, recognising that the latter was 'very good at the kind of like the soft stuff as well, motivating people and getting that balance between warm and approachable but also having boundaries' (Document 3.8, line 373).

This leads me to hypothesise that the participants' idea of equity in partnership had developed from an implication of balanced capital, i.e. where one lacked expertise within a field, this was equalised by the other's higher level of expertise in the same field. The headteacher verbalised this definition in terms of the knowledge and experience brought to the table, 'he brings that and I hate to say subject knowledge, but he brings that spiritual knowledge … But then I bring the whole school knowledge and the ability to put it in the diary and… so, in both ways, our roles are really important' (Document 3.10, line 231).

Summary consideration

Responding to the matters raised within this section, I recognise that the starting points of any new approach to facilitate theological conversation between priests and headteachers relating to Christian vision and ethos need to be adaptable. In particular, consideration should be given to designing a context and framework which encourages discussion about personal or professional experiences as well as educational and theological capital, without clouding each participant's unique role in the outworking of leadership priorities.

6.3.5 Commentary on the data collection architecture

Data collection architecture (outlined in Chapter 3, Section 3.6.2) refers to components of my data collection method which facilitated an ongoing narrative record and formed the overall approach used for theological reflection. This recognises that theology 'is process as well as content, and therefore includes the set of processes and practices of holding, developing, patterning and critiquing these beliefs, thoughts and discourse' (Astley, 2002a, p.56). In relation to this 'architecture', participant commentaries principally revealed views on practical arrangements for the sessions, elements of the structure and process and the sharing of transcripts and recordings.

In School P, the headteacher was positive about the practical arrangements, recognising how his usual conversations with the priest tended to focus on operational rather than strategic matters. He considered whether they could in future hold two types of

meeting, one operational and one strategic, the latter using a bible passage 'to get us thinking and are we really … doing what we set out to do in terms of our vision' (Document 3.8, line 319).

The priest also described how the arrangements and method for reflection highlighted the contribution of location, being away from the busyness of the school site and the likelihood of interruption, as well as offering moments to pause and touch on elements of scripture. He offered a pertinent reminder that theological reflection is not intended as a one-off event, but a series of ongoing conversations. He drew out particular elements of the data collection architecture which he found helpful, such as listening to recordings, reading transcripts and guidance from me in a facilitating role, also affirming the value of a shared conversation, 'thinking about how this is going to inform the practical life of the school' (Document 3.9, line 373).

The headteacher of School R commented on using the recordings of the sessions as a tool for reflection; as well as acting as a reminder, 'it just gives you time doesn't it, to rethink it' (Document 3.3, line 484). She suggested that within the cycle of theological reflection, the distinct stage of reflection enabled refinement for the 'responding' phase, developing and amending ideas and allowing participants to view the presenting issue from different perspectives. Invited during her individual interview to comment on aspects of the process which supported reflection, she confirmed the value of the data collection architecture, in particular receiving the session recordings for review. Firstly, it enabled her to listen back after a deep conversation, and 'actually going away and leaving it for a few weeks, and then coming back to it, you saw it afresh' (Document 3.4, line 371). Secondly, she identified how by listening to the narrative (as opposed to reading it in a transcript), she was able to pick up other cues or nuances not available from text.

Likewise, the priest referred to the supporting data collection architecture and appreciated the option of returning to listen to the audio recording. It will be important to include these practical and enabling characteristics within any considerations for a new approach to inquiry and reflection.

6.4 Chapter summary

In this chapter I presented the canonical and key narratives which emerged from each school and undertook a thematic analysis of the participants' conversations and commentaries – and it is worth noting the contrasting ideas which surfaced. For example, the canonical narrative in School R was linked to the outcomes and expectations of a SIAMS inspection. Conversely, School P's narrative appeared more evangelistic. There, the priest and headteacher advocated a community role and sought to address social issues, albeit whilst suggesting a deficit of values locally; however, it also became apparent that they wished to see people making a faith commitment.

The themes that I discerned from my data analysis were also varied. The participants from School R focused on staff and spoke in terms of accessibility of the school's vision, i.e. the extent to which adults were confident and knowledgeable about theological themes and language, and how this connected to the school's distinctive character and purpose. Both the priest and headteacher in School P used language which highlighted responsibility and authority, but also articulated an aspiration to see children and families worshipping together, with children taking a modelling or leadership role and helping to translate these practices into the home.

Throughout this chapter I have paused to draw on the main issues and findings emerging, suggesting how they might inform considerations for designing a new approach for church school leaders and priests to engage in theological conversation and reflection. These include the following matters relating to character and structure: facilitation and how to introduce theological reflection, critical evaluation and framing the interpretive process, the supportiveness of data collection architecture and the presence and accessibility of theological language. Likewise, I commented on relational aspects: how the process of inquiry can be influenced by the circumstances of the relationship between parish and school, as well as the importance of understanding participants' personal and professional experience.

I have also shown the value of understanding participants' educational and theological capital whilst sustaining the 'ordinariness' of conversation, such that participant roles

are not obscured as they work through the outcomes of their dialogue and discover a new situation and priorities.

My considerations for designing a new approach, alongside closing reflections from my perspective as both researcher and DDE, are outlined in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 7

Considerations and closing reflections

Throughout this study my intention has been to utilise rather than test an existing approach to theological reflection, with data collection sessions guiding me to the learning and analysis explained in Chapters 5 and 6. The learning I have described is the investigation of a small-scale qualitative inquiry; exploring what was revealed by four participants' experiences of paired reflection, and capturing and analysing the narratives expressed through their conversation and commentary. This has led me to an informed position from which I am able to identify some considerations, which focus on priests and headteachers working together theologically in relation to Christian vision and ethos in church schools, to be explored further in post-doctoral activity.

This final chapter includes an outline of those considerations, in the shape of both principles and questions. Areas for consideration include the structure and characteristics of a new approach and questions about embracing the different faith positions of participants. I must emphasise that these are only considerations – each will need further theoretical work to address some of the conceptual issues as well as their practical application.

I also offer brief closing reflections, both as a researcher and in connection to my work and ministry responsibilities as a DDE. I explain what I noticed about my role during the research study, as well as the way in which observations and findings relating to participants' leadership and ministry within the church school community connected to my experiences and responsibilities. I conclude that engaging in the practice of theological conversation offers an opportunity of transformational learning for priests and headteachers – a clear and accessible way of thinking theologically about Christian vision and ethos in CE schools.

7.1 Considerations - structure and characteristics of a new approach

One significant element of learning from my analysis is that in considering the potential structure of a new approach, attention must be given to addressing the function of facilitation and understanding participants' dispositions and prior experience, whilst sustaining an orientation towards questioning and action in the interweaving of religious belief and experience.

In the *Doing Theology Spiral* (Green, 2009), theological reflection is imagined as a group activity with a designated leader (usually a church minister) taking a facilitating, mentoring role. The leader guides the group and draws participants into an encounter with God, with the purpose of engaging them in a process of faith formation. This is quite different to the facilitation of conversation as part of my study, which viewed the priest and headteacher as self-guiding. In my role as researcher I sought to be relatively unobtrusive, but mindful of gentle steering through the inquiry process and sustaining an emphasis on the subject of Christian vision and ethos within the CE school context. Therefore, a consideration for a new approach would be how to identify options for facilitation of the process, sustaining the principle of being self-guiding so that the focus remains on personal narrative and insight. This may also include planning for practical arrangements to support participants' discernment, such as methods of recording and sharing their sessions for further reflection.

With or without facilitation, evidence from this study suggests that a new approach should incorporate certain elements at the beginning. These starting points are centred around participants' experiences, both personal and professional. They may include introducing questions arising from their current practice, in addition to discussing areas of perceived educational and theological capital e.g. their status, knowledge or qualifications in either of these fields. Developed appropriately, this could explore views and assumptions about the interplay between church, school and home and capture the voice of stakeholders, specifically children and young people, without blurring the unique roles each participant might play in any outworking of the priorities which form a leadership response to their inquiry.

A further consideration is how participants both embrace an openness to voicing challenge and yet remain self-critical. Research participants in School P raised the notion of being countercultural, although at times reflected a deficit view of local community values and attitudes. This illuminates the risk of similarly-minded individuals reinforcing one another's views without these being contested. Theological conversation orientated not just around expectations in education but outwards to civil and church communities is stimulating, but should be undertaken within a context of critical evaluation (See Section 7.2.2).

7.2 Considerations - the faith position of participants

In looking ahead to a new approach to theological conversation, it is important to emphasise that this study engaged with participants who self-identified as Christian, as I was interested in their reflections on God in relation to their experiences. Furthermore, it used the framework of Ordinary Theology which forms a 'theology that is fundamentally religious and spiritual, and therefore closely connected to personal faith' (Astley, 2002a, p.39), drawing on a believer's personal knowledge of God and shaped by spiritual practices and beliefs (Astley, 2004). Thus, the participants within the study were theologising within a context in which faith was known and shared, about subject matter which uncovered characteristics of their self-awareness 'in so far as these are knowingly influenced or formed by participation within a religious tradition' (Hull, 1977, p.6).

This raises the question of how a new approach might embrace participants who do not self-identify as Christian, whilst engaging them fully in reflecting on vision, ethos and leadership within a church school. An exploration of this question is outside of the bounds of this thesis, however I believe it might be helpfully explored through two particular areas: reflection and discussion as theological, and critical evaluation.

7.2.1 Reflection and discussion as theological

In terms of a learning theology (see Chapter 2, Section 2.6.2), I was studying how individuals' personal ordinary theology interacted with the reflective process, focusing

on the process of inquiry and the participants' experience of it. Interestingly, some key learning from the schools' narratives was in relation to the accessibility of theology, which resonates with findings by Spencer and Lucas (2019), who undertook a review of literature and in-depth interviews with a small number of individuals with expertise in the area of Christian leadership in schools. The study's findings showed that stakeholders repeatedly asked questions about the meaning of theological vision and theological literacy, and what was being suggested by headteachers thinking in a theological way.

This presents a fundamental question about a new approach to paired theological reflection: how might the inquiry process be presented to potential participants? It commences from personal experience and is a joint learning endeavour between priest and headteacher, yet also seeks to explore an underpinning theology to Christian vision and ethos within a church school, alongside each individual's role in leadership and ministry within that community.

7.2.2 An element of critical evaluation

I have already noted that this study was undertaken with participants who self-identified as Christian and was characterised by a practical method imagined for use by lay and ordained Christian leaders (Green, 2009). In addition, the Ordinary Theology framework incorporates the discernment of the guidance of the Holy Spirit within the community. It anticipates a level of awareness amongst participants, within their discernment, to testing the faithfulness of any perceived change in doctrinal expression, and questions the extent to which they might be considered spiritually mature or theologically competent to fulfil such a role (Armstrong, 2013).

In considering a new approach to theological reflection for priests and church school leaders, I recognise the potential vulnerability of a self-guided approach in that it may result in a varied approach to critical evaluation. However, elements of structure and the attributes, roles and experience of participants, regardless of their faith position, can help manage this potential issue. For example, participants would hold capital across the fields of education and theology and engage in critical discourse, drawing on

a number of subject areas and exploring priorities across a shared context (Pears, 2007). Within their school communities, priests and headteachers will regularly address questions of identity and faith-inspired leadership; in topics relating to school governance, the organisation of the curriculum and discussion about Christian character and vision, to name but a few. This study therefore has a practical application – it could be the beginning of a valuable tool to help increase their understanding of how to position themselves in these matters, acknowledging their own dispositions and starting points.

7.3 A reflection on my researcher role

In the role of researcher during this study, I planned to enter the field of research in a way which was attentive and supportive, creating a space in which lived experiences would be revealed and discussed by participants. Yet I was aware that through my involvement and these encounters I must be open to new learning and understanding, as well as the possibility that my view of self or other may change (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007).

I have reflected on this 'position of self' in Chapter 3 (Section 3.7.2); acknowledging the concern of an inevitable influence through my diocesan role, whilst ensuring that the study was grounded in ethical principles relating to the collection, analysis and handling of data. I planned carefully, communicating to participants the nature of the research process as rooted in an academic programme of study and inquiry and regularly affirming my role as researcher. A few times, participants would refer to 'the diocese' (usually accompanied by a sideways glance) as if to wish to acknowledge or even explore our connection. Each time a smile (with no verbal response) was sufficient to move participants on and the connection remained perceivable but manageable.

I also became very conscious of the importance of the relational and contextual aspects of the inquiry process. Particularly throughout the period of data collection, I noticed that conversations between priest and headteacher (and thus the ensuing narrative) reflected both the characteristics of each personal relationship and also the current status of the link between parish and school.

Finally, I became aware of moments in which participant narratives surprised me, troubling or affecting my own value position. For example, the priest and headteacher in School P used the language of being counter-cultural in terms of what they perceived as modern secular attitudes. Yet this felt as if it was expressed within a deficit view of local community (see Chapter 6, Section 6.2.1) and suggested to me that their own culture or position ought to have been open to challenge, whether by themselves or others. I wonder how this issue of critical evaluation (noted in Section 7.2.2) might also influence the role of facilitator in any new approach to theological conversation?

This illuminates the difference between Green's (2009) methodology, which anticipates a discrete function for a designated leader in supporting groups 'doing theology', and my adapted method which took a more self-guiding approach – a subject which, in relation to considering a new approach, will require discussion via the proposed reference group (see Section 7.5).

7.4 Connections to my professional role

In Chapter 1, I signalled that this study's unique approach of blending Ordinary Theology, narrative inquiry and Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and capital provided an original contribution to knowledge in terms of how priests and headteachers might engage in 'doing theology' together in a church school setting.

This has important strategic implications for developing and enhancing the connection between parish and church school, which I have the opportunity to develop through my professional role within a diocese. Insights from the *Faith in the Nexus* research report (Bowie et al., 2020) remind us that for many church school families, church attendance is not a priority – yet they find a sense of belonging to church *through* school and consider themselves to be part of the Christian family. This can easily lead to disengagement if parish priests do not work closely with the school. Sustaining the connection between school and church thus requires strategic prioritisation (Bowie et al., 2020); deliberate, strong and active engagement through a positive relationship. This study begins to indicate the rich possibilities for headteachers and priests that can be gleaned through focused, critical conversation about education leadership, rooted in

careful and theological reflection at local level about the shared community between school and parish, such that a sense of mutuality and shared missional priorities might be created.

I have also reflected on two more operational aspects of my role as DDE during this process; firstly in relation to how our diocesan education team interprets and explores policy or vision documents published by the CEEO with church school leaders, and secondly how our team expresses advice and guidance to schools regarding the appointment of headteachers and expectations of their Christian faith commitment.

As I have progressed through this study, I have begun to form a position that whilst I consider the *Church of England Vision for Education* (The Church of England Education Office, 2016) to be a clear articulation of the Church's view of the purpose of education, rooted in a theological rationale, some of the centralised outworking of the vision feels problematic. Whilst there is an intention to provide resources 'to help equip leaders to work with the Church of England Vision for Education in their own context' (The Church of England, 2020c), its function is perhaps a fitting illustration of the voice of Church authority speaking into education (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.4), applying theology to educational issues. Consequently, it appears to offer a bridge between theology and education (Hull, 1984), rather than an ordinary, practical, inquiring theology for a local context. A more dialogic approach, such as I have examined, might provide an antidote to this implicitly transactional means of resourcing leadership, which signifies a one-directional transmission of 'correct' ideas rather than a hermeneutical model of interaction.

Likewise, as diocesan education teams continue to explore the understanding and language of Christian vision with school leaders, it feels important to prioritise active listening for the presence and movement of God in the local context, including the roles of church and school leaders within this and how each school might respond. My reflection is that this listening and noticing should value specialist theological insight but not be steered by it. Rather, it anticipates that God has equipped a group of people with spiritual gifts for discerning and voicing God's will. This seems to express the essential

nature of theology – a community which offers itself to join in partnership with God's work (Fraser, 2005).

I have also become more aware of how the presence of (or attention to) SIAMS can be cyclical within a school's life and how the language of Christian vision is received by different audiences. During SIAMS training for school leaders and governors, our diocesan team always emphasises that the principles and intent of the evaluation framework should be embedded and evaluated regardless of where a school sits within an inspection cycle. However, the narratives of School R clearly showed a lead-in period and focused on the implications after the inspection event. These narratives pose the question – how might we work with schools to encourage all staff, in all roles and regardless of hours worked, to be connected to the school's Christian vision?

Regarding implications for the appointment of headteachers to CE schools, the centrality of response in religion which draws people of faith to personal learning (Astley, 2002a), and the themes explored in this study of speaking about God and discerning God in experiences, raises the question of how diocesan education teams continue to advise recruitment panels in terms of applicants who do not have a faith commitment. Presently, and usually in an attempt to augment the potential field of candidates, advertisements will speak of a leader's ability to promote life in all its fullness (John 10:10, Good News Translation). They hold significant responsibilities relating to developing the school's distinctive Christian character and must be able to explain how biblical teaching is at the heart of the school's vision 'giving it coherence, relevance and sustainability' (The Church of England Education Office, 2018, p.3). I leave the expectation of faith commitment in headteacher candidates as an unresolved question; if they are able to demonstrate the aforementioned skills and capabilities required, what rationale might we offer for expecting a personal knowledge of God?

Finally, this study has important implications for Initial Ministerial Education. For clergy, working with children and the dynamic of teaching and learning dynamic is part of their ministry, so surely paying attention to children and involvement in and by schools should be part of their ministerial shaping? It is not enough to suggest that priests simply have a disposition towards education or the skills to work in schools. Paying attention to

children, i.e. putting the child in the midst and viewing everything through what it means to them, is key to who Jesus is, and to who we are (Godfrey and Griffiths, 2020).

7.5 Next steps

As an outcome of this doctoral study I intend to set up a reference group within the diocese, consisting of serving priests, CE school headteachers and a diocesan colleague who holds a responsibility for advising parishes on mission. I plan to present my findings, considerations and the questions that have arisen to this group and begin a collaborative process of shaping a new approach to theological conversation to be piloted with diocesan church schools, noting any potential outside this sector for guiding headteachers on the practice and benefits of reflecting on their work with another person. I have also identified the need to undertake further theoretical work in relation to embracing participants holding different faith positions and critical evaluation, as well as practical work on facilitation and the accessibility of theological concepts.

7.6 A closing thought

I reflect with hopefulness on the future of a method or model of theological conversation between priests and headteachers. Using the framework of Ordinary Theology has inspired a learning model of conversation and relationship, imagining equality in participation and seeking honest exploration. It encompasses a level of risk for both participants, since the inquiry process precludes any desire to try to maintain a professional detachment (Savage, 2013). There is the possibility of exposure to vulnerability as they open themselves up and draw deeper into the life of their shared community; yet the richness of experiences, insights and responses as they develop new situations from learning and doing theology together could be truly transformational.

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Appendix A - Research Ethics Review Application

Research Ethics Review Application for full review

For Faculty Office use only	
FREC Protocol No:	**Date received:**

*Your application **must** comprise the following documents (please tick the boxes below to indicate that they are attached):*

Application Form	✓
Peer Review Form *Peer Review to follow from Dr. Durrant as agreed with Prof. Powell*	

Copies of any documents to be used in the study:

Participant Information Sheet(s)	✓
Consent Form(s)	✓
Introductory letter(s)	
Questionnaire	
Focus Group Guidelines	

Education Faculty Research Ethics Review
Application for full review

1. PROJECT DETAILS

MAIN RESEARCHER	Quentin Roper
E-MAIL	[redacted]
POSITION WITHIN CCCU	EdD Student, University Governor
POSITION OUTSIDE CCCU	Director of Education, [redacted]
COURSE (students only)	Doctorate in Education
DEPARTMENT (staff only)	
PROJECT TITLE	The role and contribution of theological conversation between clergy and headteachers to the development of vision and ethos in two Church of England primary schools.
TUTOR/SUPERVISOR: NAME	Prof. Trevor Cooling
TUTOR/SUPERVISOR: E-MAIL	[redacted]
DURATION OF PROJECT (start & end dates)	September 2018 – July 2020

OTHER RESEARCHERS	None

2. OUTLINE THE ETHICAL ISSUES THAT YOU THINK ARE INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT.

a. Role separation

As Diocesan Director of Education I am an advocate for Church of England schools and senior officer of the Diocesan Board of Education, which holds a statutory responsibility for promoting education within the Diocese [redacted], according to the faith and practice of the Church of England. This includes promoting religious education and religious worship in schools and giving advice to governing bodies and site trustees of educational endowments.

Within this employed role, my engagement with schools focuses principally on advocacy and liaison. However, the diocese has a closer connection to Academy Trust governance through the framework of company law, thus I will recruit headteachers and parish priests whose schools are maintained by the Local Authority, to reduce any potential conflict of interest.

b. Power Relations

i) In relation to researcher

As Diocesan Director of Education I have regular engagement with the Episcopal Staff Team (Bishop and Archdeacons) and senior postholders within the Local Authority (LA) Children, Young People and Education Directorate. All priests require a Licence from the Bishop to officiate within the diocese, and headteachers in maintained schools are monitored by the LA in relation to school performance. Such a relationship may cause participants to ask questions about authority, influence or reporting.

I will make my role as researcher explicit, emphasising the objective of generating new knowledge (through a shared conversation around school improvement) to benefit the participants themselves. I will also affirm that participants' identity will be protected throughout the research project and publication.

ii) Between participants

If the parish priest is an ex-officio member of the school's Governing Body, he/she acts as part of this corporate body in undertaking responsibilities relating to the employment of all staff, including the headteacher.

This will be mitigated by the protection of participant identity, an emphasis on the benefit of generating new knowledge, and the fact that there is no direct/individual line management relationship between the participants.

c. Approaching participants.

I will approach potential participants with discretion and affirm the confidentiality of the research process, also making sure that the practice of obtaining voluntary informed consent is clear. In addition, I will be alert to any contrast in willingness to engage, since both headteacher and parish priest need to be involved in the project.

d. Data analysis – interpretation

An awareness of my personal theology and ecclesiology when interpreting data.

3. GIVE A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE PROJECT in no more than 100 words. (*Include, for example, sample selection, recruitment procedures, data collection, data analysis and expected outcomes.)* Please ensure that your description will be understood by the lay members of the Committee.

The project studies theological conversation between the headteacher and parish priest representing two Church of England schools, using the stimulus of a practical enquiry relevant to developing vision and ethos. Data collection draws on a cycle of 'experience, explore, reflect, respond' and includes an introductory session, an audio recording of theological conversation with follow-up on immediate experiences, then individual interviews after six weeks. Data analysis will capture how participants' language carries theology, connects to experience and underpins their vision of Christian education. It will also provide an emergent understanding of how theological conversation contributes to their appreciation of each other's leadership and ministry amongst the church school community.

4. How many participants will be recruited?	4
5. Will you be recruiting STAFF or STUDENTS from another faculty?	YES/**NO** If yes, which Faculty? **IMPORTANT**: If you intend to recruit participants from another Faculty, this form must be copied to the Dean of the Faculty concerned, and to the Chair of that Faculty's Research Ethics Committee.
6. Will participants include minors, people with learning difficulties or other vulnerable people?	YES/**NO** If yes, please add details.

7. Potential risks for participants: - Emotional harm/hurt* - Physical harm/hurt - Risk of disclosure - Other (please specify) *Please note that this includes any sensitive areas, feelings etc., however mild they may seem.	Please indicate all those that apply. **YES**/NO YES/**NO** YES/**NO** Minimal risk of sensitive issues or experiences being raised during conversation or interviews
8. How are these risks to be addressed?	▪ Activities and interview process will be designed to put participants at ease and avoid making excessive demands ▪ Participants may withdraw at any point without needing to provide an explanation ▪ Option to pause audio recording; sensitivity and professionalism during individual interviews.
9. Potential benefits for participants: - Improved services - Improved participant understanding - Opportunities for participants to have their views heard. - Other (please specify)	Please indicate all those that apply. YES/**NO** **YES**/NO **YES**/NO

10. How, when and by whom will participants be approached? Will they be recruited individually or en bloc?	Potential participants will be approached by me individually via email and personal conversation during June/July 2018.
11. Are participants likely to feel under pressure to consent / assent to participation?	Clergy hold a licence through the Bishop, so tend to locate my role within the advisory and administrative diocesan teams, not any clerical structure. Headteachers in church schools, however, may hold a different perception of my authority within the education sphere and might therefore feel a sense of obligation to participate, even if sufficiently confident to decline.
12. How will voluntary informed consent be obtained from individual participants or those with a right to consent for them? - Introductory letter - Phone call - Email - Other (please specify)	Please indicate all those that apply and add examples in an appendix. **YES**/NO YES/**NO** YES/**NO** Consent form

13. How will permission be sought from those responsible for institutions / organisations hosting the study? - Introductory letter - Phone call - Email - Other (please specify)	Please indicate all those that apply and add examples in an appendix. YES/**NO** YES/**NO** YES/**NO** The headteacher is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the school and for having due regard to the National standards of excellence for headteachers (2015); within this context, their permission to engage in the study is sufficient.
14. How will the privacy and confidentiality of participants be safeguarded? (Please give brief details).	Schools and parishes will not be identified in the thesis; nor will any subsequent journal article(s) or publication of findings breach privacy or confidentiality.
15. What steps will be taken to comply with the Data Protection Act? - Safe storage of data - Anonymisation of data - Destruction of data after 5 years - Other (please specify)	Please indicate all those that apply. **YES**/NO **YES**/NO **YES**/NO Recordings will be made on a digital voice recorder which will be kept physically secure (locked in a drawer at the researcher's home) Consent forms will be kept physically secure. Anonymised data will be stored away from consent forms and any contact details relating to participants. Data will be categorised and analysed using a qualitative data analysis software tool; electronic files will be stored securely using the researcher's university computing account and/or an encrypted pen drive.
16. How will participants be made aware of the results of the study?	A personal or paired (headteacher/priest) conversation will be offered to share the results of the study.
17. What steps will be taken to allow participants to retain control over audio-visual records of them and over their creative products and items of a personal nature?	In this study, data is held in audio format only; participants will be notified of their right to withdraw (interview data and recordings would be destroyed)

18. Give the qualifications and/or experience of the researcher and/or supervisor in this form of research. (Brief answer only)	Interviews and observations conducted in primary schools for MA (Leadership and Management for Learning) exploring the value of classroom-based action research
19. If you are NOT a member of CCCU academic staff or a registered CCCU postgraduate student, what insurance arrangements are in place to meet liability incurred in the conduct of this research?	

Attach any:

Participant information sheets and letters
Consent forms
Data collection instruments
Peer review comments

DECLARATION

- I certify that the information in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it.
- I certify that a risk assessment for this study has been carried out in compliance with the University's Health and Safety policy.
- I certify that any required CRB/VBS check has been carried out.
- I undertake to carry out this project under the terms specified in the Canterbury Christ Church University Research Governance Handbook.
- I undertake to inform the relevant Faculty Research Ethics Committee of any significant change in the question, design or conduct of the study over the course of the study. I understand that such changes may require a new application for ethics approval.
- I undertake to inform the Research Governance Manager in the Graduate School and Research Office when the proposed study has been completed.
- I am aware of my responsibility to comply with the requirements of the law and appropriate University guidelines relating to the security and confidentiality of participant or other personal data.
- I understand that project records/data may be subject to inspection for audit purposes if required in future and that project records should be kept securely for five years or other specified period.
- I understand that the personal data about me contained in this application will be held by the Research Office and that this will be managed according to the principles established in the Data Protection Act.

Researcher's Name: **Quentin Roper**
Date: **04.05.2018**

The role and contribution of theological conversation between clergy and headteachers to the development of vision and ethos in Church of England primary schools.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

A research study is being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) by Quentin Roper, a student on the EdD (Doctorate in Education) programme.

Background

The relationship between headteacher and parish priest is fundamental to Church of England primary schools and the parish in which they are situated, as each plays a significant role in spiritual leadership and ministry amongst the church school community.

Participants in this research will be supported in identifying a practical question or educational issue, relevant to the development of vision or ethos within the school, as a stimulus for theological conversation. The study will look at narrative and personal reflections for spiritual insight; how the nature of God is discerned in participants' experiences and how their language carries theology and underpins their vision of Christian education. It will also provide an emergent understanding of how theological conversation contributes to their appreciation of each other's leadership and ministry amongst the church school community.

The aim of the research is to develop a model for theological conversation and reflection for clergy and headteachers, encouraging parishes and schools in their shared mission and ministry.

What will you be required to do?

Participants in this study will be required to engage as a pair; the headteacher of a Church of England Primary School with the priest of the parish in which the school is situated. The study incorporates three sessions, which are designed to assist participants in reflecting on their Christian life and ministry within a church school setting.

This includes:

- An initial session to introduce the research and method
- Participants undertaking a semi-structured, timed task focused on theological conversation
- An individual interview with each participant

To participate in this research you must:

Be responsible for the Christian character and spiritual leadership of a Church of England Primary School, which has not converted to academy status:

Either As the school's substantive headteacher (or equivalent)

Or As the Principal Officiating Minister in a Church of England parish and holding an ex-officio position on the school's Governing Body

The research focus requires both headteacher and parish priest to be linked to the same school.

Procedures

1. An introductory session (maximum two hours) to share the research questions and research method and agree the practical question/educational issue.

2. A semi-structured, timed task (maximum two hours) focused on theological conversation around the agreed question/issue, which is captured by audio recording. On completion, the researcher will follow-up with each participant on their immediate experience.

3. Approximately six weeks later, an individual interview (maximum one and a half hours) based on how the task enabled participants to engage in theological conversation.

Confidentiality

All data and personal information will be stored securely in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the University's own data protection requirements. Data can only be accessed by Quentin Roper. After completion of the study, all data will be made anonymous (i.e. all personal information associated with the data will be removed).

Dissemination of results

Participants will be offered an opportunity, individually or as parish priest/headteacher together, to meet with the researcher to receive a verbal summary of the results of the study.

Deciding whether to participate

If you have any questions or concerns about the nature, procedures or requirements for participation do not hesitate to contact me. Should you decide to participate, you will be free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.

Any questions?

Please contact Quentin Roper - [redacted]

Supervisor – Professor Trevor Cooling

Faculty of Education
Canterbury Christ Church University
North Holmes Road
Canterbury
Kent
CT1 1QU

INTRODUCTORY EMAIL

Dear …

Firstly, a brief explanation for the perhaps unusual step of corresponding through a Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) email account – which is that I am writing as a student, making preparations for the research/thesis stage of a Doctorate in Education.

My research questions seek to examine 'the role and contribution of theological conversation between clergy and headteachers to the development of vision and ethos in Church of England Primary schools' - and your school emerged in my planning as potentially well-placed in terms of context and leadership. In particular, engagement by participants is as a pair; the headteacher of a CE Primary school with the priest of the parish in which the school is situated, so existing, positive church/school partnerships are valuable.

I have attached a Participant Information Sheet and wonder if you might be willing to have an initial conversation (no obligation, of course) about the study?

I look forward to hearing from you in due course,

With thanks and all good wishes

Quentin Roper

Canterbury Christ Church University

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: The role and contribution of theological conversation between clergy and headteachers to the development of vision and ethos in Church of England primary schools.

Name of Researcher: Quentin Roper

Contact details:

Address: [redacted]

Tel: [redacted]

Email: [redacted]

	Please initial box
1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during the data collection, without giving any reason.	
3. I understand that any personal information that I provide to the researchers will be kept strictly confidential	
4. I agree to take part in the above study.	

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Date	Signature

Copies: 1 for participant
1 for researcher

Appendix B - Examples of interview questions

Paired interview, School R

Researcher questions	**Interviewer questions**
What role might theological conversation play in the development and implementation of vision and ethos? Explored through: - Participants' understanding of the notion, purpose and function of theological conversation - Whether theological conversation assists leaders' understanding of each other's mission and ministry within the school community	1. Has this process helped your thinking about vision and ethos in the school? 2. Did you feel you were 'doing theology'? - *How was your discussion theologically informed?* - *Is conversation only theological when it includes particular language or concepts?* 3. How helpful was the cycle of the 'Doing Theology Spiral'? - *Can you describe your experience of the 'reflection' element?* - *How and when was it most effective?* - *Benefit of listening to recordings afterwards?* 4. Thinking about your different leadership roles (priest, headteacher, governor): a) What expertise do you think you brought? b) What shared experiences did you hear through these conversations? - *Using Christian language, articulating vision*
Probing questions	Could you say something more about that? Do you have further examples of this? Could you give a more detailed description of what happened?
Linguistic questions	Can you describe it to me? What happened? What did you do? How did you experience it? What did you think/feel about it? What is your opinion of what happened?
Interpret/clarify by rephrasing	

Individual interviews, School R

Priest
Could you tell me something of how you got to where you are [professional and personal paths, and/or discernment of ministry]? In the first session, what did you feel about the process of identifying your 'current reality', or focus for discussion? You both spoke about people's knowledge and familiarity with Christian language, and how comfortable or confident people are with it in either the church or school context. Can you say something more about that? - *Explore place of knowledge/understanding in people's confidence in speaking about Christian vision* - *Can you give any examples of where you have seen tensions between a corporate view of the school's Christian vision and ethos and people's private views or experiences?(Governing Body, staff)* Between Sessions 1 and 2 you did some reading (CE Vision for Education) – could you say something about how this helped thinking around Christian inspiration? - *You mentioned that this document and also SIAMS come from 'on high' – how important is this?* What role did you feel you played in developing conversation around the focus for discussion and subsequent plans, and what skills do you think you brought? - *Could you say something about the helpfulness (or otherwise) about this being a conversation, rather than an individual task?* - *Was the location of the discussion important?* - *What was distinctive about the other person being the headteacher?* - *At the conclusion of the conversation, did you feel a sense of ownership of the actions?* Which elements of the process helped you to reflect, review practice or challenge assumptions? - *And you spoke about how sharing and understanding Christian vision might have an application in a church context – could you give examples of this?* I am very interested in unpacking the word 'theology' – in your conversation you described what you experienced as 'everyday' and 'practical' theology, can you say something more about that? - *Can anyone do theology, if so what do you think that looks like – and what might be an 'accessible' definition of theology?* * Possible follow-up questions in italics. * Use probing and linguistic questions from paired interview

Headteacher

Could you tell me something of how you got to where you are [professional and personal paths, and/or discernment of ministry]?

In the first session, what did you feel about the process of identifying your 'current reality', or focus for discussion?

You both spoke about people's knowledge and familiarity with Christian language, and how comfortable or confident people are with it in either the church or school context. Can you say something more about that?

- *Explore place of knowledge/understanding in people's confidence on speaking about Christian vision, and whether staff are comfortable working in an environment underpinned by Christian values*
- *Can you give any examples of where you have seen tensions between a corporate view of the school's Christian vision and ethos and people's private views or experiences?*
- *(Governing Body, staff)*

Between Sessions 1 and 2 you did some reading (CE Vision for Education) – could you say something about how this helped thinking around Christian inspiration?

- *Also you seemed quite taken aback by the school's induction policy, and the lack of mention of vision, how did you feel about that?*

What role did you feel you played in developing conversation around the focus for discussion and subsequent plans, and what skills do you think you brought?

- *Could you say something about the helpfulness (or otherwise) about this being a conversation, rather than an individual task?*
- *Was the location of the discussion important?*
- *What was distinctive about the other person being the vicar?*
- *At the conclusion of the conversation, did you feel a sense of ownership of the actions?*

Which elements of the process helped you to reflect, review practice or challenge assumptions?

I'm fascinated that in the last session you referred to the idea of doing theology 'officially' and that it was scary… can you describe that feeling about theology?

- *Could there be a more 'accessible' way of describing theology for you… and I wonder if there are any connections between this and staff confidence in using Christian language?*

* Possible follow-up questions in italics
* Use probing and linguistic questions from paired interview

Appendix C - Example of transcription

Transcription Protocol – Specification

1. Transcript format – intelligent verbatim
2. **Bold for interviewer (I)**
3. Normal for participant (P)
4. PH – Participant (headteacher)
   PC – Participant (clergy/priest)
5. Line numbers added
6. Page numbers in footer

SCHOOL R, Individual interview (Headteacher)

I: Just as an introduction, can you tell me something about how you got to where you are here, whether that's your professional and personal path that's brought you here or some discernment of ministry that means that you have arrived at this school?

PH: So, I qualified in [redacted] and I made a conscious decision then that I wanted to work in a church school. I'd been at a church primary school and I'd done lots of my teaching practices in church primary schools and I have a Christian faith and I was brought up in a local church. So, I made a conscious decision to work in a church school. So, my first job as an NQT was in a very small church school just outside [redacted] and it was wonderful. I just loved the fact it was a church school. It was a funny little place. Then I moved back to London and again, made a conscious decision to go to a church school. I worked there and then I moved into consultancy. So, I then became a consultant with [redacted] Borough, because I'd been at a school in [redacted] when the interactive whiteboards were rolled out across the school and they were going to transform education, which of course they didn't. Then I had the opportunity to work in loads of different schools, which was brilliant and that was two years, I learnt huge amounts there. It was interesting because I would go into non-Church schools and it just reaffirmed my decision that being in a church school was the right thing for me. But it also gave me loads of experience in terms of leadership in teaching and learning which led me back to being a deputy head. I was a deputy in [redacted] with the most charismatic head. He is just incredible. He's also a Christian. He's completely bonkers and maverick is the phrase. A maverick head. But he's just amazing. I learnt so much from him and he transformed the school in [redacted]. He was the one who pushed me and said go on, you can be a head. You're perfectly capable, which was fantastic and I learnt loads from him. He is now a head on the [redacted]. They're doing incredible things there. So, I then went to my first headship which was a church school in [redacted], which was fantastic, because I stayed

in [redacted] diocese, which I was really familiar with. I was there six and a half years and that taught me a lot, because that was really hard. Then just for personal reasons, my husband and I moved down to [redacted]. He was still working in London and I just couldn't do the commute anymore. So, I looked for something around here. This came up and it was close to where I grew up and it was a church school which was really important, and it was so different to my two-form entry just on the outskirts of [redacted], to this, which is one-form entry rural. You have cows and foxes and things in the field, whereas in London, it's so different. I thought that would be a really interesting challenge and this just felt like an unpolished diamond when I came around and I just thought, this could be incredible. One of the things about it was that it wasn't shouting that it was a church school. So, that really appealed to me and that's probably why I found myself here.

I: I was going to pick up, interesting the difference between what you felt about this as a church school, with your previous experience of headship. Can you unpack a little bit what the differences were?

PH: I think my first headship was… it was a strong church school, and it was the academic attainment that was the thing that was lacking. That was the thing that needed to be focused on, teaching and learning and curriculum, but actually, the distinctiveness of the church school was quite strong. They had a really strong relationship with the church and a really good governing body. So, that actually felt quite… when I went to visit my first headship, that felt like quite a strong, comfortable position to be in. that was positive, and what needed the development was the teaching and learning and the curriculum, and I felt I had a lot of that as a deputy head. Because as a deputy head, often you do learning and teaching and curriculum side of things, so therefore it felt like I had the expertise to turn that bit around. We did. We got Ofsted good, which was great. What was interesting though is, as a school, it was very… it had its Christian distinctiveness, but I would say the staff relationships were really hard and actually, when I think about how you focus on vision and how that goes through everything, that absolutely wasn't there. There wasn't a consensus. There wasn't a feeling of doing the right thing for the children. It was very much the staff, then us. It was really hard. So, actually, Christian distinctiveness wise, they probably weren't doing the right things, but against that old framework, they were ticking all the boxes, strong RE, good collective worship, good links. So, on the old framework, they were absolutely ticking boxes. Then when I came here, there was just nothing. It was a name. Even that, on paperwork, it didn't really say Church of England primary school. There was just… there was nothing. Is this really a church school? I think it was summed up with… when we went around, we had a tour with about seven or eight of us being shown around by a governor and lots of people were asking questions, where are you in the Ofsted cycle? Tell us about school improvement? Those sorts of things. Asking all the intelligent questions you're supposed to ask, and one person asked about SIAMS. It wasn't me. The governor replied, oh yes, that's absolutely fine, the vicar comes once a week. That was it. Actually, I think everyone went, pardon? That's not what SIAMS is about. That's interesting. So, clearly the governors or this governor had no concept of what SIAMS actually is and what it means and Christian distinctiveness. So, that

appealed to me because that wasn't something that had been a focus in my first school, so it meant that this was a very different challenge. You could see quite clearly the teaching was strong across the board. It was a bit dull and everything was a bit pedestrian, but there was a real strength there. . There was loads of strong foundations to be built on. So, that was something very different to focus on. So, the two headships have been very different because there's been different things to focus on. That I think was what appealed to me. But I think also, that's what has made this job joyful in a way that my first headship never was, because the relationships and the people… the people in themselves were lovely. As a group, they were a nightmare. They were negative, they were unionised. They were… everything was anti… why do we have to do it like that? So, everything became a battle. So, although I enjoyed it and really enjoyed being at that school, this school… there isn't that. Everyone is so positive and there's such an incredible atmosphere and everyone is like yes, let's do this, let's do that and it becomes a joy and that's the difference. I could see there was the joy here which actually makes the whole journey easier and maybe a bit harder in a way, because then you just think, we can do that, we can do that, we can do everything and then you try and do too much and it's difficult. But that was the… they were very different challenges even though they're both church schools. But I think that's why. There's the joy here that wasn't in London. Maybe I didn't realise that until I wasn't there. When you're in it you think this is fine and then you come somewhere else and you think that was draining. That was emotionally battering. When you're not in it… I guess that's why I found myself here.

I: Thinking about that journey that the school has been on here, and the fact that when we first met it was post SIAMS wasn't it? How did you feel in that first session about trying to define a current reality as we called it, or focus for discussion?

PH: I guess it was relatively easy in the fact that you've got some pointers from an inspector who says actually, you ought to be focusing on this, this and this. So, in a way that makes it quite easy, but possibly makes it a little bit restricted because actually you just feel like, clearly we've got to focus on those things because they're on the inspection report. Maybe if we hadn't had that, we might have thought of some different strands to think about. Maybe it actually becomes a bit restricted because you feel like you have to focus on what the inspection has drawn out. I also feel a little bit that this is a bit new still, and I haven't got anyone else to compare with really. So, I haven't got that collaboration with other heads where we can all say, what did you do? What came out? How does that look in your school? It still feels a bit new like we're finding our way around. It feels like it might develop over the next two or three years, with slightly different guidance or experience of things, which therefore might change the way we look at something.

I: It was interesting that both you and [redacted] picked up on this sense of people's knowledge and their familiarity with Christian language, whether that's being comfortable with it, confident with it, in the church context and the school context. Can you tell me a little bit more about that here, what you feel about how that shows itself here?

PH: I'm very aware that we've got a staff that are not churchgoing. I wouldn't like to assume what anyone believes but I'm pretty sure the vast majority, if not all of them are not classed, wouldn't class themselves, as practising Christians and therefore it feels like, particularly when I started, there was a real lack of knowledge and understanding, personal lack of knowledge and understanding and just knowing simple things that you would possibly assume might be knowledge that somebody would have who has either been to a church school or worked in a church school, basic Bible stories, links that you can make, concepts, people just don't have that. I think therefore, that makes it quite difficult. People find it quite difficult. I think they're quite scared of the whole concept. They don't know the right Bible story, or they've never heard of that person, or that story, or the concept of incarnation, those sorts of things. That's come through in things like Understanding Christianity and the RE scheme. We've done that for… this is our third year now. People have found it really hard, because it is quite tough, particularly when you're teaching years five and six things. If you haven't got a background personally, it's actually quite difficult. I think people find that quite tricky and they associate being a church school, means you must know stuff about the Bible. You must know the Bible stories, know who the people are, know the concepts. Because they don't have that, I think they find that quite difficult then to talk about, Christian vision, because they always go back to, I've never heard of it, I don't know the stories. I can't remember who that is or where that is. I still have people come and say, I didn't know that, after collective worship. Which is lovely really because people have said things and actually, I was talking to a staff member. I can't remember what we were talking about. Who were we talking about? Joshua or Moses or somebody was mentioned in collective worship. They were like, so Jewish people were wandering around the whole time, weren't they? They haven't got their own land… so is that linked to the whole Israel problem now? You're saying, well… they say, I'd never thought of that. It was really interesting that people are still learning things. People came out of collective worship, I didn't know that whole family timeline and Ruth and it all going around through King David, that's amazing. Which I think is a lovely thing because people talk about it. I didn't know that. So, the whole time, we're building on that actually. So, actually the collective worship we do is so important for staff as well as children because they're learning at the same time and I think we're getting staff learning alongside the children.

I: And they're supportive of the underpinning Christian values of the school?

PH: Absolutely. They are totally supportive, but often they wouldn't refer to them as Christian. So, they'll talk about values. They'll talk about our people rule, but they won't necessarily say that comes from the Bible. So, when I keep reminding people, it's from Luke's gospel. Because they haven't got the knowledge, they don't see where it comes from. So, they absolutely support it, they totally agree with it, everyone is on board. They just don't have the biblical base for it.

I: There feels as if there's a connection that you're expressing about some understanding of Christian knowledge and concepts and therefore the expression of the Christian vision of the school.

PH: Yes, so they totally get it, they totally support it, all of them which I think is where the joy comes in but they don't have the knowledge to see where it's come from.

I: I picked that up I think in the conversations, and I'd like to maybe see if there's any examples you can think of, when you and [redacted] were talking about governors having a corporate view of the school's Christian vision, and then peoples private views or experiences about that. So, there's something about the school itself having an underpinning vision, the governors corporately supporting it, and then privately some sort of tussle or tension that they find through those views and experiences.

PH: I don't necessarily think it's a tussle for them. I wouldn't ever want to speak for anyone else. I don't think it's a conflict or a tussle for them. I just think they genuinely don't take them as Christian based. So, if you talk about forgiveness as one of our really important values, they'll say, well that's a moral value. It's just about being a good person. Actually, you could have that discussion. They just don't take it all the way back to the Bible, and they don't see it as in conflict. Just when they think of the people rule or our values of forgiveness and compassion etcetera, they don't always see them with a Biblical base and that comes from a lack of knowledge.

I: Can you identify examples where you've experienced that in staff meetings or a governing body meeting?

PH: I guess some of the staff meetings where we were looking at the SIAMS framework, and it was talking about the vision, our school's vision, life in all its fullness and everyone's potential, everyone flourishing and I think we were talking about afterschool clubs and why we offer the after school clubs that we do. We make sure we've got a range of sport and why do we do… those sorts of things and people were saying, we do this, we make sure there's a range of clubs and make sure there are available for all children. We make sure there are lunchtime sports clubs during the summer, so those children who haven't been allowed to come to an after-school club, for whatever reason, family reasons, have the opportunity to take part in something different. When you say, why do we do that, because it's a good thing to do and sport is really important and we don't want anyone to miss out. Why do we do particularly types of sports so that the child in year two in a wheelchair can join in? Well, so she feels included and… but they never go back to, well because we know that every child is made in God's image. They just don't make that link. Once you say the link, they're like yes, yes, but they just don't make that link. I think it comes from confidence and knowledge. It's not a natural thing to do. I guess the adults, if they haven't been to church schools, if they haven't got a Christian faith, that's just not something you do. You just don't make those links. When you then point out those links, they're like oh yes. So, it's not a negative thing and it's not a conflict. They don't disagree with me, they just don't automatically think of that link.

I: In listening back between session one and session two, both you and [redacted] had gone to the Church of England Vision for Education and picked up on the bit around Christian inspiration.

PH: Yes, and I don't think they've ever had time to think about that.

I: In terms of the process that we went through, how did that connection with the Church of England Vision and the Christian inspiration help your thinking on the focus that you identified?

PH: I guess it made me… by talking through that process, it made me realise and made it very clear to me that's almost where the break was in people's knowledge and confidence and it made… it clicked and made me realise, that's probably… there's probably a lack of knowledge here. We've never sat down and looked at the Church of England's vision for education as a group. All those discussions we had about when do you do it and who do you include have actually made me make sure that February's inset day, everybody, site manager, cleaners, the lot… whereas if I hadn't had that process and that discussion with [redacted], I might not have done that, because it just highlighted that we must make sure that everybody is involved. It's not just the teachers or teaching assistants. It's office, it's everybody. So, that process was really useful because a, I think it highlighted where the gap was and it's made me realise, that's what I could use as the basis, and it's also made me realise who and how we do that, rather than just hoping it happens adhoc because it doesn't happen adhoc.

I: In that conversation, you also picked up about the lack of mention of vision in the induction policy. How did you feel about that?

PH: It was just… it's so blindingly obvious when you stop and think about it, but it did mean, when we did some interviews, we included things like a vision question in the interview which was really interesting and when we did those interviews, we interviewed three people and we just said, this is the vision and showed them it and said, what do you think? What does it make you think of? It was wonderful actually. It was fascinating listening to people and there wasn't a right answer. It was just a really good part of that discussion and I think it's really important that we get that into the induction procedure, so it also becomes part of the process. But there isn't a right answer. It's just about having those discussions with people and how important it is. We also then went on to appraisal because I've got 30 staff who are already here who don't need to do the induction process. Yes, there's one but I need to do that with the other 30. So, having that discussion with staffing and an appraisal process is going to be really quite powerful.

I: That discussion element seemed really pertinent in terms of you and [redacted] having that conversation. I'm interested in how helpful it was to be in discussion rather than be thinking about that particular focus or whatever on your own?

PH: I think it made me think more… we definitely came up with more things. If I'd been sitting here pondering myself, there's no way I'd have necessarily made the links. I wouldn't have made the links about making sure everyone was in on it. I'm not sure I'd necessarily have made the links to go right back to the Church of England vision. I might have done but actually, as part of the discussion, we got there together. So, I think it was very useful and I could well have missed out on quite a lot of those things if I hadn't had that discussion. So, really interesting.

I: Was there anything distinctive about that other person being the vicar as opposed to any other person, or member of staff, that you were having the discussion with?

PH: Maybe. I think when you have a discussion and it's with the vicar, there's always that underlying Christianity to it. I think if I'd sat and talked to [redacted], my chair of governors, or my deputy head, I think we'd have very easily gone on to the management, the organisation side, how to do things, how to plan it, what the actions were, and maybe not do the deeper thinking behind why and… whereas by doing that with [redacted], I think maybe automatically, we kept coming back to that point and it also… we didn't really have an end point, whereas often when I've sat down and talked to people, okay, let's just talk about the school improvement plan, what's the… what are you going to do? What are the actions? So, actually it's all very specific. Let's think about this. What are the success criteria, what are the actions we can do and what are the costs, and you literally just… you're having a conversation almost around the boxes on your school improvement plan. It's not quite open… generalised. So, therefore you get very specific answers. If you then say, what are we going to do about maths or about vision and people then come up with actions, but you don't have a discussion as to why you're doing something and why you might need to do it, or who might need to do it or how you do that, it becomes more of a list of things. So, there's definitely benefit in having that discussion with [redacted] as it was so much more open, and there wasn't an end point goal as it were. You're having your own generalised discussion around things and I think then we came across things as part of a discussion.

I: So, is there something in the sense of the role that you bring, whether you are headteacher or governor, or vicar in that conversation?

PH: Definitely. Definitely, because you come up with a different perspective, because [redacted] was very much talking about, with her congregation and that perspective, which is very different to being in the school perspective. As she was saying, with her church congregation perspective, people are there because they choose to be there because of something they believe in, whereas people are at school because it's their job, although they believe in it, it's not in the same way. It's almost more voluntary the church thing, whereas the role is, this is your job. This is what you… I do wonder about how… I think it would be really interesting to have that discussion as a threesome with the chair of governors because they would have a completely different perspective and I think that would be really interesting, but to still have a very open discussion with very open ended… where you weren't necessarily coming up with a list of things that you're thinking next year.

I: So, in that sense, does the image or the reference to the cycle help, that you feel you can go to any part in it and -

PH: I think so, yes, and then start talking around things and what is the issue we're thinking about, what does that mean, what does it look like, what can… so you can use that cycle at any point I think.

I: Looking at the whole process which is the sessions and the bits in between, are there particular elements that were really helpful in helping you to reflect, review the practice, review the responses, challenge assumptions?

PH: I think the process of having that discussion and then listening back to it was really useful actually. And actually, having some time in between, because we had that really deep conversation for over an hour or so, if I'd then felt okay, two days later I'm going to listen to it and write a list of things, actually going away and leaving it for a few weeks, and then coming back to it, you saw it afresh. Oh yes, I forgot I said that, that was interesting. So, that was a really good process to go through actually. I think that then leads back to reading something rather than listening to it, how tricky I found it. Because I'd then left it a few weeks, I couldn't remember. Because it was just words on a page, I couldn't pick that nuance back or when we had laughed or commented on something. So, I think the process of having time to cogitate on it, and then go through it again on our own, is a really interesting process. I think if you then said to someone, next year, shall we have another discussion and invite chair of governors and record it, I think people would be like, that sounds awful. You can imagine people would feel really quite uncomfortable about it, because it is odd. But actually, as a process, I think it's really interesting and definitely… I definitely think we came up with things that wouldn't have come up any other way.

I: I'm interested in a couple of things. One that you've just referred to earlier which is that by engaging with the vicar, what was distinctive was, you got this sense that there was Christianity involved in the conversation and during the last session, you referred to the idea of doing theology officially, but also the fact that it was scary. Can you describe a bit more about your feelings about theology?

PH: To me, theology is very highbrow and things that clearly people who are highly intelligent do when they're at college, and I just don't see that as theology. Maybe that's my perception of it, but theology is stuff you do at college where you have very highbrow conversations with people who've got degrees and are very experienced priests, or have the most incredible knowledge and I don't see myself as somebody who is someone who can have that discussion. So, I don't see it as theology. I know you kept telling me it was but I don't see it. I just can't see it as theology.

I: Is there anything that would make theology more accessible?

PH: I don't know. Maybe from my point, maybe trying to find out a little bit more about what is theology and maybe hearing other discussions or seeing other discussions or watching other discussions and… for example, if there was a video of a discussion or people having a theological discussion, if I watched that and thought, that is officially classed… I've got no frame of reference because I don't see myself as having done theology. So, because I've never heard people having a theological discussion or read about it, or seen a video, I just can't see that as theology.

I: Was [redacted]'s reference then, when she spoke about everyday and practical theology, was that helpful?

PH: It was. It made it a little clearer as to why it is and it made more sense to me because I'd just never considered that. So, that was useful.

I: So, did theology become something different then?

PH: I think so, from what my perception of it is, and maybe still… I'm still not sure I… maybe she's just being kind. So, yes, it made more sense but I still haven't experienced or seen it in another context. So, I still think, I don't really think it's theology.

I: So, between your image of theology as highbrow and [redacted] saying it's everyday, it's practical, do you get a sense of what theology… as being just practical and every day is about in terms of God?

PH: I don't know. I find it really hard to put those together. Theology and discussions about God still seem to me very highbrow. I know it's a phrase that we keep on using but we just… that's what… maybe the everyday discussion bit just feels like everyday discussions and I wouldn't label it as theology.

I: I wonder if there is any connection between that and staff confidence in using Christian language?

PH: I guess so, because to me, I'm not doing theology, I'm not having a theological discussion, I'm clearly not highbrow enough for that. I don't have enough knowledge. I can absolutely see then where the staff come into it in a different concept where we're having a discussion about vision, but not talking about the Christian bit of that because I don't get it. I can see exactly where they're coming from and that's exactly the same as what I feel when we have a discussion about theology, which is actually quite useful, because I can see where they're coming from and I haven't put those two together before. But that's absolutely where they come from.

I: From that, might you not reconsider but reflect more on the actions that you were talking about in the sessions as something to go forward with?

PH: I guess so. So, I can very much feel how… like fish out of water I felt in terms of it being a theological discussion. So, if that's how I feel, what kind of things can we do in terms of activities and discussions that will make you feel comfortable, and maybe those labels make people feel anxious and nervous. So, the label of theology. We'll have a theological discussion. Automatically, I'll be like, no thank you. Then there's almost labels or names that make people feel almost inadequate. So, therefore, I think I need to think quite carefully about how we approach those things and maybe by just sharing the Church of England's vision for education, if I just shared it in the booklet that they give it to you as, I can imagine that people will see the label and think, oh crikey. Whereas if I just pulled out some sentences and didn't tell them where they'd come from, maybe it

wouldn't have that label that would make things scary as it would if you called it theology. So, I think possibly, I need to think quite carefully about how it's approached and how things are shared with staff. So, if they have that scary label, it doesn't make them immediately go, this is not for me. I haven't got the knowledge.

I: There's something there I think I'm hearing about uncovering what's making people nervous?

PH: I think so, and I think it's to do with knowledge and understanding and maybe labels of things. This is Christianity or these are Bible verses. If people feel inadequate, because they don't understand or don't want to ask or don't know, and they're being told things they never think of, then suddenly everyone feels on a back foot. So, if you don't feel confident, and knowledgeable, then I think you're automatically feeling anxious and actually, you don't want to say anything, don't want to join in the discussion, might get it wrong. There's clearly a right answer. [redacted] is clearly thinking of something. So, I need to think quite carefully about how I share things and what we do as part of the vision and discussion. I can just imagine actually, having talked about this now, if I just photocopied the Church of England's vision of education, gave them that with all the labels all over it, they'd just freak, because it's just like, this is clearly an official document. Whereas if you pull out some strands and sentences which are fantastic and absolutely explain the school, I think it would be really interesting and I think people… if people don't feel threatened and inadequate and worried, you get so much more out of a discussion.

I: So, there's something about where it comes from as well that you've picked up, if it comes from the Church of England and looks like an official document, and for you the word theology comes from what you've described as a highbrow context -

PH: Yes, absolutely. If it's coming from somewhere intelligent or official, it can become quite scary and therefore if people feel slightly unsure, then I think that will affect people's response.

I: Which connects I suppose into my question about making theology accessible.

PH: Yes, and therefore by calling it theology, if people automatically think, I don't understand that, I'm clearly not clever enough to have that sort of discussion, you possibly won't get as rich a discussion, or even people just opting out and saying, that's not for me because it's got that label I guess.

I: Is there anything from what we've spoken about that you want to add in to or any other reflections into the overall shape or structure of the sessions and what was in between?

PH: I don't think so. As I said, I found the gaps between sessions really useful. Going a little bit back to the labelling of things, the diagram that you showed us right at the very beginning terrified the life out of me. I hadn't the faintest idea what it

means, I have no idea what I'm going to say and it just… so automatically you think, crikey. So, the anxiety was there straight away because I thought, this is not something I'm familiar with. I'm a headteacher I can do that bit but this is way beyond my pay grade. So, automatically, felt really anxious about it. So, it would be really interesting if other headteachers were part of a process, whether there ought to be some part of the discussion about what does theology actually mean and what is this. So, it becomes less scary.

I: So how did this dissipate over time or didn't it?

PH: I don't think it did, because then we got the diagram out in the second one and it was like oh no, not again, I still don't quite get it, and it made you think oh. So, I don't think it ever did. If somebody said to me tomorrow, explain that diagram, I wouldn't have the faintest idea. I wouldn't be able to because it just makes me really anxious, which is a bit odd. I find it really hard to put that diagram and connect it with what we did.

I: But the feelings help you connect with the issue that was brought up.

PH: Exactly, because that's where the staff are coming from. This is something that they're not confident about. This is not their usual day to day role. This is not part of their thing and then it becomes something that makes everyone quite anxious.

Appendix D - Example Code list

School P

A	**Theoretical Lens**		
CA	Capital	APC	Articulation of participants' own capital
		ATO	Assign to others
		CUL	Cultural capital
		RIO	Recognising in others
		THA	Teachers as holding authority
FI	Field		
HA	Habitus	RDP	Reveals a disposition (individual)
B	**Context**		
CU	Cultural		
SO	Social	PHA	Perceived hierarchy of authority
		SOP	Socio-political
C	**Narrative**		
CA	Canonical (big picture)	CES	Community role in an evolving social context, providing solutions to tackle perceived malaise
KN	Key narrative	CFW	Children and families worshipping together
		CPW	School/children helping parents/family learn about worship including worship behaviours
		ITS	Influence of technology on society/community
		RRA	Responsibilities, respect and authority
		SDV	Spiritual development of staff/families
		SHC	School as the hub of community
		SJC	Spiritual journey of children
FQ	Functional Qualities (of individual contributions)	CON	Connecting with previous experience
		DCR	Describing concerns or reservation
		DIL	Exploring dilemma
		ERV	Personal example giving rationale for vision
		EXP	Explain/rationalise an event or experience
		MOR	Moral tales
		SST	Success stories

D Church School

CL	Children's learning	GTA	Gateway to children's aspirations
		HLB	How they learn best
CO	School as community	FAM	Community as family
		RSP	Recognising community/social pressures
CP	Link to church/parish	CHR	Chaplain/headteacher relationship
		RMB	Removing boundaries
		WEC	Worship or events in church
LI	Leadership issues	LPR	Lack of parental respect
		PRC	People responding to change
LR	Leaders' roles	KES	Keeping everyone on the same journey
		OVS	Operational versus strategic
		PCS	Pastoral care of staff
		SPI	Spiritual leader
MM	Mission and ministry (perceptions of)	CEC	Christian education in the community
		CPD	Church as providing discipleship
		CPO	Contributes personally to the other (participant)
		DIM	Distractions of materiality (people)
		EQP	Working together, equal partners in ministry
		FIH	Faith in the home
		SCC	School/church comparison
		SHE	Shared experience
		SVM	Shared vision of ministry
VE	Vision and ethos	ECC	Ethos as counter-cultural
		EVS	Enactment of vision in school community
		EXP	Expectation of support (staff, governors, parents)
		LDM	Lectio Divina as a model
		PLC	Place of prayer/contemplation in life of school
		RVS	Reference to school vision statement
		SVS	Shared values in school
WO	Worship	AOW	Accessibility of worship
		AWO	Awe and wonder
		CPE	Concern about parental engagement
		EQE	Equality in experience
		FOR	Format of worship
		INV	Worship as invitational
		LCF	Link to Christian festivals
		PRE	Peace and refreshment
		SCL	Staff confidence in leading worship
		SPE	Making worship special
		WVP	Worship versus performance

E Faith Position

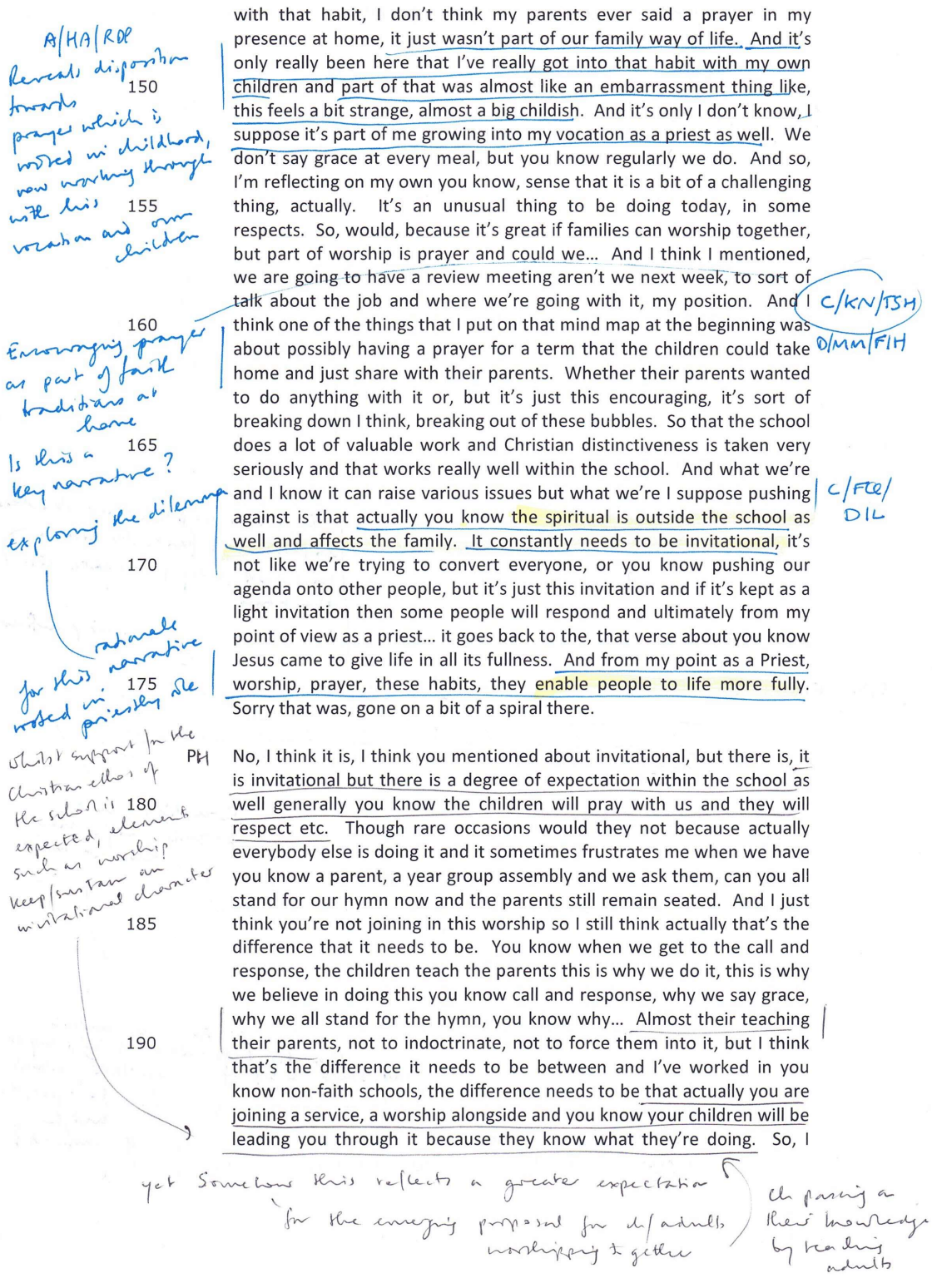
EF	Expression of faith in individuals	PBF	Position of belief/faith
		SAF	Speaking about faith

F Operational Response

IO	Involving others	EGL	Engaging governors and/or leadership
LO	Logistics	ASW	Arranging spaces for worship
		GNA	General arrangements

Appendix E - Examples of annotated transcripts

School P, Session 2



School R, Session 3

P: No go on?

P2: I think it is theologically informed, because we're talking about something that Jesus said, life in all it's fullness which comes from the bible, which is theology. So, we are unpacking that and putting it into a practical you know into school and into all that stuff. I mean that is really doing theology, well to me that is doing theology.

P: Okay.

P2: Because we are bringing God into school, into everyday life.

P: Practical context.

P2: Practical context, I didn't think of it, I didn't think oh we're doing theology today. So, I didn't think of it as theology, but I know that we are doing theology does that make sense?

P: It makes it sound quite scary, if you say you're doing theology.

P2: Well, I suppose because theology is quite a sort of long, not a long word but sort of hard churchy word.

P: Yes, it's definitely a churchy word.

P2: Yes and doing theology because perhaps you don't think of it as doing theology, theology is something you read and maybe think about. But the practical side I suppose people don't think of as practically doing it.

P: Yes, and I think if, you said, if you approached somebody ahead and said would you like to have theological discussions with your vicar, I can imagine most of them would go what??? I might be a bit busy. Because actually it doesn't make you think oh crikey.

P2: It doesn't sound exciting.

P: And it sounds quite scary actually.

P2: It does sound scary.

P: It sounds really scary.

P2: Because it sounds like you've got to know a lot about the bible.

P: Yes.

P2: Or about God which is pretty impossible anyway.

P: Yes, but that's quite, that's hard and it comes across as quite scary. So that's why I would say this is not theology.

P2: Yes, but because I've been to college and all that stuff.

P: Yes.

P2: Then theology is.