Collaborative, Child-led Philosophical Inquiry in Religious and Moral Education

Author 1
Ewan Cameron, Argyll and Bute Council, Scotland
ewancameron79@me.com

*Author 2
Claire Cassidy, School of Education, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow G4 0LT.
claire.cassidy@strath.ac.uk
ORCID: 0000-0002-3088-1721
*Corresponding author

Abstract

Situated in the context of the Scottish Religious and Moral Education (RME) curriculum, this article considers the practice of Community of Philosophical Inquiry (CoPI) and how it supports the RME curriculum. Sharing extracts from children's CoPI sessions, the article reflects on the ways in which ten and eleven year-old children discuss religious and theological ideas philosophically. The child-led, collaborative approach demonstrates that the children work together to create meaning. It is proposed that the RME curriculum, or the enactment of the curriculum, often misses opportunities for children to engage with philosophical ideas about religious and theological concepts, and that an explicitly dialogic, philosophical approach affords important opportunities to support children's self-understanding in-relation with the world and others.

Keywords

Introduction

The aim of this article is to explore the way in which McCall's Community of Philosophical Inquiry (CoPI) (McCall 1991, 2009) might be used as an approach to support the teaching and learning of Religious and Moral Education (RME) that fosters child-led collaborative meaning-making in relation to religious concepts. The present article, and wider study of which it is part, aims to contribute to the growing field of empirical, classroom-based research in the area of Religious and Moral Education (see, for example: Pearce, Stones, Reiss and Mujtaba 2021; Ilten-Gee and Hilliard 2021). The article is situated in the RME component of the Scottish curriculum. While there is scope for discussion and personal reflection in the primary school RME curriculum, opportunities for philosophical dialogue that support a shared search for meaning can be missed. While the article focuses on the Scottish context, the considerations are not unique to Scotland, as we seek to respond to the question: how might engaging in philosophical dialogue support children's learning in RME?

In Scotland, there are two types of State schools: denominational (faith) schools, and non-denominational schools. Non-denominational is not quite accurate, as such schools are seen to be 'broadly of a Christian character' (Education Reform Act 1988, Matemba 2018), and, despite the cultural diversity in Scottish schools, this Christian dimension persists. The distinction between the two is important, however, as in faith schools (the vast majority of these are Catholic) children are taught Religious Education, while in so-called non-denominational schools, children are taught Religious and Moral Education. Aside from this distinction, the curriculum remains the same across the school sector. It is worth noting at the outset that the term 'religious' is used throughout the article in its broadest sense, to include faith, the theological and associated practices.

The Scottish RME curriculum

Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Executive 2004) is a curriculum for all learners between the ages of three and eighteen. The curriculum spans five levels: early level (pre-school to the first year of primary school, ages 3-5); first level (Primary 2-4, ages 6-8); second level (Primary 5-7, ages 9-11); third level (Secondary 1-3, ages 12-14), and the senior phase (S4-6, ages 15-18). RME, as other curricular areas, comprises Experiences and Outcomes, statements that outline pupils' learning and progression across the topics and levels. These

are aligned with Benchmarks to support consistency and teachers' professional judgements about that progression. Teachers in Scotland have a lot of autonomy in terms of how they meet the Benchmarks. While it has been suggested that such autonomy can lead to vagueness, it is also true to say that this vagueness allows teachers freedom to create the experiences children and young people have in order to attain the outcomes (Cassidy 2018b). This is true across all areas of the curriculum. As a mandatory subject in Scottish schools, RME has Experience and Outcomes, and associated Benchmarks (https://education.gov.scot/Documents/rme-eo.pdf). It is worth mentioning that the Catholic Religious Education Experiences and Outcomes differ philosophically from the RME curriculum, notably in that opportunities for philosophical inquiry are less obvious and that moral education is implied through Catholicism. Indeed, although it is not until the senior phase of the RME curriculum that philosophical inquiry is mentioned, there is no mention of it at all in the Catholic RE experiences and outcomes. The Catholic RE document does not reach beyond pupils being able to reach beyond being aware, researching, describing, sharing and exploring how or why certain things are the case with respect to other world religions. Within the Catholic element of the curriculum, questioning, debate or dialogue are not in evidence; instead, 'factual' statements are presented, such as: 'I am becoming aware of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit'; 'I am familiar with the Christmas story and I know that at Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus the son of God and Son of Mary', and 'To help me understand the message intended by the writers of the Biblical texts I have developed an awareness of the literary forms of the Bible' (https://education.gov.scot/Documents/rerc-eo.pdf).

The over-arching themes spanning the RME curriculum are: Christianity; other world religions; and development of beliefs and values. In recent years there has been a shift from personal search to a 'philosophication' of the curriculum (Nixon, 2008), where children are encouraged to consider a more diverse range of perspectives. That being said, the philosophication of the curriculum, as Nixon calls it, seems to be situated predominantly in the secondary school, with children in the primary stages only being encouraged to 'talk about their own beliefs' or to 'share my developing views about values such as fairness and equality and love, caring, sharing and human rights' (Education Scotland n.d., 2). Indeed, while teachers *may* interpret the curriculum guidance as promoting philosophical dialogue in RME, the notion of philosophical inquiry is only explicitly stated for pupils working at the senior phase of the curriculum, when they are between the ages of fifteen and eighteen.

Without such an explicit statement for younger pupils, opportunities to consider the potential for philosophical dialogue within RME may be limited and even missed, despite, or perhaps because, there is so much freedom for teachers in addressing the curriculum Benchmarks.

Conroy, Lundi and Baumfield (2012) identified a 'sense of boredom and scepticism' (316) for pupils that pointed towards one of the central challenges facing Religious Education in the UK: coherence in purpose and meaning. Describing how RME is caught between a 'sceptical culture on the one hand' and 'the mythical silence of the incommunicable and irreducible on the other' (319), they argue that religious education that fails to resonate with pupils' lives and leads to 'confusions, contradictions and conflations' (319). This sceptical culture is one, they argue, that has led to flawed teaching of religious education, with undue focus on 'social phenomena and practices' (313) rather than making meaning of the world and our being in it. Consequently, it raises the question of how teachers might develop RME that is insightful and from which pupils can make meaning, and that they might do this as a shared endeavour. Education Scotland, an executive agency of the Scottish Government, with responsibility for supporting and ensuring quality and improvement, recognises this need, asserting that pupils should have 'opportunities to develop their own beliefs and values… resilient attitudes and life skills to support them through the complexities of human existence and co-existence' (Education Scotland 2014, 4). Indeed, the curriculum document states that pupils should be encouraged to reflect, discover and engage in critical evaluation to develop their beliefs, attitudes, values and practices, and that by cultivating reflection, discernment and critical thinking they will be aided in their moral decision-making (Scottish Government, n.d.).

However, despite curriculum guidelines noting that RME should be engaging, critically challenging and personally meaningful to pupils, Grant and Matemba (2013) reveal that poor lessons with inadequate tasks remain endemic: pupils are not given opportunities to demonstrate understanding or questioning of the religious concepts under investigation. Missing opportunities to provide learning that has personal resonance and that challenges children's thinking and being in and of the world must inevitably lead to the 'boring' lessons identified by Conroy et al. (2012). Generally, the teaching of RME in Scotland's primary schools is too slow to respond to the expectations of Scotland's curriculum (Wilson 2008). What the curriculum appears to advocate, but never quite achieves, is philosophical endeavour - an interrogation of ideas, concepts, beliefs and values – on the part of pupils. Going beyond what is written in curriculum and policy documentation, Garrett (2020) notes

that teachers tend to avoid making the likes of debate or dialogue part of their regular practice, creating 'a condition of ambivalence' (339) where such activities are desirable, but where there is anxiety over what may ensue. Although Garrett is writing in the context of the USA, his suggestion of ambivalence or reluctance to engender dialogue on particular topics appear to translate to the Scottish context. Some teachers are often nervous of children discussing what may be seen as controversial as they are not quite sure what they, as teachers, can and cannot say, or they are fearful of parents' reactions (Cassidy, Brunner and Webster 2014). However, it cannot be acceptable that opportunities are not provided for children to explore what they think about as broad a range of topics as possible, including so-called controversial issues (Chetty and Suissa 2017). The sense that aspects of RME teaching and learning might be child-led and collaborative in nature may address this somewhat.

Teaching about and teaching from

Teece (2010) makes a distinction between learning about and learning from religion. Learning *about* involves finding out about religions' beliefs, teachings and practices, and absorbing something of that faith's response to ultimate questions. Learning *from*, on the other hand, refers to pupils' learning from religion 'about themselves – about discerning ultimate questions and "signals of transcendence" in their own experience and considering how they might respond to them' (94). This, Teece (2010) suggests, requires two evaluative approaches: impersonal and personal. The former requires the ability to make 'critical evaluations of truth claims [and] beliefs' (94); the latter is an approach to self-evaluation from confronting and evaluating religious truth claims, beliefs and values, an aspect of RME in the Scottish context. Baumfield, Conroy, Davis and Lundi (2012) report that teachers in their study see one purpose of RME to be conceptual understanding of both religious and non-religious world-views with the aim of developing self-understanding and a relationship with the world; i.e. that children should be learning *from* RME. It may be that in engaging children in philosophical dialogue while they are learning about and from religion, and religious and moral topics that there is a shift to learning *through* religion and associated ideas as a collaborative activity that supports reflection and action on the individual level with a view to supporting children to consider themselves in relation to the world and others (Cassidy and Mohr Lone 2020).

Learning solely *about* religion is a phenomenological approach: it seeks to teach knowledge and understanding of key aspects of the religion non-dogmatically, to interpret religious experience of others and thus develop and deepen pupils' own cognitive perspective (Acquah 2017). A fundamental problem with the phenomenological approach is the distinction between experience and understanding (Barnes 2001). Although religious language can be used to develop understanding about religion, language cannot enable one to *experience* religion. While it may be important to learn about religions, a phenomenological approach may leave pupils unable to see the ways in which RME could be of immediate value for their personal development (Teece 2010), being somewhat detached from their lived experience in and of the world. By itself, the phenomenological approach does not address the gap between knowledge and empathy, understanding and experience. This is a problem if an aim of RME in schools is to encourage, as Baumfield et al.'s (2012) participants think, self-understanding, including it might be suggested, a sense of self in-relation to the world and others.

The interpretative approach to RME is arguably more reflective. Lessons seek to consider how a religion or faith is represented to avoid stereotyping and misrepresentation. It also encourages pupils to reflect on what is being taught (Wedell 2010). One example of children being supported to interpret facets of religious beliefs, practices and traditions is the Hampshire syllabus *Living Difference* (Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton Councils 2004). Here, teachers are encouraged to focus on the concepts and values 'inherent in the spirituality of religious traditions' (Teece 2010, 101). Although the interpretative approach seeks to evoke a more reflective path in learning about and from religion to enrich learners' understanding of their religious/spiritual ideas, concepts and values, it appears to focus on reflection at an individual level. What might support self-understanding, particularly in-relation, is a dialogic approach, one in which pupils are encouraged to engage with others about the ideas presented within RME or religion more broadly.

Reaching beyond the phenomenological or interpretive approach to RME that tends to dominate the Scottish primary school RME curriculum requires more than a blending of the two. While there is scope for reflection in the Scottish curriculum, there is no evidence to suggest that children are supported to engage reflectively in ideas presented in RME, and even when reflection is evident, it tends to be a solitary activity (Cassidy 2018a). To move

beyond this, to one where there is scope for learning through ideas found in RME, collaborative philosophical dialogue offers an opportunity.

The Toledo paper offering guiding principles for teaching about religion and beliefs in public schools (OSCE/ODIHR 2007) proposes three levels of dialogue, increasing in complexity, as one approach. The third level encourages pupils to ask questions and 'express, negotiate and justify their views' (48). To do this, learners must first acknowledge that alternative views to their own exist, and that, through dialogue, they share these, questioning their own and others' views and ideas. A dialogic approach sits well with the teachers from Baumfield et al.'s study (2012), who prefer learning that is child-led and constructivist. Indeed, a philosophical approach, such as that described in the present article, relies on communal thinking and meaning-making that is generated by the children.

Dialogue, particularly philosophical dialogue, is important, particularly where the goal is to develop self-understanding in-relation to others (Cassidy and Christie 2013). While academic philosophy is often a sole endeavour, philosophy with children in schools is more practical in nature; it demands that learners engage with others' ideas through dialogue, with the teacher having a less directive role and where children identify questions to explore without expectations of finding the answer the teacher might be looking for. While we must be cautious that applying philosophy within RME does not reduce religious and theological concepts to an 'intellectual system' (Huggler 2009, 121), there is much that such an approach might offer to teachers and pupils alike, not least because it is both child-led and constructivist (Ventista and Paparoussi 2016; Makaiu 2017). It may offer more than learning about and learning from religion, or at least complement it, and this is the element that appears to be missing, at least in the Scottish RME primary curriculum.

Philosophy with Children and RME
Philosophy with Children (PwC) grew from the Philosophy for Children (P4C) programme developed by Matthew Lipman in the USA (Lipman 1978, 1993, 2003, 2014). Since its inception, almost fifty years ago, P4C has been adopted and adapted internationally. What each approach has in common is that it advocates a dialogic approach to philosophy that is more or less structured, and where participants engage with questions philosophically. One such approach is Community of Philosophical Inquiry (CoPI) (Cassidy 2007, McCall 2009). McCall developed CoPI in the early 1990s while working with Lipman. Lipman's approach

comes from Peirce and Dewey (Lipman 2003; Pardales and Girod 2006), and McCall drew on the Hegelian approach to philosophising she had developed while a student at university and what she had learned from Lipman (McCall 2009). The approach is premised on four underpinning principles: as humans we all have the capacity to reason; we are all creative; we are fallible; everything is open to question (Cassidy 2007; McCall 2009).

Simply put, CoPI is facilitated by the teacher and adopts a structure whereby participants (usually) read a stimulus that provokes their questions. The facilitator selects a question to be explored, and thereafter, the children contribute by commenting on others' contributions, using the phrase 'I agree/disagree with (another child's name) because (giving a reason)' (Cassidy 2007; McCall 2009;). There are some additional rules within CoPI: the children raise a hand to indicate they wish to contribute, the facilitator selects speakers in an order that will juxtapose philosophical perspectives; in agreeing/disagreeing with one another, participants may not refer to an authority for their reason to dis/agree, they should avoid technical language (philosophical or otherwise); they need not offer their own opinion; and there is no search for consensus or conclusion (Cassidy 2007, 2017; McCall 2009).

The teacher/facilitator in CoPI remains physically outside the circle in which the participants sit. Further, she is not, as in some approaches, a co-inquirer; her contributions are designed to seek clarification, exemplification or expansion to drive the philosophy forward (Cassidy and Christie 2014). The teacher is not in a position of 'epistemic authority' (Kennedy 2004, 753); rather, she is a metaphorical midwife that delivers arguments and questions. Her role is to identify where clarification or expansion may be needed - not to control but to 'trigger and bridge…ways of thinking and talking, which we call philosophical' (ibid., 761). Such a role supports children to engage philosophically with religious concepts, and self-discovery of their own views or beliefs pertaining to these (Cassidy 2018a), and they do this collaboratively.

In suggesting that encouraging children to philosophise means understanding philosophy 'not as an abstract body of axioms and systems, but in the sense of philosophising as an activity' (Martens 2009, 104). Incorporating PwC within RME suggests that engaging with philosophical dialogue can assist 'young people in making meaning for themselves from […] different explanations of existential questions' (Hannam 2012, 130). The key, here, is that

they are engaging in this themselves with little teacher intervention, thereby enabling children to identify areas of religious or moral interest and to explore their thinking together.

CoPI involves evaluative reasoning, juxtaposing objective and subjective perspectives and beliefs, considering these in relation to their supporting arguments, as opposed to absolutist and relativist thinking (Knight and Collins 2014; van der Straten Waillet, Roskam, and Possoz 2015). Ipgrave's (2009, 2013) research on children engaging in dialogue on the concept of God, took an evaluativist approach through which certainty and hesitancy 'encouraged the children to push their thinking further to produce new meanings' (62). Thus, instead of 'trading truths', children created 'new suburbs of meaning' (ibid., 68). In evaluating more than one position, scope is offered to consider reasons for the views held. As such, van der Straten Waillet et al. (2015) contend that engaging in philosophical dialogue would be an effective educational approach to explore religious and theological concepts, as evaluativism 'better fulfils the individual need for meaning' (287). Further, a philosophical approach such as CoPI offers a structure to support hesitancy or uncertainty by encouraging participants to build on others' ideas and to make connections across these to support shared understanding, though not necessarily agreement.

A significant, if not fundamental, problem with applying philosophy within RME to explore religious concepts goes back to Conroy et al.'s (2012) 'two silences' between the sceptical culture and the 'silence of the incommunicable and irreducible' (319), and Barnes' (2001) assertion that 'religion lies beyond discursive reason […] penetrated only by intuition and encounter' (454). However, were we to accept that we cannot reason about the ineffable, philosophy would be somewhat redundant. We might be able to agree that the construct or practice that is religion relies on 'intuition and encounter', but the drive for meaning and understanding ourselves and others requires that we engage with the ideas that appear to challenge reason. What practical philosophy with children allows is that children raise their own questions, they unpack and evaluate their responses. While philosophising engages with logic and reason to explore concepts and ideas and to counter arguments, religious language often applies metaphor, mythology and mystery to explain or give some understanding to divinity, the transcendent and life beyond this world (Armstrong 2005). This is not beyond children; indeed, most of the stories we tell children to socialise them rely on metaphor, mythology and mystery. Martens (2009) argues that the attitude of philosophical and religious thinking are 'radically different' because philosophical thought lacks certainty,

while (Christian) theology 'bases itself on a hope through faith that is therefore placed beyond the scope of questioning' (113). Both philosophy and theology reach limitations in the other. Faith cannot reject thought; philosophy cannot escape 'fundamental and liminal questions of meaning' (113). If philosophy and religious thinking share the same aim, of understanding our place in the world, then questioning is necessary, but addressing the questions is central. Hope offers no more certainty than philosophical exploration. An RME curriculum that advocates that children do not question or wonder or challenge is one that should itself be queried.

Philosophical inquiry can be an approach to reveal 'the thought inherent in religion' (Huggler 2009, 123), and this is, arguably, what teachers should facilitate. Buttner (2009) argues that what matters is whether it can support and help children's understanding of 'matters between heaven and earth, among themselves and their environment' (193), thereby offering space for what Huggler (2009) might see as a nurturing dialogue, and what Lipman (2003) would call caring thinking, where participants care about their manner of thinking about a topic and they care about the topic itself. Lipman's caring thinking presents one way in which teachers might bring reason and religious ideas together within RME.

Philosophical inquiry might be said to be fundamentally existential. Life and thinking influence one another, 'the motives for doing philosophy are noetic, cathartic, even mystical, [which are] congruent with the motives of [RME]' (Jorgensen 2009, 18). Philosophical inquiry into RME concepts can allow time and space for self-reflection towards self-understanding in-relation by applying logic and reason, metaphor and myth, to articulate and explore philosophical and religious ideas. Taking this into account, the goal of the present study was not to analyse pupils' engagement with philosophical concepts *per se*. Rather, it was to illustrate the way in which teachers might use philosophical dialogue to address religious ideas, but in a manner that is child-led and collaborative.

Methods

Evidencing individuals' meaning-making through philosophical dialogue is challenging, not least because meaning-making is often private, with our understanding, interpretation, beliefs and values likely to evolve throughout our lives. The focus here, therefore, is on a

pedagogical approach (CoPI) rather than on quantifying or qualifying the meaningfulness of pupils' meaning-making.

The research took place in one of Scotland's poorest Local Authorities (Scottish Government 2020). One of the researchers is a teacher in the school, though not committed to teaching one class. Instead, he was responsible for teaching RME to two Primary 7 classes. Primary 7 is the final year of Scottish primary school and pupils are around 11 years-old. The classes were of mixed ability, with a combined total of 46 pupils. Class 7A had 26 pupils and class 7Z had 20 pupils. Because the RME teacher was not the full-time class teacher, he followed the class teachers' plans in terms of topics to be taught. The class RME topic was 'Notable Christians', which was to last a full term of twelve weeks. During the term, the children alternately participated in six CoPI sessions and six RME lessons. Children learned about the lives and principles of three notable Christians within the RME lessons (Eric Liddell, Father McCluskey and Eric Bonhoeffer), while the six CoPI sessions used texts designed to relate to themes arising in the RME lessons (though not directly about the studied Christians). Examples of stimulus texts included an extract from Philip Pullman's *The Amber Spyglass*; two newspaper articles: *The Truth About the Christmas Day Football Match*, and *Christians Have no Right to Refuse to Work on Sundays, Rules Judge;* and the facilitator's adaptation of the philosophical Trolley Problem, *The Runaway Train Carriage.*

Each CoPI session lasted approximately forty minutes, the amount of time scheduled by the class teacher for RME. The CoPI structure, described earlier, was followed and the same stimuli were used with each class. The twelve dialogues (across the two classes) were audio-recorded and later transcribed to aid analysis. Prior to reviewing the transcripts together, the researchers scrutinised them individually. In doing so, for the purpose of the present article, they identified instances where children led the dialogue and where collaboration with respect to creating meaning was evidenced. They also looked for instances of the facilitator/teacher allowing the children to have ownership of the dialogues and how he supported the inquiry.

The larger study, of which this is part, involved more detailed coding of the children's dialogues in exploring the content. Ideas relating to ethics, for example, could become meta-ethics and applied ethics, and these might be reduced further by coding applied ethics into specific issues. Equally, some concepts could be conflated, such as 'worship' and 'prayer', or

'belief' and 'secularism'. However, for the purpose of the present article, the focus remains on the analysis that coded for:

- children collaborating to make meaning (sharing examples, extending examples, clarifying terms, building on others' ideas, offering counter-examples);

- children directing the dialogue (shift in focus, introducing new idea, offering example, introducing a new term; and

- facilitator's moves (choice of speaker, question for clarification, request distinction, request extension of point, request definition, request an example, reminder of CoPI rules, pausing).

A broad range of themes were explored philosophically by the children, but, as noted, the purpose of the present article is not to explore the philosophical content of the dialogues *per se,* but to illustrate the potential for CoPI as an approach to support child-led, collaborative meaning-making in the primary school RME curriculum. Consequently, five illustrative extracts, identified using the codes noted above, are provided and discussed below.

Research ethics

The project was granted ethical approval by the University's Ethics Committee. The school and the class teachers gave consent to undertake the study with the children. Additionally, all children and their parents/carers were provided with information sheets about the project and were asked to provide informed consent; all children and their parents/guardians did so. All names have been anonymised.

Findings

While any discussion in RME is potentially a philosophical endeavour, there are many areas in which the boundary between philosophical and religious concepts is blurred. The pupils' dialogues show that religious themes (remembering that here religious includes the theological) were discussed philosophically. The illustrative extracts below are presented for their compactness.

Bearing in mind the children's questions are provoked by a stimulus, the first excerpt stems from the question: 'What happens when we die?'. The second and third from 'Is what some people think about God a lie?'; and the fourth from 'Why didn't God stop both wars?'. As noted above, the facilitator always calls on those who have raised their hand to indicate they

wish to contribute, so to facilitate reading of the extracts, this element of the transcripts has been redacted; other facilitator interventions have been retained. As this is not a comparative study, comparisons are not made between the two groups.

On the afterlife

Pupil's question: What happens when you die? (Caleb)

Excerpt 1:

Caleb: I think it's like another world… like you do different things that you can't do in our world.

Maggie: I agree with Caleb because like you live through your life.. it's not as this is, but you go through stages… like you've got a life on Pluto, then your next life's on Earth.

John: I disagree with Maggie because I think when you die you've got a new life with a new family – you're born into a different family, like you have another life.

Oscar: I disagree with John because after you die I feel like nothing happens… when you're done, you're done.

Ingrid: I agree with Oliver because I think that after when you die you just have your funeral and go into the ground…and then the bugs eat you up. *[Laughter]*

John: I disagree with Maggie because I think when you die you've got a new life with a new family – you're born into a different family, like you have another life.

Oscar: I disagree with John because after you die I feel like nothing happens… when you're done, you're done.

Ingrid: I agree with Oliver because I think that after when you die you just have your funeral and go into the ground…and then the bugs eat you up. *[Laughter]*

Reuben: I disagree with Ingrid. I think that when you die, you just live through your favourite memories of when you were alive.

A little later Bart brings in the idea of God.

Bart: I think that you meet God and then you go to a separate like, just this kinda grassy hill with just a tree on it where you want to… you're just on your own.

Facilitator: So… what to you is Heaven?

Bart: Em, a very peaceful place where you can…like go back and think all your memories on Earth. And em… *[long pause]* Actually, I think you need to put your family there… *[became inaudible]*.

Ffion: I disagree with Bart because I don't think you meet God when you die…if you think, if you're still alive you never meet God, but when you die how will you

meet God because you're dead, you don't live when you're dead. Because you'd be in a coffin. Under the mud.

Greysen: I disagree with Ffion because I think your spirit gets separated from your body… Your -

Facilitator: Your spirit gets separated from your body?

Greysen: Yeah.

Facilitator: What's 'spirit'?

Greysen: Your body's sort of like a solid thing, your spirit's like, sort of like who you are…I don't know how to explain it, it's like… your personality, who you are inside.

Later, Danny returns to the notion of reincarnation:

Danny: I do believe your get reborn but not as a human again but as say an insect… a different form. It makes sense.

Facilitator: Why?

Danny: So you can … live again.

Courtney and Charlene return to the idea of a spirit:

Courtney: I think you might come back as a different form, a different type, but you have time to redeem yourself, like for the mistakes you did in your life. And instead of you doing like, something we would all do or something like that, we could probably try and fix it or something. Like instead of doing it in your new life,

> you could try not do it, or you could come back as your spirit animal.

Facilitator: Come back as your spirit?

Courtney: Animal.

Facilitator: Animal?

Courtney: Like the animal what represents what your spirit's like. Bart said something that his is a wolf and his mum's a cat… So, I think there might be a chance of you coming back as your favourite animal or a different form, a different type.

Charlene: I agree with Courtney because I think like when you die you go into a coffin but then your spirit comes out and you go up to Heaven.

Facilitator: Spirit?

Charlene: Your personality… like if you were nice then you'd be nice and stuff.

Facilitator: Are spirit and personality the same?

Charlene: I think one is invisible, but it's like a person but they're invisible so it's who you were but you're not, you can't be seen.

Facilitator: And that's spirit?

Charlene: Yeah.

Facilitator: And personality?

Charlene: Your feelings and what you do to other people.

This extract touches on both philosophical and religious ideas relating to the afterlife, including naturalism (Oscar; Ingrid); God (Bart); memories (Bart; Reuben); and reincarnation (Caleb; Maggie; John; Danny; Courtney). While Caleb and Maggie express the idea that we continue to live on elsewhere, and John reasons that we are reborn in this world, all three describe ideas of the afterlife and reincarnation, building on one another's ideas. Bart introduces the idea of God, taking the dialogue in a different direction, and implies the notion of continual existence, but Ffion disagrees: death is the end – there is no afterlife. Ffion reasons: if you never meet God when you're alive, you can't then meet God when you're dead, 'you don't

live when you're dead', suggesting that one can only experience 'meeting' if one is alive. Ffion used the ideas of others to find her way to this assertion; working with their ideas she was able to reach a point, even temporarily, where she was creating meaning for herself through inquiring philosophically with others. Charlene's description of the spirit rising from the coffin, describing 'spirit' as 'personality' draws her to try and articulate the difference between the two. The facilitator/teacher was important in this element of the dialogue, having recognised the potential distinction being made, probing but not directing the content of the dialogue. The religious ideas explored employ philosophical concepts such as the existence of things unseen, dualism and the existence – or not – of soul: the spirit is the unseen aspect of a person, it is 'who you were but…you can't be seen'. Graysen develops Charlene's thoughts, agreeing that the spirit is separated from the body after death, adding that the body is 'solid' while spirit is 'who you are'. Again, the facilitator recognising potential here is important in his simple repetition, with an inflection, of the phrase, 'Your spirit gets separated from your body?' This repetition prompts further elaboration without offering the facilitator's own views on the topic, as in other instances of facilitative interventions.

The dialogue considers non-Christian ideas of the afterlife, such as rebirth. On asking Danny why he thinks that 'you get reborn as… a different form', he replies 'So you can… live again'. Here, Danny does not seem to be suggesting that we are reborn on a path toward enlightenment as in Buddhism, but possibly the notion of death as final and thus to be avoided – rebirth avoids such finality. Courtney alludes to Aboriginal and Native American beliefs in animism (that had not been part of the class work): 'you could come back as your spirit animal […] the animal that represents what your spirit's like'. What can be seen here is that children are drawing on learning from activities outwith their RME lessons and they are using this to work with one another's ideas, clearly directing the path of the inquiry.

Heaven and hell
Bart disagrees with an early point from Maggie – if we have been bad in this life, we return as ghosts – before developing his idea of heaven and hell:

On heaven and hell

Bart: I sort of agree but sort of disagree, [with Maggie…] I think that if you've had a bad life, that means like, if you've been murdered you come back as if you're sort of living… I suppose you could say that you're a ghost

but nobody can see you but, you know, he's there. And if you've died but…you go up to Heaven. And I sort of believe what I said two weeks ago I think it was, that I think we're living in Hell cos nothing goes wrong in Heaven but things go wrong down here as well.

Both Maggie and Bart's discussion of ghosts alludes to a state of existence between heaven and hell. Both propose Earth as hell: Bart, 'I think we're living in Hell […] things go wrong down here'; Maggie, 'if one is bad then after death they stay here, on this world'. Hell is not, we should be clear, a topic generally explored by the Scottish RME curriculum, but one that has been raised by the children and that the facilitator/teacher allows to evolve. Bart offers a quite different angle to notions of hell: it is not something experienced after death, but something we can experience now. Later in the dialogue, another notion of hell is offered. Kay says, 'Hell's not as bad as getting tortured […] if you're bad and people remember you as being selfish and things […] you go into a hell kinda thing... and you kind of forget… like you just fade away into ash'. Kay's description is different to that suggested by others, seeming to allude to a more psychological notion, to 'fade into ash' is to become non-existent, insignificant, people would 'forget you'. Clearly, the children are making connections across the ideas and are developing their understanding together. Note Bart's uncertainty when he trials 'I sort of believe'; the philosophical inquiry facilitates this hesitancy.

On the nature of God

Facilitator: '…God's alive'?

Claris   Well some people think his spirit exists in Heaven, some people think he's somewhere else, like somewhere that's not here, and some people think that he is everywhere, that he's in everything.

Jacques: Well, it's not like agreeing or disagreeing [with Claris] it's more that I'm a trying to understand what she meant by saying that em, God is alive by being a spirit. But if you're alive I don't think you're just like a spirit – you're like physical. Whereas if you're a spirit then most of the time you aren't actually, physically there. It's not as if like, if one of your family members has passed away, it's not as if you can see them. I mean some people like say that they can but most times if you're a spirit then you've passed away. So, how could like God be that?

Facilitator: Could you try and answer that question? How can God be alive if he is a spirit?

Jacques: I don't really think this myself, but some people might say that because some people say that he's like the creator and things, he chose to be, he somehow has made himself be a spirit. He is like…
            [inaudible].

Facilitator: He is like?

Jacques: Everywhere and everything.

At this point, Ellie contributes that God is like 'a living thing' because people believe 'he's watching you', to which Claris disagrees:

Claris: I disagree with Ellie because he's not really a living thing. In my opinion if he does exist, he's not really a living thing but he is alive. Like there's sort of a difference.

Facilitator: The difference between a living thing and being alive?

Claris: … In my opinion if he's, if he does exist, he's not really a living thing but he is alive. Like, there's sort of a difference.

Facilitator: What is the difference? The difference between a living thing and being alive?

Claris: A living thing is something that can breathe, lives, grows – all stuff like that but alive is different, cos like, an idea can be alive. Like, alive is like, *[…thinks…]* Alive is like, it… it exists but it is not something that exists that you can always see.

Claris mentions how some believe God as being 'everywhere, that he's in everything', which Jacques reiterates, the concept of God as omnipresent. Very quickly though, Jacques queries Claris' meaning, saying he is 'trying to understand' Claris' idea of God. He does not simply say 'I don't understand' or 'what do you mean' but follows it up with his own reasoning as to why he finds her comments confusing at this stage. As such, Jacques detects a distinction and encourages Claris to clarify her meaning of 'alive' and 'a living thing'. This does not come from the teacher as might otherwise happen in an RME lesson, but is driven by the children. The intervention from the facilitator in this instance is to ask Jacques to attempt an answer to the question he raises in order that subsequent speakers have something to agree/disagree with and, therefore, to build upon. It's worth commenting that Jacques offers a suggestion where he says, 'I don't really think this myself', where he is working with others' ideas to explore his own and the group's thinking.

Not only are the participants tentatively exploring dualism to navigate through religious (theological) – and philosophical – ideas regarding the existence of God, but they are also challenging each other on specific concepts. 'Alive' and 'a living thing' may appear synonymous, yet Jacques enables Claris to locate what she means *in this context* by 'alive' and 'a living thing' while simultaneously illustrating how the word 'alive' can also be applied in different contexts to mean something different: 'an idea can be alive'. The dialogue moves on, at the children's initiation, to consider the concept of God. The teacher could not have planned for such a transition between ideas; he has followed the children's lead, though he pushes the children's thinking with his interventions. Indeed, he allows Claris to struggle to explain her thinking, an opportunity that demonstrates the importance of the teacher recognising opportunities for philosophical engagement to allow the dialogue to progress.

On God

> Kady: I agree with Claris because he isn't walking down the street or nothing so he isn't – he technically isn't alive. […] he isn't alive, he's like a spirit so he's not technically alive walking down the street.

> Kiel: Well I'm in the middle with Kady because she said he's not walking down the street but you can't really see him so I think you don't know if he's walking down the street or not.

Community of Philosophical Inquiry allows participants the opportunity for participants to put a range of perspectives into their own words, while supporting uncertainty or hesitancy. Kady's interjection offers an everyday example of Claris' abstract idea, illuminating the point afresh, and so supporting the understanding of a complex idea. Kiel, not the teacher, reveals a problem with Kady's argument when she speaks of God 'walking down the street': if something is invisible, it can't be seen; God's invisible therefore we can't know if God is walking down the street. They are engaging in philosophical dialogue about a religious (theological) concept that is not obviously part of the primary RME curriculum, and importantly, they are not sure (yet) what they think about the issue, as evidenced by Kiel's suggestion that he is 'in the middle', neither fully agreeing or disagreeing with Kady.

One participant, Oscar, offered a contribution, professing himself an atheist, a new idea in the dialogue, 'I'm just an atheist […] I'm a strong disbeliever on the God spectrum'. Although Oscar offered a brief definition of atheism, 'not believing in being [a part of] any religion', further inquiry into what he meant by the 'God spectrum' might have opened opportunities for pupils to offer other ideas previously not considered. It may be suggested that there is generally scant opportunity in the curriculum for pupils to engage in thoughtful, critical discussion of what it means to be religious, or to be a challenging believer, agnostic or atheist. Developing ideas of 'what could be' perhaps offers more scope for the developing self.

God as a 'confidence booster

By making a connection to her learning about Eric Liddell and how his belief in God gave him confidence, Kady introduces the idea that God is not a person or thing but that 'he's more of a confidence booster for some people'. She offers an example: if someone was at an audition, they might think 'God, make sure I'm good. So, he'll kind of boost your confidence'. She reasons that because 'some people believe that he's real…they'll kind of believe that he'll make… everything [go] well'. Ellie disagrees with Kady, suggesting 'if you didn't believe, he wouldn't really', insinuating that 'confidence boosting' requires belief in God. Ellie is able to consider what another has said and offer a different interpretation. Rab adds an example the pupils had studied in RME: '[W]hen Eric Liddell got a medal … he believed God was watching him, then he got a boost'. This is an example of one of the few times elements of the RME lessons filtered into the CoPI dialogues.

The pupils began to explore the complexity of God's role, going on to note that being a confidence booster does not expand one's understanding of religion or life's mysteries.

God's intentions

Jacques: I disagreed with what Kady was saying… and then…
            I agreed with Kady because she said that God and
            people used that as a confidence booster, I don't think
            that's what God's intentions are to be. I think that's
            what people think of God […]but really that's not his
            intentions: he's like, he's doing more what like Claris
            were saying that he's not got thought or that, he's
            doing things to watch over people but not actually
            physically.

The agree/disagree structure of CoPI is important; the structure enabling disagreement in an area where some teachers may lack confidence in promoting disagreement in RME lessons. In both agreeing and disagreeing with Kady, Jacques draws attention to God's intention; despite some people's belief that God may boost confidence, this is not God's intention, God does not think. God, Jacques suggests, may 'watch over people' he is 'not actually physically' interfering in their lives. He proposes both the idea of an interventionist God, and God as a non-physical entity. Claris supports Jacques' point, stating that 'the thought of there being someone there watching over them boosts their confidence rather than him doing it for them'. Jacques concludes the dialogue on God as a confidence booster by agreeing with a previous contributor he had earlier disagreed with: 'I agree with Mark now because before he was saying God *is* a confidence booster but now he's saying that God *can* be [a confidence booster] because God isn't only a confidence booster'. This is a nice example of shared meaning-making rather than individual reflection, but the collaborative endeavour has supported Jacques to change his mind.

Concluding remarks

This article considered the ways in which Community of Philosophical Inquiry (CoPI) might be used as a child-led approach within RME to provide opportunities for children to engage in shared meaning-making and self-understanding through philosophical dialogue. The focus was not to investigate the impact on individuals' *per se*, but to reflect on CoPI as an approach to within the RME curriculum, particularly the primary school curriculum, for an interrogation of religious and philosophical concepts. The wider study of which this is part, analyses the ways in which the children explored the theological/philosophical topics.

The present article demonstrates that CoPI is an approach through which pupils engage *philosophically* with theological and religious concepts. It supports their exploration towards an understanding of such complexities as people's belief in, and stories of, God and religion as a means to understanding who we are (Armstrong 2005; Teece 2010). The extracts demonstrate that the dialogues went beyond simple knowledge exchange, to a sharing of thoughts and ideas, opinions and conjectures that broadened their 'meaning making experiences' (Wilson 2008, 12), through collaboration. A clear example of this being Mark's change of stance and Jacques' critical listening when debating the concept of God as a confidence booster that illustrates pupils fostering each other's thinking. What *is* God's intention? What is God *for?* How is God manifest? Does God exist? These questions are inherent in religion (despite religions' claim to answers) and are questions philosophical inquiry enables children to encounter and engage with critically, and together. Further, it allows children to be uncertain and to express and explore that uncertainty.

Using CoPI answers Education Scotland's call for 'learning that develops [children's] beliefs and values' (Education Scotland 2014). If RME is to be a subject where pupils can explore and deal with life's meaning, value and purpose, (Scottish Government (2007), CoPI may be a means to serve this stipulation. While Conroy et al. (2012) identified 'boredom and scepticism' (316) in pupils' experiences of RME, philosophical dialogue may offer something useful in enabling pupils to drive the agenda in class, to explore their own ideas, while making connections to the content provided in other contexts, and in so doing, make meaning for themselves. Pupils ask their own questions that may, through traditional RME activities, have inhibited more philosophical or theological/religious contributions. Scepticism within CoPI, in the present article, was towards others', or participants' own, arguments. Drawing disagreement, therefore, created new considerations and interpretations of their ideas. The pupils addressed what interested them, not pre-prescribed learning intentions as determined by curriculum devisers, whether policy makers or teachers. As such, the ideas presented resonate with their lives, making greater the opportunity for impact on self-understanding. Recognising opportunities for this kind of dialogue and for moments within dialogues that offer potential to take children's thinking forward is important.

Unlike Schihahelejev's (2009) Estonian study, the children in the present study are invested in addressing their own questions rather than those posed by the teacher. The potential impact of this approach upon practice is that it prevents RME becoming 'boring' or irrelevant to

pupils' lives; actively supporting shared meaning-making and the exploration of life's meaning, value and purpose, particularly in their personal development (Scottish Government 2007; Education Scotland 2014). Van der Straten Waillet et al. (2015) state that neither philosophy nor theology have 'sufficed to answer questions pertaining to the existence of God, the essence of Love, the nature of mankind, or to the ethos of a good life' (287), and Luby (2019) advocates a dialogic pedagogy in the classroom. The CoPI model offers such a pedagogy by providing a structure that enables pupils to present and substantiate their thinking, demonstrate respect for others' ideas and space to reflect on the confrontation of the two. In an increasingly pluralistic world, such an approach may usefully be considered as one way in which to advance religious education curricula to support the development of self-understanding in-relation. Indeed, as Garrett (2020) suggests, 'When significant upheaval occurs, there will be an equally significant demand placed on the capacity for individuals to accommodate it' (353), and CoPI may be one way in which children may be equipped to address this upheaval.

References

Acquah, A. 2017. "Phenomenological Approach to the Teaching of Religious Education: Sharing Knowledge to Benefit Religious Educators." *Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion* 29, 7-11.

Armstrong, K. 2005. *A Short History of Myth.* Edinburgh: Cannongate.

Barnes, L. P. 2001. "What is Wrong with the Phenomenological Approach to Religious Education?" *Religious Education* 96 4: 445-461. doi: 10.1080/003440801753442366.

Barrett, D. 2012. "Christians Have no Right to Refuse to Work on Sundays, Rules Judge." *The Telegraph available at: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/9770825/Christians-have-no-right-to-refuse-to-work-on-Sundays-rules-judge.html*

Baumfield, V. M., J.C. Conroy, R.A. Davis, and D.C. Lundi. 2012. "The Delphi Method: Gathering Expert Opinion in Religious Education." *British Journal of Religious Education* 34 1: 5-19. doi: 10.1080/01416200.2011.614740.

Büttner, G. 2007. "How Theologizing with Children can Work*." British Journal of Religious Education* 29 2: 127-139. doi: 10.1080/01416200601162367.

Cassidy, C. 2007. *Thinking Children*. London: Continuum.

Cassidy, C. 2012. "Questioning Children." *Thinking: The Journal of Philosophy for Children* 20 1&2: 60-66.

Cassidy, C. 2018a. "Philosophy with Children: an Alternative to Religious Observance." In *Collective Worship and Religious Observance in UK Schools: Challenges and Opportunities*, edited by Peter Cumper and Alison Mawhinney. Oxford: Peter Lang International Publishing.

Cassidy, C. 2018b. "Scottish Primary Education." In *Scottish Education, Fifth Edition*, edited by Tom G.K. Bryce, Walter M. Humes, Donald Gillies and Aileen Kennedy. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Cassidy, C., R. Brunner and E. Webster. 2014. "Teaching human rights? 'All hell will break loose!'" *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice* 9 1: 19-33. DOI: 10.1177/1746197913475768.

Cassidy, C., and D. Christie. 2013. "Philosophy with Children: Talking, Thinking and Learning Together." *Early Child Development and Care* 183 8, 1072-1083. doi: 10.1080/03004430.2013.773509.

Cassidy, C., and D. Christie. 2014. "Community of Philosophical Inquiry: Citizenship in Scottish Classrooms." *Childhood and Philosophy* 10 19: 33-54.

Cassidy, C., S-J. Conrad, and M.J. Figueiroa-Rego. 2019. "Research with Children: a Philosophical Rights-based Approach." *International Journal of Research & Method in Education* 43 1: 38-52. doi: 10.1080/1743727X.2018.1563063.

Cassidy, C. and J.M. Lone. 2020. "Thinking about Childhood: Being and Becoming in the World." *Analytic Teaching and Philosophical Praxis* 40 1: 16-26.

Chetty, D. and J. Suissa. 2017. "'No go areas': Racism and Discomfort in the Community of Inquiry." In *The Routledge International Handbook of Philosophy for Children*, edited by Maughn Rollins, Joanna Haynes and Karin Murris, 11-18. London: Routledge.

Conroy, J.C., D. Lundie, and V. Baumfield. 2012. "Failures of Meaning in Religious Education." *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 33 3: 309-323. doi: 10.1080/13617672.2012.732812.

Corbin, J., and A. Strauss. 1990. "Grounded Theory Research: Procedures, Canons, and Evaluative Criteria." *Qualitative Sociology* 13 1: 3-21. doi: 10.1007/BF00988593.

DeGroot, G. 2014. "The Truth About the Christmas Day Football Match." *The Telegraph* http://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/world-war-one/11310353/The-truth-about-the-Christmas-Day-football-match.html

Education Scotland. 2014. "*Religious and Moral Education 3-18 Curriculum Review (impact report).*" Edinburgh. Retrieved from: https://education.gov.scot/improvement/rme30-3-18-rme-review

Garrett, J.H. 2020. "Containing Classroom Discussions of Current Social and Political Issues." *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 52 3: 337-355. doi: 10.1080/00220272.2020.1727020.

Grant, L., and Y. Matemba. 2013. "Problems of Assessment in Religious and Moral Education: the Scottish Case." *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 34 1: 1-13. doi: 10.1080/13617672.2013.759338.

Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton Councils 2004. *Living Difference: The Agreed Syllabus for Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton.* Winchester: Hampshire County Council.

Hannam, P. 2012. "P4C in Religious Education." In *Philosophy for Children through the Secondary Curriculum,* edited by Lizzy Lewis and Nick Chandley, 127-145. London: Continuum International.

Huggler, J. 2009. "Religious Education as an Intellectual and Cultural Enterprise: Some Questions about 'Theologizing with Children.'" In *Hovering over the Face of the Deep*, edited by Gertrude Yde Iversen, Gordon Mitchell, and Gaynor Pollard, 117-128. Munster: Waxmann Verlag

Ilten-Gee , R. and J.L. Hilliard. 2021. "Moral Reasoning in Peer Conversations During Game-based Learning: An Exploratory Study." *Journal of Moral Education* 50 2: 140-165. doi: 10.1080/03057240.2019.1662775.

Ipgrave, J. 2009. "My God and Other People's Gods. Children's Theology in a Context of Plurality." In *Hovering over the Face of the Deep*, edited by Gertrud Yde Iversen, Gordon Mitchell, and Gaynor Pollard, 53-70. Munster: Waxmann Verlag

Ipgrave, J. 2013. "The Language of Interfaith Encounter Among Inner City Primary School Children." *Religion and Education* 40 1: 35-49. doi: 10.1080/15507394.2013.745361.

Jorgensen, H.V. (2009). "Philosophy with Children in Religious Education – A Brief History." In *Hovering over the Face of the Deep*, edited by Gertrud Yde Iversen, Gordon Mitchell, and Gaynor Pollard, 13-24. Munster: Waxmann Verlag

Kennedy, D. 2004. "The Role of a Facilitator in a Community of Philosophical Inquiry." *Metaphilosophy* 35 5: 744-765.

Lipman, M., and A.M. Sharp. 1978. *Growing up with Philosophy.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Lipman, M. 1993. "Promoting Better Classroom Thinking." *Educational Psychology: An International Journal of Experimental Educational Psychology*, 13 3-4: 291-304. doi: 10.1080/0144341930130307.

Lipman, M. 2003. *Thinking in Education,* 2nd ed. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Lipman, M. 2014. "The Educational Role of Philosophy (with a new commentary by Philip Cam)." *Journal of Philosophy in Schools* 1 1: 4-14. doi: 10.21913/JPS.v1i1.988

Luby, A. 2019. "A Culture of Dialogue. Vision, Pedagogy and Dialogic Skills for the RE Classroom." *British Journal of Religious Education*. doi: 10.1080/01416200.2019.1628006.

Makaiau, A.S. 2017. "Using a Philosopher's Pedagogy to Teach School Subjects: The Case of Ethnic Studies at Kailua High School." *Journal of Philosophy in Schools* 4 1: 4–26. doi: http://doi.org/10.21913/jps.v4i1.1417.

Martens, E. 2009. "Children's Philosophy and Children's Theology – A Family Resemblance." In *Hovering over the Face of the Deep: Philosophy, Theology and Children*, edited by Gertrud Yde Iversen, Gordon Mitchell, and Gaynor Pollard, 97-116. Munster: Waxmann Verlag.

Matemba, Y. 2018. "Religious (and Moral) Education." In *Scottish Education* (5th ed), edited by Tom G.K. Bryce, Walter M. Humes, Donald Gillies, and Aileen Kennedy, 353-358. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

McCall, C. C. 2009. *Transforming Thinking: Philosophical Inquiry in the Primary and Secondary Classroom*. London: Routledge.

Nixon, G. 2008. "From RE to RMPS: The Case for the Philosophication of Religious Education in Scotland." *Education in the North* 16 1: 1-17. doi: https://doi.org/10.26203/EHRY-FM50.

Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). 2007. *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching About Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools*. Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR

Pearce, J., A. Stones, M.J. Reiss and T. Mujtaba 2021. "'Science is purely about the truth so I don't think you could compare it to non-truth versus the truth.' Students' Perceptions of Religion and Science, and the Relationship(s) Between them: Religious Education and the Need for Epistemic Literacy." *British Journal of Religious Education* 43 2, 174-189. doi: 10.1080/01416200.2019.1635434.

Pullman, P. 2003. *His Dark Materials: The Amber Spyglass.* New York: Laurel Leaf.

Scottish Government 2007. "*Building the Curriculum 1*." Edinburgh: Scottish Government. Retrieved from: https://www.education.gov.scot/Documents/btc1.pdf

Scottish Government 2020. *Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020.* Retrieved from: https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-index-multiple-deprivation-2020/pages/5/

Scottish Government n.d. *Curriculum for Excellence: Religious and Moral Education Experiences and Outcomes*. Edinburgh: Scottish Government. (https://education.gov.scot/Documents/rme-eo.pdf)

Schihalejev, O. 2009. "Dialogue in Religious Education Lessons – Possibilities and Hindrances in the Estonian Context." *British Journal of Religious Education* 31 3: 277-288. doi: 10.1080/01416200903209106.

Strauss, A., and J. Corbin. 2010. *Basics of Qualitative Research Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory, 2nd ed.* London: Sage.

van der Straten Waillet, N., I. Roskam, and C. Possoz. 2015. "On the Epistemological Features Promoted by 'Philosophy for Children' and their Psychological Advantages when Incorporated into RE." *British Journal of Religious Education* 37 3: 273-292. doi: 10.1080/01416200.2014.937795.

Teece, G. 2010. "Is it Learning About and From Religions, Religion or Religious Education? And is it any Wonder some Teachers don't get it?" *British Journal of Religious Education* 32 2: 93-103. doi: 10.1080/01416200903537399.

Ventista, O. M. and M. Paparoussi 2016. "Introducing a Philosophical Discussion in Your Classroom: An Example of Community of Enquiry in a Greek Primary School." *Childhood and Philosophy* 12 25: 611-629. doi: 10.12957/childphilo.2016.24994.

Wedell, K. 2010. "Evaluating the Impact of the Hampshire Agreed Syllabus: 'Living Difference' on Teaching and Learning in Religious Education." *British Journal of Religious Education* 32 2: 147-161. doi: 10.1080/01416200903537548.

West Dunbartonshire Council 2014. Social and Economic Profile 2014. Retrieved from: https://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/media/3901536/social_and_economic_profile_2014.pdf

Wilson, J. 2008. *Teaching Sikhism as a Living Faith*. Oxford: Farmington Institute.

Authors' biographies

Ewan Cameron is a primary school teacher, working in Argyll and Bute Council, Scotland.

Claire Cassidy is a Reader in the School of Education at the University of Strathclyde, Scotland. She is the course leader for the Postgraduate Certificate in Philosophy with Children.