

Article

‘Render Therefore Unto Caesar the Things Which Are Caesar’s, and Unto God the Things That Are God’s’ (Matthew 22:21). Reflections on the Changing Relationship Between Catholic Education and the State Eighty Years After the Passing of the 1944 Butler Education Act

David Fincham

Catholic Education Research, St Mary’s University, London TW1 4SX, UK; david.fincham@stmarys.ac.uk

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to reflect on the changing relationship between Catholic education and the State in the eighty years that have elapsed since the passing of the 1944 ‘Butler’ Education Act. The 1944 Education Act proved to be a transformational landmark in the development of Catholic education in this country. Whilst in many other countries in the world Catholic education is provided by independent fee-paying schools, in England it has benefited from support and funding provided by the government. The legislation consolidated the relationship between Church and State that had been established with the introduction of compulsory education in 1870. However, integrated within the national educational system, Catholic schools are also subject to political currents that can pose challenges. When I began teaching in a Catholic secondary school in the mid-1970s, compulsory education was framed within the legislation set out in the 1944 Education Act. However, the post-war consensus that informed that legislation was swept away in the wake of the passing of the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA). This latter development marked a watershed in schooling in England and Wales. Whilst extending greater autonomy to schools through Local Management of Schools (LMS) and Grant Maintained (GM) status, central government designed and regulated education for all maintained schools through a National Curriculum and it intervened more rigorously in their management by scrutinising their performance through the establishment of regular Ofsted inspections. Arguably, the introduction of Grant Maintained schools contributed to ‘a survival of the fittest approach’, which challenged concerns for the common good. Moreover, with the passing of the 2010 Academies Act, it became possible for all maintained schools in England and Wales to convert to academies and multi-academy trusts (MATs) by direct agreement with the Secretary of State for Education. Within the Catholic sector, where the bishop has traditionally been primarily responsible for the regulation of education provided by Catholic schools across his diocese, the question of academisation has provoked divisions of opinion about the governance of Catholic schools. Drawing on a reflection on my own experience as a teacher and leader in Catholic secondary education, the paper examines opportunities and challenges that have faced Catholic education in this country over the past eighty years and considers implications for its future. Autobiographical narrative is a method of research located within the qualitative field of enquiry. Whilst its subjective and introspective nature has been open to question, it provides a researcher with the opportunity to examine personal experience to provide illuminative insight.



Academic Editor: Carl-Mario Sultana

Received: 18 May 2026

Revised: 29 June 2026

Accepted: 1 July 2026

Published: 16 July 2026

Copyright: © 2026 by the author.

Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland.

This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and

conditions of the [Creative Commons](#)[Attribution \(CC BY\)](#) license.

Keywords: challenges to Catholic education; Catholic schools; the dual system; educational reform; academisation; the common good

1. Introduction

The intention of this paper is to consider the changing relationship between Catholic education and the Westminster government¹ in more than eighty years that have elapsed since the passing of the Butler Education Act in 1944. Unlike many educational jurisdictions around the world, such as those in the USA, where invariably Catholic schools are independent fee-paying establishments, Catholic schools in England and Wales benefit from financial support and resources from the State. In considering the historical background of the development of Catholic education in England and Wales, it is intended to examine opportunities and challenges that have faced and continue to face Catholic schooling in this country. In commemorating eighty years since the passing of the 1944 Butler Education Act, it is remarkable, too, to consider that I am part of the first generation that experienced the impact of that legislation on Catholic education.

There is an adage that you cannot really know where you are going until you know where you have come from. Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, for example, once recounted in a homily:

A traveller in Ireland had lost his way and came across a farmer leaning on a fence. The traveller asked him if he knew the way to Ballymollee. 'If you are going to Ballymollee,' he replied, 'I wouldn't start from here.'

The point, of course, is that you must start from where you are and not from where you would like to be. So, the preliminary question of this paper is how did Catholic education in England arrive at its present juncture?

Before considering the consequences of the 1944 Education Act and its implications for the relationship between the State and Catholic education in England and Wales, it would be helpful to begin by appreciating from a longer perspective the socio-historical background from which the legislation originated.

1.1. *Sowing the Seeds*

After the Reformation in the mid-sixteenth century, the Church of England became the established religion in England. Consequently, parliament began to pass laws, known as the penal laws, which discriminated against non-Anglicans, and particularly Catholics. It was considered that, as Catholics recognised the authority of the Pope before that of the monarch, they were a threat to the State. The penal laws imposed severe restrictions on Catholic schooling in a culture in which there existed a mutual suspicion between Catholics and the government.

In 1791, however, a Catholic Relief Act was passed, which removed many of the restrictions, allowing Catholics to practise their faith and to establish their own schools. Thus, with a progressive relaxation of the penal laws in England and Wales, Catholic education became openly available for boys of the upper middle classes. [Hornsby-Smith \(1996, pp. 46–47\)](#) says that:

The emergence of secondary education for boys of the upper middle classes can be traced back to 1794 when the Jesuits opened Stoneyhurst and 1802 when the Benedictines opened Ampleforth.

Apart from this, though, there was very little educational provision for the majority of Catholics until well into the nineteenth century.

From 1833, the State provided grants to voluntary bodies such as the Anglican National Society and the British and Foreign School Society to assist them in building Church of England schools and non-conformist schools respectively, but it was not until 1847, with the establishment of the Catholic Poor School Committee, as a recognised agency of the Catholic bishops, that the Catholic Church on behalf of its community, was able to negotiate acceptable terms and obtain grants from the government (Arthur 1995, p. 13). This began a process of collaboration between the Church and the State. According to O’Keeffe (1999, p. 243),

... the seeds of partnership between Church and state were sown from as early as 1847, eventually maturing into the full complex relationship of the Dual System. . .

Further to these developments, there began a unique partnership between the Catholic Church and the State in England and Wales, which, in spite of difficulties and tensions that have emerged over the years, has continued to this day.

In the wake of the Irish Potato Famine of the 1840s, over a million refugees left Ireland to move to Great Britain, the United States, Canada, South Africa, and Australia. As a result, by 1850, most Catholics in England and Wales were no longer of indigenous origin. As Hornsby-Smith (1996, p. 47) observes:

The overwhelming majority was relatively impoverished Irish immigrants or their descendants mainly found in the great industrial conurbations in the north.

Thus, a burgeoning Catholic population of Irish descent began to congregate in the large cities of England and Wales, predominantly in and around industrial and working-class conurbations such as Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Birmingham, and London. In response, the efforts of the Catholic Poor School Committee were focused on the provision of Catholic elementary schooling on behalf of Catholic families in and around these cities (Grace 2002b, p. 10).

Coincidentally, and with a fortuitous stroke of providence, the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy to Great Britain in 1850 occurred at the same time as the arrival of this vast number of Irish Catholic refugees. The Church was therefore able to exercise greater influence and control in providing education for the Catholic community. Significantly, at the Synod of Westminster in 1852, the Catholic bishops indicated that they would prefer the building of schools to that of building a chapel so as to ensure the transmission of the faith to the next generation:

Wherever there may seem to be an opening for a new mission, we would prefer the erection of a school, so arranged as to serve temporarily as a chapel, to that of a church without one. (Quoted by Arthur 1995, p. 15)

In those early days, therefore, as the seeds of Catholic education were sown in England and Wales, Catholic schools were often used not only to provide education for young people but also as places of worship in the parish.

During the course of the nineteenth century, a patchwork pattern of schools in England and Wales evolved. Consequently, when in 1870 the “Forster” Education Act was passed, it set out to complete a coherent structure of elementary schools in a systematic way. Hence, where denominational schools were not available, or where there was no existing school, School Boards were set up to administer state-maintained schools that would “fill the gaps.” Ball (2012, p. 92) says that:

The compromise that was written into the 1870 Education Act was that the state through local School Boards would ‘fill up the gaps’ in, rather than replace, the existing provision.

Significantly, seminal principles that informed the “dual system”, which the 1944 Act would consolidate, were formulated. For more than a hundred years after the passing of the 1870

Education Act, Catholic maintained schools would benefit from an educational settlement in which the State would contribute to funding for new buildings and running costs. Within the conditions of the Act, the Catholic bishops also ensured that there would be an integral connection between educational provision in Catholic schools and the passing on of the Catholic faith.

When, in 1902, the “Balfour” Education Act was passed, it abolished School Boards and in their place the regulation of education in England and Wales was devolved to local authorities. This would include the provision of funding of all schools, whether denominational or state-maintained, from the rates. A further outcome was that from 1902 the payment of teachers’ salaries would also be made from public funds. According to [Arthur \(1995, pp. 23–24\)](#),

... the 1902 Education Act finally recognised the existence of a ‘dual system’ and provided for the maintenance, but not the erection, of schools operated by the Church authorities, out of local rate income.

In addition, with the passing of the 1902 Education Act, previous arrangements for inspections were extended. They were conducted by His (Her) Majesty’s Inspectorate (HMI), who had the responsibility of reporting their findings to the Secretary of State for Education, and by the larger cities who set up their own inspectorates.²

Notwithstanding, inclusion of Catholic schooling within the national provision of education was not without challenge. Thus, when the 1902 Education Act was passed, inherent bigotry and prejudice that had been directed at Catholics in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century culminated in a violent response in the wake of controversies surrounding its implementation. Whilst the Act had responded positively to appeals from the bishops for financial support and assistance for Catholic schools, critics, especially Nonconformists, demonstrated vehemently against public funding for Catholic education ([Arthur 1995, p. 23](#)). This manifested itself in a wave of hostile opposition in a furore over what was described as “Rome on the rates”.

From 1902 until the passing of the 1944 legislation, the Catholic authorities maintained an uneasy relationship with the State. However, the bishops insisted that religion was a fundamental component of education, and the Catholic Education Council (CEC), which superseded the Catholic Poor School Committee in 1905, asserted that, if the State demanded compulsory schooling, then parents had an inalienable right for their children to be educated in the traditions of their faith ([Arthur 1995, p. 24](#)).³

Another contested question related to the appointment of teachers. From the perspective of the Church, education is intimately connected with faith, so it campaigned for the preferential appointment of Catholic teachers to Catholic schools as had been the case when Catholic parish schools were introduced. It was a question that would be addressed again when the next major piece of educational legislation was drawn up in 1944.

1.2. The ‘Butler’ 1944 Education Act

The passing of the 1944 Education Act evolved after a long gestation period of negotiations, which began with the appointment of R.A. “Rab” Butler as the President of the Board of Education in July 1941 and was concluded with its enactment in parliament with cross-party approval in August 1944. Significantly, the 1944 Act created a national system of education that was regulated by government but maintained and administered at local level.

Throughout negotiations surrounding the development of the Bill that would be introduced to parliament, a great deal of time was spent in trying to reconcile the perspectives of the Catholic Church with those of the State. Indeed, according to [Arthur \(1995, p. 28\)](#), during the period prior to the presentation of the 1944 Act to parliament, discussions be-

tween the Church and the government surrounding Catholic attitudes towards education occupied more time than any other issue. The government, recognising that the concerns of the Catholic bishops remained critical, appreciated that only a political compromise would achieve a practicable solution. But whilst respecting the rights of the State, the hierarchy insisted on preserving its own interests. For example, they demanded that teachers in a Catholic school should be Catholic and that their schools should retain their own distinct denominational nature. Ultimately, the Catholic bishops were the only interest group to oppose the 1944 Education Act (Arthur 1995, p. 28).⁴

While politicians and other observers have characterised the Catholic Church as intransigent during the passage of the Bill through parliament (Buck 2020, pp. 39–40), in the end, the hierarchy achieved a pragmatic settlement with the State that “strengthened the position of Catholic schools” (Ward 2021, p. 85). Thus, broadly speaking, the 1944 Education Act achieved a balance between the interests of the State and concerns raised by the Catholic bishops (Arthur 1995, p. 448). According to Storr (2011, p. 31),

The dichotomy between county and voluntary schools that had developed since the middle of the nineteenth century was, therefore, reaffirmed, with voluntary school bodies exercising responsibilities for the buildings, equipment, staffing and pupil admissions.

A secure future for Catholic schools was of vital concern for the bishops, and the establishment of voluntary-aided school status⁵ proved to be means of satisfying their demands for retaining autonomy over admissions, curriculum, and teacher appointments. Consequently, following the course of complex negotiations with diverse interests (which included the Church of England, the Nonconformist churches, the Catholic Church, local administrators and teacher associations), a settlement was eventually agreed. Significantly, the dual system, in which a balanced resolution of the question of the distribution of power and authority between the government and the Catholic Church, was established (Arthur 1995, pp. 28–29).

It is noted by Buck (2020, pp. 40–41), incidentally, that, when Butler was outlining the religious settlement in parliament, the recently appointed Archbishop Griffin was present in the Strangers’ Gallery. The following morning, the President of the Board of Education received a copy of Rev. Alban Butler’s *Lives of the Saints* as a gift from the archbishop. It is a matter of conjecture, but it might be interpreted that it was a signal to indicate that the Church approved the settlement.⁶ It is acknowledged that, whilst Catholic schools were drawn further into the national education system, at the same time, the State conceded that children of Catholic families had the right to be educated in a fully denominational atmosphere in accordance with their parents’ wishes (Cruickshank 1964, p. 166).

The 1944 Education Act opened the door to an easing of tensions in the relationship between the State and Catholic schools in England and Wales. Issues of authority and control combined with fair funding had characterised concerns raised by the Church in discussions with the government for nearly a century (Barber 1994). But now, under the terms of the Act, most Catholic schools, encouraged by the Catholic bishops, opted to become voluntary-aided schools. As a result, though capital costs would only be partly funded (initially at 50%, but later increased to 75% and currently at 90%), teachers’ salaries would be paid, running costs would be met by the state, and the trustees would be able to appoint the majority of the governors.

The legislation, then, achieved a unique resolution. Compared with systems of Catholic education internationally, it enabled Catholic schools to benefit from financial support and resources from the State. Thus, Elliott (2006, p. 91) concludes:

The 1944 Education Act confirmed the partnership between Church and state, known as the dual system, which characterises the funding and administration of English and Welsh schools.

There was no government direction as to the curriculum within the framework of its specifically Catholic religious beliefs. With the freedom to appoint foundation governors as the majority of the school governing board, who in turn appoint and employ the staff and set admission policies, Catholic schools would not only remain part of the maintained State system of education but would also retain a degree of autonomy within it. Morris (2008, p. 23) observes, in the wake of the 1944 Education Act,

... the priority still given by the bishops to a distinctive Catholic education, provided in its own schools, helped the Catholic community to preserve some sense of its own religious identity and doctrines and a feeling of membership of an extra-national religious society.

The Education Act of 1944 marked a significant step in building a constructive partnership between the Church and State. O’Keeffe (1999, p. 244), for example, says:

The restructuring of education culminating in the 1944 Education Act was a landmark in the development of the Catholic school system in England and Wales. For the Catholic Church, in its educative role, it signified a shift from the margins of educational endeavour towards a more pivotal role in an enhanced partnership with the state in a publicly funded education system ... It is significant that the expansion of school development at that time was undertaken with a minimum of encroachment on the church’s autonomy.

Arguably, from the point of view of Catholic schools, one of the major achievements of the 1944 Education Act was that it constructed a secure framework within which they could contribute towards the common good of wider society in the post-war years. After the war, the Catholic community in England and Wales gained greater respect and recognition than hitherto in society. The educational settlement enabled a generation of Catholics in England and Wales to take advantage of opportunities that had not been available to previous generations. Indeed, Hornsby-Smith (1996, p. 46) notes that:

Within a decade or so it was clear that Catholics were growing a ‘new middle class’, first-generation achievers who experienced considerable amounts of upward social mobility into professional and managerial occupations. With social mobility came geographical mobility, as Catholics moved out of the old inner-city parishes and into the expanding suburbs. Changes in the economic structures and the expansion of light engineering manufacture in place of the older heavy industries meant that there was a significant shift in heavy Catholic concentration in the north west, the point of entry for older flows of Irish immigration, to London, the south east and midlands. Survey evidence confirms the picture of a religious community, half of whom were either first- or second-generation immigrants, disproportionately working-class, but with higher than average participation in higher education in the late 1970s.

The concord between the Church and the State facilitated an improvement in the prospects of Catholics across society at large. Following the passing of the 1944 Education Act, and with it, the extension of secondary education, the Catholic community experienced a process of upward social mobility, which Hornsby-Smith (1996, p. 64) described as “embourgeoisement”. Accordingly, he says,

[a] predominantly immigrant, and especially Irish, and working class community of the early post-war years gained significantly from the expansion of educational

opportunities which followed the implementation of the 1944 Education Act and the provision of 'secondary education for all. (Hornsby-Smith 1996, p. 46)

Thus, the extension of universal secondary education provided a vehicle for the development of an educated Catholic middle-class. As Hornsby-Smith (1999, p. 5) also points out,

The extent to which Catholics make a significant contribution to public life might also be taken as an indicator of their emergence from the defensiveness of the 'fortress Church.'

One example of many Catholics brought up in the wake of the 1944 Education Act, in a post-war generation of working-class and immigrant Irish heritage, who benefited from the opportunity for social mobility as a result of being educated in Catholic schools, was Cherie Blair. Born on Merseyside in 1954 and educated in Catholic schools in Crosby, she is now a leading international human rights lawyer.

In summary, the 1944 Education Act marked a new and broadly positive development in the relationship between the State and the Catholic Church in its provision of Catholic education. Grace (2017, p. 175) confirms:

Between the 1870s and the 1970s, despite initial anti-Catholic prejudice, the Catholic hierarchy was able to negotiate a favourable educational settlement in which substantial public funding was obtained without serious loss of autonomy and mission integrity for the Catholic schooling system.

Amongst other things, the 1944 Education Act facilitated the development of a new and constructive framework for Catholic schools, within which both the tripartite system of education flourished in the 1950s and then the comprehensive system of schooling, which was almost universally embraced by the Catholic Church in England and Wales, evolved in the 1960s and 1970s.⁷ However, subsequently, the passing of the 1988 Education Reform Act would, in terms of the relationship of Catholic schools in England and Wales with the State, weaken the relative autonomy that they had hitherto enjoyed.

1.3. The 1988 "Baker" Education Reform Act (ERA)

Whilst the settlement achieved by the 1944 Education Act set the parameters for the relationship between the State and the Church for more than forty years, changes in the socio-political climate in the 1980s produced a shift in perspective. Significantly, emerging in that decade, a neoliberal perspective of education prevailed, which considered that education systems should be run according to free market principles.⁸

In my experience of teaching over the last fifty years, there have been many changes in education. But it was the passing of the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) that seems to have been a watershed event. It marked a significant moment in the history of education in this country. Reflecting on effects of the Act on Catholic schooling, Buck (2020, p. 47) says that:

After 1988, the Catholic Church began to face a re-configuration of its state partnership; central government increasingly expected schools to be committed to its policies of increased autonomy from local government, while local government increasingly hoped that schools, and dioceses in particular, would remain supporters of local control and accountability.

The passing of the 1988 Education Reform Act would prove to be a tipping point. Before 1988, under the provisions of the 1944 Education Act, education was 'nationally organised and locally administered.' Other than the requirement of examination boards, through their syllabuses, to direct the content of examinations at 16+, educational provision for young people during the years of compulsory education was largely determined by teachers within individual schools under the auspices of local education authorities.

From 1988, however, various initiatives, such as the design of a centralised National Curriculum, the publication of school league tables based on examination results, the Local Management of Schools (LMS), and the establishment of a national inspection system, contributed to a radically changed environment for educational provision that gave greater powers to central government authorities. According to [Hoskins \(2012, pp. 5–19\)](#),

... the ERA ‘shocked and awed’ schools with a ‘ferocious accountability regime’ aimed at raising standards for all pupils and introducing school effectiveness regimes to address school failure with the intention of increasing the UK’s economic competitiveness on the global stage.

The legislation also allowed schools to ‘opt out’ of Local Education Authority (LEA) control, becoming more independent as Grant Maintained (GM) schools, and receiving their funding directly from central government. With the introduction of Local Management of Schools (LMS), the Act sanctioned a ‘business model’, laying the foundations for the privatisation of schools. Consequently, there emerged an educational “marketplace” in which it was claimed that parents would have a wider choice of schools ([McGregor 1990](#)). GM schools were also allowed to receive preferential funding for capital projects compared to other maintained schools in the local authority. These changes marked a major challenge for the future of faith schools in general and of Catholic schools in particular.

With the 1988 Education Reform Act, and the weakening of local authority control, there was greater emphasis on central co-ordination and regulation. Schools were subject to systematic planning, academic monitoring, target setting, and accountability. In the leadership of schools in England and Wales, these developments were associated with the emergence of ‘managerialism’ ([Grace 1995, p. 45](#)). Consequently, for many schools, collegial decision-making practices of the 1970s were replaced with hierarchical structures of line-management. Headteachers assumed the role of chief executive in their schools, and, in many cases, they reduced and, in some cases, eschewed their direct classroom teaching time.⁹

The emergence of managerialism also had implications for relationships between headteachers and governors. Following the introduction of local management in schools, it became necessary for governors to collaborate more closely with the headteacher. Lack of clarity in differentiating the role of the Governing Body and the role of the executive in the person of the headteacher could lead to conflict.¹⁰

The effect on the Catholic sector was significant. [Grace \(2016, p. 183\)](#), for example, contends that the establishment of GM schools did not simply introduce greater ‘choice and diversity’, but also created a school system of ‘winners and losers.’ It was, according to the [Catholic Education Service \(1992, p. 7\)](#), a concept which was inimical to the principles of Catholic education:

The GM option intensifies financial and curricular inequalities between schools and creates new inequalities. It also supposes that schools derive their strength from their own autonomy without any sense of having a wider responsibility to the common good.

[Grace \(2016, p. 182\)](#), moreover, considered the introduction of GM schools to be the most direct challenge to the authority of Catholic bishops since the passing of the 1944 Education Act. Financial inducements offered to GM schools by the government included 100% funding for capital projects compared to the 85% of funding received by voluntary-aided Catholic schools. Voluntary-aided Catholic schools had to meet a 15% liability for capital costs, which, as building costs escalated, was a concern for Catholic leaders. Consequently, the attraction of government support for fully funded capital projects created a moral dilemma for some Catholic leaders, headteachers and Governing Bodies. By opting for

grant-maintained status, schools gained financial benefits directly from a government agency, but as the Church no longer contributed financially to developments in those schools, it also placed Catholic school leaders at odds with Catholic bishops.

In the face of objections from the bishops, many Catholic schools, with parental support, chose to convert to grant-maintained status, thus giving them a financial advantage over voluntary-aided Catholic schools. However, it came with a rupture in the vision of collaborating in the common good. In a celebrated test case in 1994, for example, the governors and parents of children attending Cardinal Vaughan School in Westminster supported the decision of the Governing Body to “opt out” of local government control and adopt GM status. In response, Cardinal Basil Hume, as Archbishop of Westminster, challenged the decision but as [Arthur \(1995, p. 153\)](#) reports,

the parents threatened to take Cardinal Hume ... to the courts ... And the Cardinal threatened to place himself in contempt of the courts ...

Moreover, as [Buck \(2020, p. 50\)](#) observes,

These cultural shifts did not overtly undermine the authority and control of the bishop in his schools but began to strengthen the voice of the state and parents and encouraged Catholic professionals and Catholic parents to heed the state’s narrative about what mattered in schools.

According to [Storr \(2011, p. 96\)](#), the challenge faced by Cardinal Hume over GM status illustrated that school governors were prepared to contest the position of the Church in the context of education and indicated that there was:

... [a] growing disjuncture between the church’s view of the nature and purpose of school education and that of the state.

The case demonstrated potential tensions and strains between, on the one hand, the interest of parents and governors for education in one specific school and, on the other hand, a bishop and diocesan educators, who were concerned with the maintenance of a coherent national and comprehensive system of school provision. [Grace \(2002a, p. 7\)](#), for example, argued that the introduction of GM schools contributed to ‘a survival of the fittest approach’, which challenged concerns for the common good. Significantly, the [Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales \(1996b, n. 82\)](#) asserted that:

The concept of competition implies that there will be failures as well as successes, and under market conditions early signs of failure may cause more rapid collapse.

For the Catholic bishops, these developments presented a threat to Catholic educational values and to the distinctiveness of Catholic schools. In effect, it was felt that the application of market forces would compromise the integrity of the values of Catholic education. This concern has been accentuated, more recently, with the advancement of Catholic academies¹¹ and multi-academy trusts (CMATs). [Buck \(2020\)](#), for example, argues that these developments give rise to potential tensions and challenges in the relationship between the State and the Catholic Church, and have implications for the relative balance of power.¹²

The passing of the 1988 Education Reform Act generated a systemic change, which set in train a public accountability framework that still operates today. It replaced previous arrangements through local authorities with an approach that managed schooling more closely through central control and intervention. This was facilitated by the introduction of an inspection framework implemented by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted).¹³

2. Materials and Methods

An Autobiographical Narrative Case Study

An autobiographical narrative consists of a researcher recounting a story from personal experience. Human beings have told stories from time immemorial in different cultures and in different contexts. They are powerful instruments of pedagogy. Jesus, for example, was renowned for telling and retelling stories to illustrate his teachings. A story therefore will provide a means not only to communicate lived experience, but also to teach. In adopting an autobiographical narrative methodology, the writer set out to explore tensions and opportunities faced by one Catholic school in its relationship with the State through the consideration of an Ofsted inspection as an example from lived experience.

Personal reminiscences can be disparaged for being too subjective and lacking in “hard” scientific rigour; but I would argue that anecdotal evidence is of considerable value and actually contributes greatly to a stock of qualitative data. In relating stories and narrative accounts, a profound understanding of social phenomena can be presented. In this respect, anecdotal evidence can be of considerable value as it can contribute greatly to a stock of qualitative data.¹⁴ It is argued that researchers of Catholic education should celebrate stories and narrative accounts as they can offer a profound understanding of social phenomena.¹⁵ Therefore, recollecting lived personal experience of an Ofsted inspection in a Catholic secondary school setting as a story enables me to give an insight into challenges and opportunities that were faced by an individual Catholic school. The following story is recounted as a personal testimony for illustrative purposes.

3. Results

In 1995, I was a First Deputy Headteacher in a Catholic secondary school. During the autumn term, we were notified that in three months’ time the school would be the subject of an Ofsted inspection. Consequently, staff were asked to attend a meeting with the senior leadership team, where they were informed of the impending inspection and were invited to put forward comments and questions. It was evident during the meeting that the announcement caused much anxiety and concern amongst teachers within the school. I was surprised that even accomplished teachers with many years of service were disturbed and distressed. This presented a different educational climate compared to that which I had encountered in an earlier experience of inspection.

We anticipated that the inspection would be conducted robustly and with rigour. At that time, impressions of the Ofsted inspection process were epitomised by the observations of Chris Woodhead, who, having been appointed as head of the Office for Standards in Education in 1994, had highlighted weaknesses in schools and poor teaching. Schools that failed to achieve appropriate standards in their academic and examination results would be subject to being “named and shamed”. It transpired that the adverse reaction towards the Ofsted inspection amongst teachers in the school had been coloured by his controversial claim that there were “15,000 incompetent teachers”. With a target of achieving greater accountability in education, he maintained that “I am paid to challenge mediocrity, failure and complacency”. These perceptions evidently affected the attitudes of colleagues towards the imminent inspection.

During the rest of the term, therefore, the headteacher arranged a series of one-to-one meetings with colleagues to allay their concerns about the inspection process. In the event, the Ofsted inspection took place in January 1996, and following a week’s scrutiny the inspectors subsequently provided a positive report of the school’s performance. One key target that was identified for the school by the Ofsted inspection required it to enable students to achieve higher examination results at a faster rate than the national average.

Thus, the school felt obliged to place greater emphasis on monitoring the academic progress of students and in raising its examination achievement in comparison with other schools.

4. Discussion

The question is how this story might be understood in the context of the relationship between the State and Catholic education. Admittedly, the account would lend itself to many interpretations from different perspectives. Therefore, any analysis of the narrative must first acknowledge that the recollection represents one person's account of subjective and lived experiences. Neither would it be appropriate to generalise from one individual experience. Indeed, if more comprehensive inferences are to be drawn, further empirical research would have to be conducted.

I relate this story neither to support nor to deprecate Ofsted inspections.¹⁶ There are benefits to providing an inspection framework within which improved standards of learning and teaching can be facilitated. It is appropriate for schools to be aware of the reality of failure and, when pupils or colleagues do not perform as well as they could do, it needs to be addressed honestly. Thus, inspections can support colleagues in improving and developing the quality of learning and teaching within their classrooms. In addition, the regulations that ensued from the 1988 Education Reform Act had implications for all schools not just for Catholic schools. Admittedly, too, for Catholic schools, Section 48 Ofsted inspections allow for an evaluation of denominational aspects of school life.¹⁷

The purpose here is not to evaluate the quality of school inspections but to explore from a reflection on personal experience how far, if at all, the introduction of Ofsted inspections by the State had an impact on Catholic education. From the point of view of Catholic education, it seemed to me on reflecting on the story that two potential sources of tension should be considered:

(a) First, it appeared that, through the agency of Ofsted, the State had formally facilitated a competitive culture in education. This view was based on the impression that school leaders would be encouraged to judge their school's effectiveness both locally and nationally by comparing their inspection grades and league table positions with other schools. It produced a climate that identified 'winners and losers' in which only the 'fittest' survived. In comparing the performance of the school with that of other schools, Ofsted played a role in supporting a shift in emphasis towards a market-oriented competitive system. Ostensibly, this is inimical to the principle of Catholic Social Teaching, which promotes the principle of the common good. This view is supported by [Grace \(2002a, p. 7\)](#), who argues that Catholic schooling faces challenges:

... from a new culture of education which, at its worst, involves the commodification of education, the marketisation of school cultures and process and the celebration of an ethic of individual and autonomous school 'success', regardless of the fate of other schools.

(b) Second, Ofsted, informed by a subject-led National Curriculum, seemed to prioritise the measurement of 'hard' targets such as examination and test results at the expense of less quantifiable achievements, such as spiritual, moral, social, and religious values. By implication, some school leaders might consciously or unconsciously feel encouraged to privilege academic performance over other less easily measurable achievements. The danger is that the hegemony of academic success will dominate a distinctive Catholic school culture that values service to the common good. Significantly, [The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education \(1977, n. 29\)](#) says that the aim of the Catholic school:

... must begin from the principle that its educational programme is intentionally directed to the growth of the whole person.

A Catholic school, therefore, in the interests of integral human development, is committed to the education of the whole person.¹⁸ A judgement of a Catholic school's performance that is reduced mainly to an assessment of its academic results provides a narrow focus and potentially poses a challenge not only to its mission integrity but also to its relative autonomy (Grace 1998).

There are outcomes, other than those measured by hard quantitative data, with which to evaluate a school's performance. If the measurement of the quality of educational attainment in a Catholic school is to be catholic, in the sense of broad and inclusive, then it would need to embrace a comprehensive range of criteria. Catholic schools should not only set out to achieve instrumental targets of success, such as those determined by examination results, academic performance indicators and league table positions, but they should also be motivated to promote values related to spiritual, moral, and social formation. As Grace (2002b, p. 431) underlines:

It is not sufficient simply to develop the intelligence, talents and skills of young people on an individual or 'self-fulfilment' basis. This could lead to the creation of talented and clever but also self-centred and materially acquisitive individuals with no regard for any conception of a common good.

If Catholic schools are agents of formation, teachers have a responsibility for developing the personal, social, and moral qualities of young people as well as for their academic achievement. These are not so easy to assess.

In summary, within the context of the relationship between the State and the Church, it can be argued that Ofsted inspections can present challenges for Catholic schools. In acknowledging the religious character of their schools, it would be salutary, therefore, for Catholic school leaders to recall the passage in Matthew's gospel, which says: 'Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's' (Matthew 22:21). As Catholic schools should aim not only to maintain academic standards but also to contribute to the common good of society, they have a dual responsibility to serve both 'God and Caesar'. In attempting to strike a balance between the two, they are constantly challenged to pay appropriate attention to their distinctive mission, and, in particular, they need to be concerned with maintaining their mission integrity.¹⁹

In the next section I shall consider more recent developments in the relationship between Catholic education and the State.

5. Conclusions

The intention of this paper has been to consider the changing relationship between Catholic education and the State in the eighty years since the passing of the Butler Education Act in 1944. It is evident that the distribution of power and authority between the government and the Catholic Church has been subject to challenge during that time. But what is the relationship between Catholic schools and the State today and what are the challenges and opportunities for the relationship in the future?

Unlike in many countries in the world,²⁰ in England and Wales the Catholic Church is a partner with the State within the framework of a national system of education, but, evidently, the balance of that relationship has been shifted and reconfigured since the settlement of 1944. It should be recognised, too, that the notion of the so-called dual system as a concept is neither a permanent entity nor defined by legislation. So, the question is whether or not the dual system, upon which the partnership between the State and Catholic schooling in England and Wales has been built, still holds.

Currently, the agenda for academisation in England has raised questions with regard to its impact on the relationship between the Catholic Church and the State. In the last ten years or so, challenges and opportunities presented by the process of academisation and

the conversion of Catholic schools and colleges to Catholic Multi-Academy Trusts (CMATs) have been well rehearsed (Buck 2020; Fincham and Lydon 2014; Grace 2017; Lydon 2022; Whittle 2020). Arguably, the process of academisation has allowed the development of “market forces” and competition between schools to increase beyond the contours defined by Grace (2017, pp. 198–200).

Academisation continues to cause concern for many in the Catholic community. Buck (2020, p. 172), for example, in a critical, incisive, and thorough analysis of the degree to which academisation has challenged the relationship between diocesan Catholic schools and the State, claims,

... the advent of academisation has caused expected and unexpected disruption to the church-state partnership ...

A collateral concern is that academisation will lead to a diminution of episcopal control over Catholic schooling and will undermine the prevailing dual system of education.²¹ Currently, under Canon law, for example, diocesan bishops have the right to inspect all Catholic schools situated in their jurisdiction. Thus, Canon 806 states:

The diocesan bishop has the right to watch over and visit the Catholic schools in his territory, even those which members of religious institutes have founded or direct.

However, the extent of control and authority over Catholic schools in the future has been disputed. Lydon (2022, p. 17), for example, in his experience of academisation as a Director of a Multi-Academy Trust, contends that the relationship between the Board of the Multi-Academy Trust and the Diocesan Education Service has been characterised by ‘collaborative ministry in the service of the common good.’

Whether or not Catholic schooling will benefit from adopting academy status, there are questions that the Catholic educational community needs to consider carefully. I wonder, for example, whether the autonomy of Catholic academies would protect their existence at a time of falling roles. The conversion to academy status should not be left to chance and should have regard to the common good.²² There is scope for extensive empirical research in this area. It would therefore be value in promoting discussion and conducting investigation in Catholic schools that have adopted or are considering the adoption of academy status.

Catholic school leaders within an increasingly secularised society are challenged to maintain a viable balance between, on the one hand, their commitment to their schools’ spiritual mission and, on the other hand, their obligations to wider society. Murphy (2001, p. 100), for example, asserts that:

The church school must not aim to be an educational haven separated from the real world.

Nowadays, it is not only children from Catholic families who benefit from Catholic education. Whilst Catholic schools have a responsibility to provide an education that is authentic to the distinctive traditions of the Catholic Church, they must also acknowledge that there are students in their schools who are not baptised Catholics. Young people who attend Catholic schools come from a diversity of religious, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. The Catholic Education Service (2022, p. 21), for example, provides data that shows that in England:

There are 316,070 non-Catholic pupils in state-funded [Catholic] schools, constituting 40.2% of the total. (<https://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/news/england-catholic-school-pupils-much-more-diverse-than-national-average---new-data>)

Moreover, the Catholic Education Service (2022, p. 25) indicates that in England:

Catholic schools in both primary and secondary phases are considerably more ethnically diverse than average national school figures. (<https://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/news/england-catholic-school-pupils-much-more-diverse-than-national-average---new-data>)

In the last eighty years, the relationship between the Catholic Church and the State has undergone strains and tensions. But within an increasingly secular and pluralist society, Catholic schools need to advocate responsibility for social concern and social justice. The aims of a Catholic school should be consistent with a mission that is inclusive and contribute to community cohesion. *The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education* (1977, n. 45), for example, points out that:

In the certainty that the Spirit is at work in every person, the Catholic school offers itself to all, non-Christians included, with all its distinctive aims and means, acknowledging, preserving and promoting the spiritual and moral qualities, the social and cultural values, which characterise different civilizations.

Catholic schools have a responsibility to serve the entire community, including “the least, the lost and the last,” to be in the service of poor and disadvantaged students, the disruptive, the alienated and the powerless, and those who are slow to learn. Catholic schools therefore have a responsibility not only to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ into the lives of young people, but also, in a multicultural society in which there is a plurality of worldviews and perspectives, to be committed to supporting diversity and inclusivity. This implies that Catholic schools have a role to offer a significant contribution to the welfare and common good of the whole of society. In considering what shifts in practice have looked like in the context of distinct policy movements that have occurred in England, it is hoped that this paper will also have contributed to the field of Catholic education internationally.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

Acknowledgments: Valuable comments on an early draft of this chapter were received from Peter Ward. Where I have accepted his advice, it has improved the discussion. Responsibility for the final version is mine.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Notes

- ¹ It should be pointed out that whilst education in England and Wales has historically been provided under the auspices of the Westminster government, since 1999, control over education policy in Wales has been devolved to the Welsh government.
- ² The historical origins and development of denominational inspections in Catholic schools in England and Wales are judiciously recounted by Ward (2021).
- ³ In his encyclical on Christian education, *Divini Illius Magistri*, Pope Pius XI (1929, n.48) says, ‘... the State should respect the inherent rights of the Church and of the family concerning Christian education and moreover have regard for distributive justice. Accordingly, unjust and unlawful is any monopoly, educational or scholastic, which, physically or morally, forces families to make use of government schools, contrary to the dictates of their Christian conscience, or contrary even to their legitimate preferences.’
- ⁴ The bishops were most concerned about issues related to finance. For example, the government suggested that if the Church authorities were unable to fund capital improvements and costs of maintenance required to bring their schools up to an acceptable level, the local education authority would take over responsibility for its Catholic schools. Nevertheless, many of the proposals were acceptable to some of the negotiators and Bishop Brown, for example, maintained that it would have been preferable for the hierarchy to have accepted the main thrust of the proposals.

- 5 In practice ‘voluntary-aided’ schools in England are non-fee-paying institutions, within the national education system.
- 6 It is noteworthy, too, that a portrait of R.A. Butler was unveiled on the occasion of a visit by Lord and Lady Butler on 17th November 1981 and to this day can be found in the annex of the Waldegrave Drawing Room at St Mary’s University at Strawberry Hill.
- 7 The impact of the Second Vatican Council (1963–1965) cannot be underestimated either, as it represented a paradigm shift in the self-understanding of the Church. [Hornsby-Smith \(1996, p. 51\)](#) says that ‘There was a shift towards a more ‘open Catholicism’ and an emphasis on a ‘People of God’ model of the church where all members contributed their gifts and talents and participated in a collegial way to the mission of the church.’
- 8 A neoliberal education policy model emphasises competition through target setting, as a basic form of accountability, along with monitoring of outcomes and closing of underperforming schools ([Jones 2016](#)).
- 9 [Sullivan \(2002, p. 101\)](#) argues that ‘managerialism’ threatens professionalism and challenges the notion of seeing teaching as a vocation: ‘When interventionist and strong management styles are applied to the notion of an authoritative mission, as in the case of Catholic schools, there is the danger of an organisational culture that is burdensome, constricting and life-diminishing being built up. The ‘tools’ of management then can slip into the ever more subtle forms of control, rather than releasing energy. They can create the impression that school leaders are seeking increased surveillance for increased compliance.’
- 10 Indeed, [Grace \(1995, p. 82\)](#), for example, reports the experience of one secondary headteacher: ‘One of the problems we faced was an initial, acute enthusiasm for power . . . In reporting to the Governing Body, I used the expression that ‘senior management think . . .’ and the Chair of Governors stopped me immediately and said, ‘We are the senior management now’.’
- 11 Academies are state-funded schools that are independent of the jurisdiction of local authorities. They are directly accountable to the Secretary of State. Legally, they are exempt from regulations that govern the conduct of other maintained schools pertaining to, for example, admissions, exclusions, and the curriculum. All schools in England are encouraged with financial inducements to ‘convert’ to academy status.
- 12 See also [Grace \(2017, chap. 12\)](#) ‘The State and Catholic schooling in England and Wales: politics, ideology and mission integrity’.
- 13 Following the passing of the 1992 Education (Schools) Act, all state-funded schools in the country would be inspected by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), which would publish its reports to inform schools, parents, and government. Since 1999, Estyn) a separate inspection service has been responsible for inspections in Welsh schools.
- 14 [Denzin and Lincoln \(2000\)](#), for example, propose that “qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get a better understanding of the matter at hand” (pp. 3–4).
- 15 The value of storytelling and its importance in the context of research is elaborated by Peterlini and Rathgeb in their book *Anecdote Research*, which vindicates the adoption of lifeworld phenomena and personal experiences as a methodology for gaining insightful evidence for the purpose of conducting research.
- 16 It is interesting to note that according to a study conducted by [Bokhove et al. \(2023\)](#): ‘Our empirical analysis . . . demonstrates how Ofsted inspection judgments available to parents when they are choosing a school are weak predictors of the future school environment and outcomes.’
- 17 Dioceses have responsibility under Canon Law for conducting denominational inspections.
- 18 Amongst other things, for example, the [Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales \(1996a\)](#) proposed that Catholic schools should be committed to promoting the education of the Whole Person.
- 19 Mission integrity is a contested concept, but it is defined by [Grace \(2002b, p. 432\)](#) as ‘fidelity in practice and not just in public rhetoric to the distinctive and authentic principles of a Catholic education.’
- 20 The Catholic school system is the largest faith-based system in the world, including more than a quarter of a million Catholic schools serving over fifty million students ([Jones and Barrie 2015, p. 119](#)).
- 21 According to Sir [Newsam \(2013\)](#), the process of academisation would enable the Secretary of State for Education to secure unrestrained and irreversible control over decision-making in all schools in England. According to [Pring \(2013, p. 157\)](#), moreover, the effect would be to create ‘the most personally centralised education system in Western Europe since Germany in the 1930s—each school contracted to the Secretary of State.’ It is argued that this situation may not have a significant impact under a benign Secretary of State, but it could potentially have incalculable consequences if a Secretary of State were to be appointed who was not in sympathy with schools of a religious character.
- 22 Since the time of St Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century, social institutions of the Catholic Church are intended to be instruments for the common good and not exclusively for the particular good of Catholic communities.

References

- Arthur, James. 1995. *The Ebbing Tide: Policy and Principles of Catholic Education*. Leominster: Gracewing.
- Ball, Stephen J. 2012. The reluctant state and the beginning of the end of state education. *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 44: 89–103. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Barber, Margaret. 1994. *The Making of the 1944 Education Act*. London: Cassell.

- Bokhove, Christian, John Jerrim, and Sam Sims. 2023. How Useful are Ofsted Inspection judgements for Informing Secondary School Choice? *Journal of School Choice* 17: 35–61. [CrossRef]
- Buck, Margaret. 2020. *Renewing the Church-State Partnership for Catholic Education: Engaging with the Challenge of Academisation*. Oxford: Peter Lang Ltd.
- Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. 1996a. *Principles, Practices and Concerns*. London: Catholic Education Service.
- Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. 1996b. *The Common Good and the Catholic Church's Social Teaching*. London: Catholic Bishops' Conference.
- Catholic Education Service. 1992. *A Response to the White Paper*. London: CES.
- Catholic Education Service. 2022. England: Catholic School Pupils Much More Diverse Than National Average—New Data. Available online: <https://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/news/england-catholic-school-pupils-much-more-diverse-than-national-average--new-data> (accessed on 18 May 2026).
- Cruickshank, Marjorie. 1964. *Church and State in English Education*. London: Macmillan.
- Denzin, Norman. K., and Yvonna. S. Lincoln, eds. 2000. Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 1–29.
- Elliott, Kit. 2006. A very pushy kind of folk': Educational Reform 1944 and the Catholic Laity of England and Wales. *History of Education* 35: 91–119. [CrossRef]
- Fincham, David, and John Lydon. 2014. Towards Academy Conversion: Challenges and Opportunities for Catholic Schools. *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences* 9: 159–95.
- Grace, Gerald. 1995. *School Leadership: Beyond Education Management*. London and Washington, DC: The Falmer Press.
- Grace, Gerald. 1998. Realising the Mission: Catholic Approaches to School Effectiveness. In *School Effectiveness for Whom? Challenges to School Effectiveness and School Improvement Movements*. Edited by Roger Slee, Gaby Weiner and Sally Tomlinson. London: Falmer Press.
- Grace, Gerald. 2002a. Catholic Education in England and Wales. In *Contemporary Catholic Education*. Edited by Michael Hayes and Liam Gearon. Leominster: Gracewing.
- Grace, Gerald. 2002b. *Catholic Schools: Missions, Markets & Morality*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Grace, Gerald. 2016. Catholic Education and the Principles of Openness. *International Catholic Journal of Education* 2: 61–76.
- Grace, Gerald. 2017. *Faith, Mission and Challenge in Catholic Education*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Hornsby-Smith, Margaret Patricia. 1996. The Catholic Church and Education in Britain. In *Catholicism in Britain and France Since 1789*. Edited by Frank Tallett. London: Hambledon Press, pp. 43–65.
- Hornsby-Smith, Margaret Patricia. 1999. *Catholics in England 1950–2000*. London and New York: Cassell.
- Hoskins, Kate. 2012. Raising standards 1988 to the present: A new performance policy era? *Journal of Educational Administration and History* 44: 5–19. [CrossRef]
- Jones, David A., and Stephen Barrie. 2015. *Thinking Christian Ethos: The Meaning of Catholic Education*. London: CTS.
- Jones, Ken. 2016. *Education in Britain 1944 to the Present*, 2nd ed. Cambridge: Polity.
- Lydon, John. 2022. Catholic Multi-Academy Trusts: Developments and the position of religious orders in the ongoing debate. *Pastoral Review* 18: 15–20.
- McGregor, John. 1990. *Conservative Party Conference News*. London: Conservative Party.
- Morris, Andrew B. 2008. *50 Years on: The Case for Catholic Schools*. Chelmsford: Matthew James Publishing Ltd.
- Murphy, A. J. 2001. Performance Management and the Church School. In *Performance Management in Schools*. Edited by Ingrid. Bradbury, John. O'Neill and John. West-Burnham. London: Pearson, pp. 100–12.
- Newsam, Peter. 2013. Towards a Totalitarian Education System in England: Looking at the Academy Question in a Longer Policy Context. *Networking* 14: 4–6.
- O'Keeffe, Bernadette. 1999. Reordering Perspectives in Catholic Schools. In *Catholics in England 1950–2000*. Edited by Margaret Patricia Hornsby-Smith. London and New York: Cassell.
- Pope Pius XI. 1929. *Divini Illius Magistri*. London: CTS. Available online: https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xi_enc_31121929_divini-illius-magistri.html (accessed on 29 June 2026).
- Pring, Richard. 2013. *The Life and Death of Secondary Education for All*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Storr, Christopher. 2011. *Serving Two Masters? Catholic School Governors at Work*. Leominster: Gracewing.
- Sullivan, John. 2002. *Contemporary Catholic Education*. Edited by Michael A. Hayes and Liam Gearon. Gracewing: Leominster.
- The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education. 1977. The Catholic School. Available online: https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19770319_catholic-school_en.html (accessed on 30 June 2026).

- Ward, P. 2021. Step by Step: An Introduction to the History of Catholic Denominational Inspection in England and Wales. In *Irish and British Reflections on Catholic Education*. Edited by Sean Whittle. Singapore: Springer.
- Whittle, Sean, ed. 2020. *Conference Report from the First National Conference on Academisation*. Whitehaven: Networking Education Trust Ltd.

Disclaimer/Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.