

**Teaching About Jesus in Religious Education:  
Improving Children's Learning**

**The Second Report of the Research Project 'Teaching about Jesus in RE'**

**2006**

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## **Acknowledgements**

We record grateful thanks to those teachers and pupils from the schools who participated in this project and helped us with our research. For reasons of research confidentiality the schools remain anonymous, but sincere thanks are due, as without their help the work could not have been undertaken.

Special thanks are due to our sponsors, the Jerusalem Trust, for their generous support and keen interest in the findings of the project.

## **Independence of research**

The comments and opinions expressed in this report are the independent conclusions of the research. They do not necessarily represent the views of the Jerusalem Trust, nor was their sponsorship conditional on any outcomes other than public reporting of the findings and the creation of new curriculum materials derived directly from the research for use in schools.

## Introduction from the Co-Directors

In the first phase of our research into the figure of Jesus in Religious Education, we concluded that Jesus was not remotely, as some people feared, a neglected figure in Religious Education. He, or his teaching, could be found in most syllabuses at some point in almost every year of Years R to 11 RE, and within a full-length module, often in Year 8 (age 12+). But we also discovered that Jesus appeared to children to be a rather pallid figure, the subject of respect yet also indifference. He was perceived as significant but was also the subject of misunderstanding, sometimes confusion. We also found that the strange ‘stand-off’ in higher education that has arisen between the RE community in the UK and the theological community might account for the lack of theological insight in the syllabus and classroom resources that seek to present Jesus.

The next challenge was therefore – with the continuing support of our sponsors, the Jerusalem Trust – to take the research further in such a way that might promote a clearer understanding of the conceptual issues surrounding teaching about Jesus. Moreover, we and our sponsors shared the view that this needed to be undertaken as part of a process that would engender *change at classroom level*. Not to attempt this could be to imprison important research insights in the proverbial ivory tower.

In the course of this work we have undertaken extensive research with children in Key Stage 3 (ages 11+ to 13+). In addition we have worked with Key Stage 2 (junior) children in some of the feeder primary schools to the participating Key Stage 3 children’s secondary schools. We wanted to see what they knew and understood about Jesus before embarking on the module about Jesus usually delivered in Year 8.

We devised, tested and evaluated with teachers and their classes new teaching materials about Jesus, planned by members of the project team, but written specifically to embody the insights and address the difficulties exposed in the first phase of the project. The outcomes of this second phase of the project are threefold

- ✓ This research report, primarily for the communities of researchers in education, RE and childhood studies
- ✓ Curriculum materials about Jesus for use in the Key Stage 3 classroom
- ✓ Articles of professional nature for educational and religious journals to disseminate our findings more widely among the communities of education and also of faith.

The children with whom we worked gave us both wisdom and wackiness. One, writing of Jesus, talked about ‘when he rowed into Jerusalem waving palm trees’, a probable failure in literacy rather than the donkey being superseded by a boat with palm branches as oars. Another who wrote that ‘Jesus was crucified... to replenish our sins’ was probably not writing a radical new theology of atonement. But some saw more deeply, if not always clearly: ‘I don’t know what I don’t understand [about Jesus] but I am sure there are deep meanings that know one [sic] knows.’ In an interview, one young person, reflecting on what ‘Son of God’ might mean said:

*It means that, um, Jesus was the right-hand man of God. It means that God... chose, this man, Jesus, to go down, tell the world, as many people as he could, about his faith and how there’s only one God teaching them, and by his ‘son’ he means ‘right-*

*hand man', I think, and he means that when he dies he'll, kind of, he'll stay by him and he'll stay by God and be an advisor...*

We want RE to do justice to what is known about the figure of Jesus from the latest and best scholarship and to what different religions have to say about him. But we also want the learning experience of children to be effective rather than confusing, to be imaginative as well as memorable so that they have inspiration as well as understanding.

For whatever or whoever Jesus was, we can be certain that he was no pallid figure.

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Professor of Religious Education,

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# 1. Introduction

The principal intention of the current project was to build on the findings of our earlier work which established both that children had adequate knowledge about the figure of Jesus, but also that they faced significant problems in relation to their understanding of Christian beliefs concerning incarnation, resurrection and salvation (Copley & Walshe, 2002). This was to be achieved mainly through the development of Key stage 3 curriculum materials designed to support learning and understanding, particularly in those areas identified as problematic by the earlier study. There was, however, a gap in what we knew. We based our theoretical framework for the curriculum materials on what we had discovered from extensive data collected from Key Stage 3 children. But the starting point for all secondary education is the primary school. We wished to complete our evidence base of children's knowledge and understanding by conducting a parallel study to that undertaken previously at Key Stage 3, but this time amongst Key Stage 2 children. With all these aims in mind we adopted the following outline for our research in this second phase of the project.

<i>Phase 1</i>	School based research at Key Stage 2	Terms 1 and 2
<i>Phase 2</i>	Preparation and planning of the innovative teaching materials:	Term 3
<i>Phase 3a</i>	Critical trial of the materials	Term 4
<i>Phase 3b</i>	Revision of materials followed by re-trial	Term 5
<i>Phase 4</i>	Evaluation through questionnaire and interviews	Term 6

## 2. The Key Stage Two Survey

### 2.1. Methodology

The research with KS2 pupils sought to test pupils' knowledge and understanding of Jesus and to investigate their attitudes towards Jesus. The research was undertaken by means of a questionnaire survey of primary school pupils in year 6 (pupils aged 10-11). The sample included 479 pupils of which 245 were male (51.1%), 232 were female (48.4%), and two did not identify their sex (0.4%). The pupil sample contained 216 Christians (45.1%), 138 Muslims (28.8%), 114 pupils who claimed to have no religious affiliation (23.8%), 6 pupils affiliated to another religion not specified on the questionnaire (1.3%); 4 pupils who did not answer the question about religious affiliation (0.8%), and 1 Hindu (0.2%). 116 attended a place of worship very often (24.2%), 47 attended a place of worship often (9.8%), 90 pupils attended sometimes (18.8%), 139 rarely attended (29.0%), 84 never attended (17.5%) and 3 pupils did not respond to the question about frequency of attendance at a place of worship (0.6%).

These respondents were drawn from ten co-educational primary schools that were feeder primary schools for the secondary schools in which the curriculum materials were trialled. These included two independent schools and two voluntary controlled (VC) schools (1 Church of England and 1 Methodist). They were situated in Birmingham (2), Devon (4), Dorset (2) and Lancashire (2). Although they do not constitute a base from which generalisations can be made about all year 6 pupils in England, they do provide a range of types of school in different geographical locations.

**Table 1 Participating schools**

Feeder School	Feeder School Type	Count (%)	Secondary school
Devon 1	Independent	23 (4.8%)	Devon Independent
Somerset 1	Independent	55 (11.5%)	
Lancashire 1	VC Methodist	66 (13.8%)	Lancashire VC C of E
Lancashire 2	Community primary	35 (7.3%)	
Dorset 1	Community primary	32 (6.7%)	Dorset Comprehensive
Dorset 2	Community primary	41 (8.6%)	
Birmingham 1	Community primary	81 (16.9%)	Birmingham multi-ethnic comprehensive
Birmingham 2	Community primary	85 (17.7%)	
Devon 2	VC C of E	14 (2.9%)	Devon Comprehensive
Devon 3	Community primary	47 (9.8%)	
<b>Total</b>		<b>479 (100.0%)</b>	

The questionnaire was similar to one used in an earlier study of Key Stage 3 pupils (pupils aged 11-14) (Walshe, 2005). The first section evaluated pupils' knowledge of Jesus. The second section evaluated their understanding of Jesus and their beliefs about him. Ten of the questions were open-ended and so the responses to these questions were first categorised then analysed for frequency of response to each category. The questionnaire also included a set of twenty opinion statements presented in a three point Likert scale. In response to each item, pupils were asked to tick 'Agree', 'Not Sure' or 'Disagree'. On the basis that these items should be derived from the opinions of pupils rather than statements generated by adult researchers, this research instrument was based on research undertaken in a primary school in Somerset. In this initial pilot study, year 6 pupils were asked to respond to open-ended

questionnaire items, such as ‘When I think about Jesus, the following thoughts/feelings/words come into my mind...’ A range of the resultant pupil opinions was selected for inclusion in the research instrument. This was then piloted in two primary schools in Devon. Finally, the full questionnaire was piloted in another Devon primary school before the main study commenced. The data from completed questionnaires in all stages of the research was analysed using SPSS Version 11.0. (See Appendix 1: The KS 2 questionnaire)

## 2.2 Results

### Information about the respondents’ knowledge and understanding of Jesus

This section of the questionnaire was designed to assess the extent of the respondents’ knowledge of the biblical presentation of Jesus and some Christian beliefs and practices relating to him.

### Knowledge about the birth of Jesus

Pupils were asked what the Bible says about the birth of Jesus that makes Christians believe he is special. Some pupils cited several things in their answers in which case only the first reason cited was included in the coded categories below.

**Table 2 Special birth**

Special Birth	Count (%)
Son of God	81 (16.9%)
No Response	69 (14.4%)
Stable	51 (10.6%)
Star	46 (9.6%)
Christmas Day	39 (8.1%)
Don't know	36 (7.5%)
Visitors	26 (5.4%)
Other	26 (5.4%)
Angels	18 (3.8%)
New King	14 (2.9%)
Virgin Birth/Mary	11 (2.3%)
Annunciation	10 (2.1%)
Jesus' Miracles	10 (2.1%)
Spoke at birth	10 (2.1%)
Preacher/Helper/Peacemaker	10 (2.1%)
Bethlehem	9 (1.9%)



Sent by/Gift from God	7 (1.5%)
Death/Resurrection	6 (1.3%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>479 (100.0%)</b>

It should be noted that an illustration next to this questionnaire item portrayed Mary and Joseph staring at the baby Jesus in a manger. This may have influenced the pupils' answers and encouraged them to cite answers that referred to the stable.

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**Selected Questionnaire Quotations: What does the Bible say about the birth of Jesus that makes Christians believe he is special?**

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Pupil 25	He invented Easter and Christmas and also some othere [sic] things I think
Pupil 63	Leading up to the birth of Jesus a star lead the way to his stable, so you can tell god had something to do with that!
Pupil 66	He is the baby from God, he made people happy and helped the poor. He never lets anyone down.
Pupil 85	The birth of Jesus that makes Christians believe he is special is because the disipals [sic] came to bring Jesus goods.
Pupil 143	That he makes people well and teaches people about God.
Pupil 160	That he came to live to live with us and then die for us so that we get forgiven.
Pupil 256	It says he has the power to help us and guide us through life.
Pupil 303	Jesus was born on Christmas eve.
Pupil 309	The bible says that the birth of Jesus was very important because Jesus would be the leader for all of mankind.
Pupil 338	That he died on the cross.
Pupil 376	Because when he was born every animal comes
Pupil 387	The angle said that he was going to be the king of the world.
Pupil 419	He was very special because sent by god and could do incredible things.
Pupil 454	He talked to Mary and Joseph when he was born.
Pupil 463	Jesus is the prophet of Allah.
Pupil 472	Jesus is special to Christians because God gave Jesus a life in mery stumuck [Mary's stomach]

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**Knowledge of why Jesus chose fishermen as disciples**

Pupils were asked why they think Jesus chose fishermen like Simon and Andrew to be his disciples. Some pupils cited several things in their answers in which case only the first reason cited was included in the coded categories below.

**Table 3 Why Fishermen?**

<b>Why Fishermen?</b>	<b>Count (%)</b>
No Response	122 (25.5%)
Good/kind	76 (15.9%)
Normal/ordinary people	56 (11.7%)
Don't know	41 (8.6%)
Trustworthy/honest	37 (7.7%)
To provide fish/ability as fishermen	34 (7.1%)
Other	22 (4.6%)
Religious believers/practitioners	21 (4.4%)
Friends with him/each other	12 (2.5%)
Reliable/sensible/responsible	11 (2.3%)
Believed in them	10 (2.1%)
Fishers of men/to preach	9 (1.9%)
Loyal/helpers/fighters	9 (1.9%)
To help them	8 (1.7%)
Wise	6 (1.3%)
Special	5 (1.0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>479 (100.0%)</b>

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**Selected Questionnaire Quotations: Why do you think Jesus chose fishermen like Simon and Andrew to be his disciples?**

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Pupil 10	Because he is a friendly person he probily would have cosen anybody [sic].
Pupil 49	Because they were all alone and they weren't going to tell anyone.
Pupil 92	Because they didn't give up and they tried to get food and look after themselves and no just go out and by things.
Pupil 103	Because they were not corrupted by the beliefs of the Pharisees.
Pupil 111	They could fish fish so they could fish people. They were strong and gentle.
Pupil 116	Because they were nice common people.
Pupil 135	Because he thought they would believe and not be proud and would understand (They were poor and needed help).
Pupil 146	Because they where important and well known
Pupil 153	Because fishermen are wise and know wich [sic]weathers they should go out in to catch fish.
Pupil 165	Because the did what he said all the time
Pupil 248	Because he liked fishing. And fishing is a wise sport.
Pupil 309	I think he chose fishermen because then he could guide them from a life of killing living things to a ritchious [righteous], good life.
Pupil 401	Because he must have thought that they would do the write job.
Pupil 424	He chose them because they used to put him to bed and give food around to everyone.
Pupil 429	I think he chose fishermen because they wher peaceful [sic]
Pupil 445	Because they were his closest friends.
Pupil 471	To fight for him.

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**Knowledge of the parables of Jesus and what they mean**

Pupils were asked to name a parable of Jesus. The number of pupils who identified each type of passage is presented in the table below.

**Table 4 An example of a parable**

<b>Example of a Parable</b>	<b>Count (%)</b>
No Response	180 (37.6%)
Good Samaritan	56 (11.7%)
Other events in Jesus' life	54 (11.3%)
Don't know	34 (7.1%)
The sower	30 (6.3%)
Inaccurate or irrelevant	28 (5.8%)
OT narrative	24 (5.0%)

Lost son	23 (4.8%)
Lost sheep	19 (4.0%)
Rich man and Lazarus	13 (2.7%)
Lost coin	5 (1.0%)
Talents	5 (1.0%)
House built on rock	5 (1.0%)
Lamp under a bowl	1 (0.2%)
Rich fool and the barns	1 (0.2%)
Watchful house owner/servants	1 (0.2%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>479 (100.0%)</b>

### Meaning of a parable:

Pupils were asked what they think their selected parable means. Their responses were coded under the following categories:

**Table 5 The meaning of the parable**

What does this parable mean?	Count (%)
Invalid response	226 (47.2%)
Not applicable	83 (17.3%)
Secular ethical	71 (14.8%)
Defines parable	29 (6.1%)
Secular other	25 (5.2%)
Description	22 (4.6%)
Theological	19 (4.0%)
No meaning stated	4 (0.8%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>479 (100.0%)</b>

The coding categories as defined as follows:

Category	Definition
Invalid response	Includes pupils who gave no response or wrote 'don't know'.
Not applicable	Did not provide an accurate biblical passage to ascribe meaning to.
Secular ethical	Reference to morals and how humans should behave.

Defines 'parable'	Misunderstands the question and attempts to provide a definition of a parable
Secular other	Secular thoughts or observations about life (e.g. the origins of festivals or practical or safety advice).
Description	Describes narrative without assigning meaning. To meet the criterion for this category, the description does not have to be accurate. Also, if God is mentioned he is only referred to in terms of his action within the narrative. Furthermore, there is no attempt to describe the wider significance of the narrative.
Theological	Reference to the nature of God and/or the relationship between God and humankind or God and creation.
No meaning stated	States that the passage does not have a meaning or provides a vague or unspecific meaning or a meaning unrelated to the cited parable.

### Knowledge of why people wanted to arrest and kill Jesus

Pupils were asked why, according to the Bible, some people wanted to arrest and kill Jesus. Some pupils cited many things in their answers in which case only the first reason cited was included in the coded categories below.

**Table 6 Reasons why people wanted to arrest and kill Jesus**

Why did people want to arrest and kill Jesus?	Count (%)
No Response	63 (13.2%)
Rival king	60 (12.5%)
Too popular/caused jealousy	53 (11.1%)
Didn't believe him	50 (10.4%)
Too good, kind, helpful, forgiving etc	34 (7.1%)
Son of God/Blasphemy	34 (7.1%)
Trouble maker/bad man	33 (6.9%)
Roman rebel/Political power	29 (6.1%)
Other	28 (5.8%)
Promoted rival religion/beliefs/practices	26 (5.4%)
Don't know	19 (4.0%)
Didn't like him	18 (3.8%)
Rivalled priests/religious authorities	13 (2.7%)
Law breaker	10 (2.1%)
Miracles	6 (1.3%)
Cleansing of the temple	3 (0.6%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>479 (100.0%)</b>

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**Selected Questionnaire Quotations: According to the Bible, why did some people wanted to arrest and kill Jesus?**

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Pupil 17	Because he was taking people from the hands of the churches [sic] who were trying to control the people.
Pupil 51	Because he was shown of to people.
Pupil 63	The Romans were scared that Jesus was going to take over the role of king of a country – what they didn't know was he is king of the world.
Pupil 74	Because everybody thought [sic] he was a wizard.
Pupil 75	He said God was more powerful than the King.
Pupil 93	Because he broke rules that were against God
Pupil 99	Because he gave the impression that he was the Son of God, which is illegal.
Pupil 100	They were a different religion and they didn't believe in him.
Pupil 164	Some for shopping the cheats and one for money.
Pupil 165	Because he healed people on days he shouldn't [sic]
Pupil 184	Because he rose and healed people who were dead.
Pupil 272	They thought he would become rich.
Pupil 405	They wanted to arrest and kill him because they thought he was telling lies and making fake stories.
Pupil 406	Because they did not like him because he was keep sending messages about being nice.

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**Knowledge of what Christians celebrate on Easter Sunday.**

Pupils were asked what Christians celebrate on Easter Sunday. Their answers were coded in the categories below.

**Table 7 What Christians celebrate at Easter**

<b>What do Christians celebrate at Easter?</b>	<b>Count (%)</b>
Resurrection/Jesus rising from dead/reference to moved tombstone/rebirth	218 (45.5%)
Invalid response	88 (18.4%)
Crucifixion/Jesus' death/He died for us/the people	72 (15.0%)
Don't know	24 (5.0%)
The birth of Jesus	20 (4.2%)
Easter	16 (3.3%)
Other relevant: Palm Sunday/riding into Jerusalem/Lent/Passover/Xmas	14 (2.9%)
Other	11 (2.3%)
Crucifixion and Resurrection	10 (2.1%)
Chocolate/eggs/New Life	6 (1.3%)

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<b>Total</b>	<b>479 (100.0%)</b>
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**Selected Questionnaire Quotations: What do Christians celebrate on Easter Sunday?**

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Pupil 1	Chocolate
Pupil 19	The rebirth of Jesus after his death.
Pupil 53	The crucifixion [sic]of Jesus.
Pupil 57	When he rowed into Jerusalem waving palm trees
Pupil 64	Where Jesus saved us then came back to life
Pupil 85	Christians celebrate Jesus on Easter Sunday.
Pupil 121	The end of Lent
Pupil 154	The tombstone being rolled away and Jesus coming alive.
Pupil 184	The day Jesus died on the Cross and erased our sins.
Pupil 202	The birth of Jesus
Pupil 255	They share eggs out and find eggs.
Pupil 315	They celebrate Eastertime.
Pupil 379	The death of Jesus [sic] and when he came back.
Pupil 426	Christians celebrate Christmas on Easter Sunday
Pupil 455	When Jesus was killed by the bad people.

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**Knowledge of why the cross is an important symbol for Christians**

Pupils were asked to explain why the cross is an important symbol for Christians. Some students cited many things in their answers in which case only the first reason cited was included in the coded categories below.

**Table 8 The importance of the cross**

<b>Why is the cross important?</b>	<b>Count (%)</b>
Jesus died on a cross	365 (76.2%)
No Response	48 (10.0%)
Other	54 (11.3%)
Don't know	12 (2.5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>479 (100.0%)</b>

---

**Selected Questionnaire Quotations: Why is the cross an important symbol for Christians ?**

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Pupil 5	Because Jesus died on the cross the show he'd die for us and loves us.
Pupil 20	The cross is the sign of god and when jesus [sic] was nailed to it.
Pupil 42	Because he hang himself.
Pupil 109	It shows you are holy, and how Jesus didn't die when he was crucified.
Pupil 127	Because it's the shape of a man.
Pupil 129	Because he was crossifide [sic] on a cross.
Pupil 168	Because Jesus was crusified [sic] on one to replenish our sins.
Pupil 225	Because that is where Jesus rose from the dead on it.
Pupil 366	I think ither [sic] god or Jesus died on their.
Pupil 469	It wash away every sin you do.
Pupil 470	It is important when Jesus had to go on a symbol it was a Cross.
Pupil 475	It is the symbol of Jesus Christ.

---

An examination of the responses suggests that it is possible that pupils think that Jesus was hung by a noose from a cross rather than hung on one. This is a clear example of how pupils transfer their usual understanding of a word's meaning into a religious context where it has a different meaning.

**Knowledge of what Christians mean when they say that Jesus is the 'Son of God'**  
Pupils were asked to explain what Christians mean when they say that Jesus is the 'Son of God'.

**Table 9 The Christian meaning of the 'Son of God'**

<b>What do Christians mean by 'Son of God'?</b>	<b>Count (%)</b>
Invalid response	123 (25.7%)
Jesus is God's son/God is Jesus' father	99 (20.7%)
Don't know	45 (9.4%)
Jesus came down from heaven/was sent by God	29 (6.1%)
Other	27 (5.6%)
Reference to annunciation/divine parentage/virgin birth	25 (5.2%)
Jesus is special, important and great (to God)	23 (4.8%)
God-like: kind/perfect/miracle-maker/powerful	19 (4.0%)
Jesus had healing powers/was a miracle-maker/powerful/resurrected	12 (2.5%)
Jesus was created/made by God	12 (2.5%)
Jesus is king/Messiah/leader/saviour	11 (2.3%)



Messenger of God/Speaks God's words/God's representative	11 (2.3%)
Jesus is second greatest/second God/second ruler	9 (1.9%)
Jesus was good and helped and cared for people	8 (1.7%)
Jesus is God in human form/part of God	8 (1.7%)
God chose Jesus to be his son	7 (1.5%)
Holy man/true believer/religious	6 (1.3%)
Told stories about God to everyone/was a religious teacher	5 (1.0%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>479 (100.0%)</b>

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**Selected Questionnaire Quotations: What do you think Christians mean when they say that Jesus is the ‘Son of God’?**

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Pupil 5	Jesus was the Son of God!
Pupil 14	that he is the true King, Lord
Pupil 26	That he is a true believer [sic] of him.
Pupil 27	He is the son of god because he helped and cared for people.
Pupil 43	Because God told mary she is going to have a king and God was his Dad.
Pupil 50	They mean that he was perfect like God and that he had powers (miracles) like God also.
Pupil 63	Jesus is god but in human form and so he had to be born from a baby like humans – God is his father like every human has a father.
Pupil 69	They mean that god sent Jesus to help us.
Pupil 78	They say he is the second god.
Pupil 87	That he was chosen by God.
Pupil 97	That Jesus is the Lord, he’s both human and divine.
Pupil 105	The messenger of god in human form
Pupil 131	The misiare [Messiah]
Pupil 132	A holy man.
Pupil 167	God and Jesus do the same things and he sometimes says ‘father’ meaning god.
Pupil 178	God is a dad to jesus, but God and Mary weren’t married.
Pupil 180	He is part of God and belongs to him even more than we do.
Pupil 268	Because he is a mickeral [miracle] maker and god is a migacall [magical? miracle?] maker as well
Pupil 301	Christians mean that Jesus is the ‘Son of God’ because he had special powers and claimed to God’s Son.
Pupil 304	They think that he would take the place of God but now they both are dead and they both look out for us.
Pupil 398	They mean that Jesus is not the prophet of god but son of god.
Pupil 423	Christians mean that God sent Jesus tell people to listen to him and about God.

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### Information about the respondents' attitudes towards Jesus

This section of the questionnaire was designed to ascertain the attitudes towards Jesus held by the respondents, their families and their friends as well as what factors may have influenced their own attitudes.

### Likert Scale Findings

Pupils were asked to consider twenty Likert Scale statements about Jesus. They were asked to tick which statement they 'Agreed' or 'Disagreed' with or whether they were not sure. The following describes the percentage of pupils who responded in each column category for each statement.

**Table 10 Likert items on beliefs about Jesus**

Likert item	No Response	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree
	Count (%)	Count (%)	Count (%)	Count (%)
1. is not important	11 (2.3%)	45 (9.4%)	79 (16.5%)	344 (71.8%)
2. was the kind of person who cared for people	9 (1.9%)	404 (84.3%)	50 (10.4%)	16 (3.3%)
3. died for me	12 (2.5%)	150 (31.3%)	161 (33.6%)	156 (32.6%)
4. was a normal person	12 (2.5%)	118 (24.6%)	153 (31.9%)	196 (40.9%)
5. tried to bring peace	13 (2.7%)	361 (75.4%)	77 (16.1%)	28 (5.8%)
6. told people about God	10 (2.1%)	372 (77.7%)	82 (17.1%)	15 (3.1%)
7. rose from the dead	14 (2.9%)	210 (43.8%)	125 (26.1%)	130 (27.1%)
8. is hard to believe in	15 (3.1%)	134 (28.0%)	152 (31.7%)	178 (37.2%)
9. told stories to make us better people	12 (2.5%)	298 (62.2%)	115 (24.0%)	54 (11.3%)
10. loved everyone	8 (1.7%)	352 (73.5%)	77 (16.1%)	42 (8.8%)
11. was sent by God	8 (1.7%)	304 (63.5%)	114 (23.8%)	53 (11.1%)
12. was kind and generous	23 (4.8%)	367 (76.6%)	69 (14.4%)	20 (4.2%)
13. was/is God	14 (2.9%)	45 (9.4%)	150 (31.1%)	270 (56.4%)
14. was not real	21 (4.4%)	50 (10.4%)	120 (25.1%)	288 (60.1%)
15. healed people	20 (4.2%)	274 (57.2%)	123 (25.7%)	62 (12.9%)
16. was willing to lose his life for others	20 (4.2%)	272 (56.8%)	132 (27.6%)	55 (11.5%)
17. was not the Son of God	19 (4.0%)	113 (23.6%)	110 (23.0%)	237 (49.5%)
18. makes prayers come true	19 (4.0%)	110 (23.0%)	227 (47.4%)	123 (25.7%)
19. is a bit confusing	22 (4.6%)	156 (32.6%)	152 (31.7%)	149 (31.1%)
20. cares about me	12 (2.5%)	269 (56.2%)	124 (25.9%)	74 (15.4%)

### One thing I don't understand about Jesus is

Pupils were asked to state what one thing they don't understand about Jesus. Some pupils cited many things in their answers in which case only the first reason cited was included in the coded categories below.

**Table 11 What children do not understand about Jesus**

One think I don't understand about Jesus is	Count (%)
Invalid response	114 (23.8%)
Did he perform miracles? If so, how?	64 (13.4%)
Resurrection: Why? How?	56 (11.7%)
Why (How): did he die for us? Was he killed? Didn't save himself/resist?	44 (9.2%)
Was he the Son of God (or God)? Did he believe he was Son of God?	37 (7.7%)
Reality/Existence of Jesus	25 (5.2%)
Don't know	20 (4.2%)
Present existence/status (Why doesn't he return now?)	17 (3.5%)
Extent of love/forgiveness/goodness	13 (2.7%)
Other	13 (2.7%)
Ascension	13 (2.7%)
Why did he do what he did (choose those disciples/teach stories)?	10 (2.1%)
Why was he sent? Why (+How) did he come to earth?	8 (1.7%)
Personal information: appearance/family/travel/birthday + place	8 (1.7%)
Origins of Jesus/Virgin Birth/Who his father was?	7 (1.5%)
Was he a normal human? Who was he?	7 (1.5%)
Does he know everything/the future? Make prayers come true? How?	6 (1.3%)
Everything	6 (1.3%)
Nothing	6 (1.3%)
Why Christians, Muslims et al have different views/beliefs?	5 (1.0%)

<b>Total</b>	<b>479 (100.0%)</b>
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**Selected Questionnaire Quotations: One things I don't understand about Jesus is...**

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Pupil 3	Where did he go when he died and how did he come back?
Pupil 6	How did he now that someone was going to betray him.
Pupil 11	Why did he not fight the Romans
Pupil 13	Was he real and if so, why dosnt [sic] he help us today?
Pupil 17	If God doesn't exist then how can he be god's son?
Pupil 20	Why he was sent down from heaven [sic] to Earth.
Pupil 25	How he makes people get better and heals nasty cuts and bruises [sic] go Away.
Pupil 31	How telling stories he thought he could change people.
Pupil 36	How he performs miracls [sic]when no one else can.
Pupil 48	Why did he die to save us
Pupil 62	Why didn't he save himself to make the world even better?
Pupil 67	How come he dosen't [sic] come down and talk to us and tell us he is true.
Pupil 101	Why he didn't just take all the good people somewhere like Moses.
Pupil 105	I don't know what I don't understand but I am sure there are deep meanings that know one knows.
Pupil 111	Why he allowed himself to die but yet shouted 'Why did you abandon me?' to God when he died.
Pupil 112	Why did he love people like the Romans
Pupil 120	Why didn't he save himself on the cross.
Pupil 126	If he was real or not and if he's the son of God
Pupil 141	Who was his dad
Pupil 198	When he went back to heaven, when he floated up to heaven. I did not get it when the clouds covered and when the clouds disappeared Jesus was gone.
Pupil 199	Why he forgave Judes [sic] (he was very very very very very mean!!)
Pupil 208	How he saved his people by dieing a slow painful death.
Pupil 226	Is he up there looking down on us?
Pupil 275	What happened after he was born because in Bible it says nothing until he was about 30.
Pupil 276	Why he was so calm when he got put on the cross and knowing he was going to die soon.
Pupil 308	That why did he say that he would come be when the world is about to end.
Pupil 311	If he did rise from the dead how did he? (He would be a zombie).
Pupil 328	I know Jesus is not the son of god that is what I believe but will like to make sure.
Pupil 398	Why Christians and Muslims believe different things.

### What do you think was Jesus' most important message?

Pupils were asked what they think was Jesus' most important message. Some pupils cited many things in their answers in which case only the first reason cited was included in the coded categories below. Also, many pupils did not cite particular teachings, but rather things that Jesus

**Table 12 Jesus' most important message**

<b>Jesus' most important message</b>	<b>Count (%)</b>
Love your neighbour/everyone (be kind, caring, helpful)	113 (23.6%)
No Response	109 (22.8%)
Don't know/Not sure	49 (10.2%)
Love/believe in/worship God	46 (9.6%)
Be peaceful/non-violent	23 (4.8%)
Ref to Jesus' love, kindness, generosity, care + forgiveness	22 (4.6%)
Reference to prediction of death, crucifixion, sacrifice for us	21 (4.4%)
Live morally/Don't sin/Reference to Ten Commandments	16 (3.3%)
Secular other: non-religious advice/believe in yourself/increase quality/happiness	13 (2.7%)
Theological reference (e.g. nature of God + how he loves/forgives)	12 (2.5%)
Other	9 (1.9%)
Reference to resurrection or ascension	8 (1.7%)
Reference to Jesus' miracles	7 (1.5%)
To evangelise + any reference to second coming/present existence of Jesus	7 (1.5%)
Reasons why Jesus and/or message was(n't) important	6 (1.3%)
Reference to Last Supper, bread and wine, holy communion	6 (1.3%)
Reference to parables	6 (1.3%)
Jesus' identity (include reference to Son of God)	6 (1.3%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>479 (100.0%)</b>

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**Selected Questionnaire Quotations: What do you think was Jesus' most important message?**

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Pupil 10	Love others and care for others then their will be kind and care for you.
Pupil 23	That if you believe in god good things will happen to you.
Pupil 30	Love your neighbour [sic] as yourself, and do to others as you have them do to you
Pupil 38	Believe what you believe [sic] in.
Pupil 41	I will sacravice [sic] myself for your life
Pupil 45	Eat this bread it is my bodie [sic]. Drink this wine it is my blood.
Pupil 49	To keep peace and not to hurt people
Pupil 75	Love one another as I have loved you.
Pupil 77	Make everyones [sic] life happier
Pupil 80	Was that he told people about God
Pupil 92	That everyone is equal, has rightrs [sic]and is special.
Pupil 110	That you must love everyone no matter what the look like
Pupil 120	To love each other, to care about each other, and not to fight, be greedy or hate each other.
Pupil 152	That if you did something wrong he'd forgive you.
Pupil 154	Death is not the end.
Pupil 177	When he rose from the dead and proved he was truly the son of god.
Pupil 193	Do not hate each other make peace not war.
Pupil 209	To tell his disapels [sic] to tell people all over the world that he had rose.
Pupil 214	I love you and I will alwys [sic] be with you.
Pupil 247	I think Jesus' most important message was that he was going to get killed.
Pupil 271	Jesus' most important message was that just stay calm and safe.
Pupil 295	He was the Son of God.
Pupil 309	That although you might not like people or you might not think the same things as them but you can still care for them.
Pupil 376	God is watching.
Pupil 379	It doesn't matter if your rich or poor, I will still be your friend.
Pupil 415	I think Jesus' most important message was that there isn't more than one God, and Allah is you God, and that you should worship and obey him.
Pupil 473	Jesus wanted them to believe one god and they pray to god.

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**Frequency affirming specific sources of ideas about Jesus:**

Pupils were asked to identify the source of their knowledge about Jesus by choosing from the categories listed below. As a multi-response question, pupils were allowed to tick more than one answer.

**Table 13**

<b>Sources of ideas about Jesus</b>	<b>Number of pupils (%)</b>
RE lessons	323 (67.4)
School	308 (64.3)
Teachers	255 (53.2)
Family	197 (41.1)
Collective worship/Assembly	182 (38.0)
Reading the Bible or Qur'an	166 (34.7)
Place of worship (eg Church or Mosque)	150 (31.3)
TV/Video/Film	137 (28.6)
Own beliefs	127 (26.5)
Friends	100 (20.9)
Religious leaders (eg Vicar or Imam)	93 (19.4)
Sunday school	60 (12.5)
Books/Magazines/Newspapers	59 (12.3)
Other	46 (9.6)

**Table 14 In general, my family thinks Jesus...**

<b>Coding category</b>	<b>Number of pupils (%)</b>
Was/is real or true or did/does exist	106 (22.1)
Was/is morally good (kind, caring etc)	63 (13.2)
Invalid response	50 (10.4)
Wasn't/isn't real or true or did/doesn't exist	48 (10.0)
Is a prophet, messenger of God or an Islamic prophet	47 (9.8)
Don't know/not sure	30 (6.3)
Was/is important, great or brilliant	29 (6.1)
Is not the Son of God	21 (4.4)
Different family members think different things	16 (3.3)
Was/is the Son of God, the King of peace, the King of the Jews; died for us; or is ever present.	14 (2.9)
Was a normal man: wasn't special, nor a miracle worker, nor crucified or resurrected	12 (2.5)
They're not sure	11 (2.3)
Is/was a miracle worker or special	10 (2.1)
Is OK/alright	9 (1.9)
Is not important or they hold other negative views	8 (1.7)
Other	5 (1.0)
<b>Total</b>	<b>479 (100)</b>

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**Selected Questionnaire Quotations: In general, my family thinks Jesus...**

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Pupil 14	Is a myth or a story in the bible.
Pupil 26	Is true and they do believe [sic] in him but do not go to church to show it much.
Pupil 40	Is real. kind and loves people
Pupil 50	Is not real. Some think he is real but did not perform miracles!
Pupil 78	Is not important
Pupil 107	My dad believes [sic] my mum doesn't neither does my sister and I'm not sure.
Pupil 108	Is the son of man who died for us, but my sisters aren't sure.
Pupil 117	Is real, is the son of god, cares for us all, watches over us every day.
Pupil 133	As true but not a huge fan
Pupil 150	Died for them.
Pupil 162	They aren't sure whether Jesus is true or not [sic].
Pupil 181	Is a loving and caring person who is holy
Pupil 191	Is not real it is just made up to make the world a better place but religion is one of the most killers so it like saying Jesus killed many people because he told his disciples to tell everyone if he is real? and it has been proven wrong by science [science?]
Pupil 205	A Great King of peace.
Pupil 215	Is the Son of God and did miracles.
Pupil 246	Is alright but my nan believes in him
Pupil 284	Well, we don't really know if we believe him or not but we believe in all the celebrations
Pupil 357	Is Okay really
Pupil 388	Was the nicest man who didn't deserve to die.
Pupil 417	Is not the Son of God and did not die on the cross.
Pupil 449	Is a prophet of Allah (God). He is kind, generous and important.
Pupil 452	Is very magical and very perfect but, the most important is he is a great person to follow in life.
Pupil 461	Was not the son of God but a prophet
Pupil 466	Is a muslim and on the day of Judgement he will defend the muslims.

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**Table 15 In general, my friends think Jesus...**

<b>Coding category</b>	<b>Number of pupils (%)</b>
Was/is real or true or did/does exist	75 (15.7)
Wasn't/isn't real or true or did/doesn't exist	73 (15.2)
Invalid response	64 (13.4)
Was/is morally good (kind, caring etc)	51 (10.6)
Is a prophet, messenger of God or an Islamic prophet	33 (6.9)
Different friends think different things	32 (6.7)
Don't know/not sure	31 (6.5)
Was/is important, great or brilliant	20 (4.2)
They're not sure	17 (3.5)
Is/was a miracle worker or special	16 (3.3)



Is not important or they hold other negative views	16 (3.3)
Is not the Son of God	13 (2.7)
Was/is the Son of God or Christ or he died for us	13 (2.7)
Is OK/all right	11 (2.3)
Other	8 (1.7)
Was a normal man: wasn't special, nor a miracle worker, nor crucified or resurrected	6 (1.3)
<b>Total</b>	<b>479 (100)</b>

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**Selected Questionnaire Quotations: In general, my friends think Jesus...**

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Pupil 2	To have existed but to have been normal
Pupil 15	Helpful and Amazing
Pupil 23	Is kind man who had special healing powers.
Pupil 46	Didn't exist (how could he do those miracles).
Pupil 63	Is real – but only one of my friends really worships him like me.
Pupil 84	Is a fake
Pupil 99	Does exist, but doesn't change their life in any way
Pupil 108	Is a person in history who made us good. And not sure if he was real.
Pupil 111	Don't know if he's real. Can't decide. Do believe a bit.
Pupil 163	Nice but they don't talk about it that much.
Pupil 170	That he is special and died for us.
Pupil 185	Isn't real but he is. They believe that he's real but in a different way.
Pupil 281	We don't really believe [sic] in him but when we do stuff about him in school is quite fun.
Pupil 292	Real, Son of God, Ben not think he real, Luke + Natasha think he is real, not sure.
Pupil 311	He is not real but he might have been the son of god.
Pupil 350	Is a nice man because he rose from the dead for us
Pupil 427	Was the prophet of Allah, not the son of Allah, and not God
Pupil 443	Is a god man

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### **2.3 Summary and further analysis**

There are seven questions concerned with what pupils know about Jesus, and five questions concerned with what they think about Jesus.

#### **What children know about Jesus**

Taken together the 'none' response and the 'don't know' response were the most common responses to five of the seven knowledge-based questions. Two questions yielded a different response to this. The first asked what Christians celebrate at Easter. 62.6% of responses referred to either the crucifixion or the resurrection. The second asked why the cross was important to Christians. 76.2% of respondents stated that its importance was based on the fact that Jesus died on the cross.

In commenting on why the birth of Jesus was special, common responses included details from the birth narratives such as a stable (10.6%) a star (9.6%) or angels (3.8%). The most common positive response to this question, however, was conceptual rather than factual. 16.9% of the sample suggested that the reason the birth of Jesus was considered special by Christians was the belief that Jesus was the Son of God.

When asked why Jesus chose fishermen as disciples, the most common responses (about 1 in 4) focused on the supposed positive characteristics of the disciples; their goodness, reliability, honesty or loyalty. A different response came from the 11.7% who stated they were chosen for their very ordinariness.

The parable that most children remembered was the Good Samaritan (11.7%), although only a third of the sample were able to name a parable at all. In attempting to explain what their parable meant the most common explanations were secular ethical (14.8%). Only 4% of the sample offered theological explanations for their parable. The two questions prompting the most reflective and varied set of responses were those asking why people wanted to arrest and kill Jesus, and what Christians mean by the term 'Son of God'. The most common responses to why people wanted Jesus killed involved references to political or religious rivalry, or power struggles. Jesus represented a challenge or threat to someone's authority (32.4%). The children speak of a rival king, or a Roman rebel or as challenging religious authorities. Another cluster of responses reflect a perception that Jesus was seen to be bad, a trouble maker or a law breaker, or simply that he wasn't liked (12.8%). In contrast were statements that suggested that rather than being seen to be bad Jesus was perceived to be too good, too kind or too forgiving (7.1%). Another cluster focus on belief, stating that Jesus promoted a rival belief system and that in setting himself up as the Son of God he was seen as blasphemous, and in reference to this belief system, some suggest that people just didn't believe him (24.6%). In responding to this question the children demonstrate a more sophisticated set of understandings than are revealed by some of the other responses.

When considering the term 'Son of God' the most common explanation was that God was the father of Jesus (20.7%). There are, however, a huge number of responses perhaps each made by only a handful of children but which reflect variety and depth of understanding. Children speak of Jesus as God's agent, as sent from heaven, as representing God's purposes. They refer to his God-like qualities expressed both as power - through working miracles, and as compassion - through moral behaviour, attitudes and decisions. They refer to a special person - special to other people and special to God. Some New Testament titles for Jesus are used: King, Messiah and Saviour.

### **What children think about Jesus**

The children were asked what they didn't understand about Jesus and what was his most important message. For both these questions the invalid responses and the 'don't know' taken together were the most common responses.

The aspects of Jesus' life that children state they least understand are the miracles (13.4%) the resurrection (11.7%), the reasons for his death (9.2%) and whether Jesus was, or believed he was, the 'Son of God' (7.7%). The most common response to

what Jesus' most important message was, was 'to love your neighbour' (23.6%). The responses to this question can be roughly divided into two groups: those who present Jesus' message as fundamentally moral (39%) and those who present it as fundamentally theological or spiritual (22.3%).

Question 12 required a response to 20 statements about Jesus, to either agree, disagree or say they weren't sure how they felt. These statements were also used for the KS3 questionnaire. As with the KS3 data the 20 statements were subjected to factor analysis to identify underlying constructs within the 20 statements. The process involved the recoding of some statements to remove the ambiguity of negative statements. Thus the statement 'Jesus is not important' was recoded to 'Jesus is important'. Oblique rotation was used as the factors were inter-correlated and this ensured consistency of approach with the KS3 data. The emerging factors were tested both for uni-dimensionality and internal reliability. The process resulted in the identification of three factors, which were broadly similar to those obtained from the KS3 survey in the first phase of the research, though not identical.

Factor 1: Credibility This factor contained four items relating to how credible and significant the figure of Jesus is

- 'is important'
- 'is not hard to believe in'
- 'was real'
- 'is not a bit confusing'

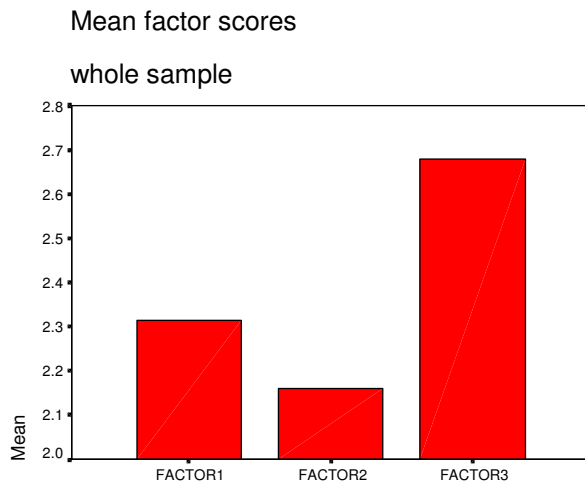
Factor 2: Divinity This factor contained eight items relating to the divine role and nature of Jesus and his ministry

- 'died for me'
- 'rose from the dead'
- 'was/is God'
- 'healed people'
- 'was willing to lose his life for others'
- 'was the Son of God'
- 'makes prayers come true'
- 'cares about me'

Factor 3: Humanity This factor contains seven items relating to the human, compassionate and moral nature of Jesus

- 'was the kind of person who cared for people'
- 'tried to bring peace'
- 'told people about Jesus'
- 'told stories to make us better people'
- 'loved everyone'
- 'was sent by God'
- 'was generous and kind'

The factor explaining the most variance in this KS2 data is Factor 1 'credibility' which was the least important for the KS3 data. The average scores on the three factors are compared, in order to provide a picture of the areas of Christian belief about Jesus that the children tended to agree or disagree with.



All these mean scores fall above the neutral score of 2.0, showing a tendency for KS2 pupils to concur with these three aspects of Christian doctrine. It is clear from the graph that the children scored higher on factor 3, relating to the humanity of Jesus, than on either of the other two factors. This was also the case for the KS 3 data. In addition the standard deviations were lower for factor 3 than for factors 1 and 2, indicating a greater uniformity of response to factor 3 than to the other two factors. The factor yielding the least agreement was factor 2, concerned with the divinity of Jesus.

Comparing for school, gender and religious background produced no significant difference by gender. There were differences between schools, although there is no clear evidence as to what might be informing these. There were ten primary schools from three regions. These were the South West, Birmingham and Lancashire. Two schools were independent schools, and two were church schools, the remaining six were community primary schools. The ten schools fed into five different secondary schools: one independent, one voluntary controlled, one multi-ethnic comprehensive, and two comprehensives in the South West of England. On the credibility factor (factor 1) the two inner city Birmingham schools and one school from Dorset scored higher than the other schools, and significantly higher than one independent school, one church school and the other Dorset primary. Given that both Dorset schools were community primary schools feeding into the same comprehensive it is impossible to deduce why they should have produced such a different response on this factor. On the divinity factor (factor 2) one church school and the same Dorset school that scored highly for factor 1 scored higher than the other schools and significantly higher than the two inner city Birmingham schools. This raises the question why the multi-ethnic schools should score high on credibility but low on divinity. It is possible that if the school had a high proportion of Muslim pupils then believing may not be an issue, but the divinity of Christ might be. On the humanity factor (factor 3) the same Dorset school scores highly again as does one of the Birmingham schools. These two schools are significantly higher than the other Birmingham school and a church primary school in Devon. It is hard to see why the two Birmingham schools should differ so widely on this issue. Why one particular community primary in Dorset should score consistently highly on all factors is curious.

Religious background was deduced from a direct question in the questionnaire. The results revealed that 45.1% were Christian, 28.8% were Muslim, 23.8% were from no religious background, and 1.5% were from a religious background that was neither Muslim nor Christian. On factor 1 Christians and Muslims scored significantly higher than the non-religious group. On factor 2 Christians scored higher than the non-religion group who in turn scored significantly higher than the Muslim group. On factor 3 Christians scored higher than Muslims, who in turn scored significantly higher than the non-religious group. Respondents were also asked to state the frequency of their attendance at a place at worship. 17.5% said never, 29% said rarely, 18.8% said sometimes, 9.8% said often and 24.2% said very often. Pupils who attended worship often or very often scored high on factor 1 than those who attended rarely or never. On factor 2 however, there was something of an anomaly in that those who attended worship often, sometimes or rarely scored higher on this divinity factor than those who attended never or very often. Given the tendency for the Muslim group to have a low score on the divinity factor, religious affiliation was compared with attendance at worship, which revealed that that the large majority of those who attend worship very often, came from the Muslim community. Correlating affiliation and attendance at worship for the three factors revealed that for Christians there was a high positive correlation between factors 1 and 2 and frequency of attendance at worship, but that the Muslim scores were unrelated to the frequency of their attendance. On factor 3 there was a significant difference between those who attended worship often, who scored higher than those who never did.

### **3. The Critical Trial and Key Stage Three Survey**

#### **3.1 The critical trial and KS3 survey**

The critical trial of the curriculum materials was undertaken in partnership with the following five co-educational secondary schools: a comprehensive school in Devon, an independent secondary school in Devon, a voluntary controlled Church of England high school in Lancashire, a comprehensive technology college in Dorset and a multi-ethnic comprehensive school in Birmingham which had a majority Muslim population. Each participating school worked collaboratively to devise, trial, evaluate and edit new curriculum materials with a class of pupils in years 7 and 8. The precise details of the partnership were decided jointly, but in general it involved:

- Trialling draft curriculum materials for one term with one class;
- Keeping a record throughout the term of the impact and effectiveness of these curriculum materials (including collecting a sample of pupil work which was of good quality or shows originality of thought);
- Completing evaluation forms which asked the teachers for their comments, questions or suggestions regarding the layout, format, structure, narratives, clues, questions and activities in each unit of the curriculum materials;
- Administering a pupil questionnaire devised to ascertain the pupils' responses to the curriculum materials and to ask general questions about their knowledge and understanding of, and attitudes towards, Jesus;
- Facilitating individual interviews with pupil representatives from the trial class;
- Attending a one-day seminar during which the revised curriculum materials were evaluated and the trial procedure was critiqued.

In addition, two expert teachers involved in the University of Exeter RE Postgraduate Certificate of Education partnership were asked to evaluate the curriculum materials.

The KS3 questionnaire administered by the teachers in the trial schools was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum materials, both in terms of the material covered and how it was presented. To this end we needed to know what pupils had learned, whether the materials addressed those areas that had been identified as problematic, and whether pupils had found the materials engaging, challenging and supportive. Pupils were asked to consider what had been the most significant thing they had learnt using the materials, which activities they had enjoyed, and what they would change about them. They were asked to reflect on new understandings they might have gained along with opinions and remaining difficulties. The first seven questions on the questionnaire were open ended, so responses were coded into categories then analysed for frequency of response in each category. The final question used the 20 attitudinal statements, and three point Likert scale that had been used both in the previous Key Stage 3 research project and in the Key Stage 2 study from this project. This allowed for comparisons both with Key Stage 3 students prior to the use of the materials and for comparisons with younger children. The final data collection involved 139 children taken from four of the partnership schools involved in the critical trial.

**Table 16**

Secondary school	Number of pupils (%)
Independent Devon	17 (12.2%)
Lancashire VC CofE high school	31 (22.3%)
Dorset comprehensive	49 (35.3%)
Birmingham multi-ethnic comprehensive	42 (30.2%)
<b>Total</b>	139 (100%)

The sample included 76 males (54.7%) and 63 females (45.4%). The sample included 49 pupils who were not affiliated to a religion (35.3%), 42 Christians (30.9%), 42 Muslims (30.2%), 4 pupils who were affiliated to religions other than those specified on the questionnaire (2.9%) and one Buddhist (0.7%). The questionnaire data was entered into SPSS and analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. (See Appendix 2: KS3 questionnaire.)

### 3.2. KS3 questionnaire results

#### Open-ended questions

Pupils were asked to give their own responses to seven open-ended questions relating to the course they had just completed. Their responses were coded and grouped into categories listed in descending order of frequency.

**Table 17 What is the most significant thing you have learnt about Jesus this term?**

Most significant thing you have learned	Number of pupils (%)
His miraculous work, healings or specific miracles	30 (21.6%)
How he died? including trial, pain of crucifixion	21 (15.1%)
What a good man he was and what moral actions he performed	20 (14.4%)
Different perspectives, opinions and beliefs	11 (7.9%)
Why he died? Purpose of crucifixion	10 (7.2%)
Perspectives on Jesus from the world religions	9 (6.5%)
How special, important and great he was	7 (5.0%)
His teaching and preaching	7 (5.0%)
That he was the Son of God (according to Christians)	6 (4.3%)
Ref to believers, followers and gospel writers	5 (3.6%)
Miscellaneous information about Jesus	4 (2.9%)

How he resurrected from the dead	3 (2.2%)
The birth of Jesus	2 (1.4%)
Invalid response (including two pupils who said 'nothing')	4 (2.9%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>139 (100%)</b>

**Table 18 Which activity or task did you most enjoy most? Why?**

<b>Activity most enjoyed</b>	<b>Count (%)</b>
Group/pair work and discussion	41 (29.5%)
Looking at Jesus in art (unit 2: making a collage)	17 (12.2%)
Miracles (units 8/9 inc acting out Lazarus story)	15 (10.8%)
Learning about the crucifixion (unit 10)	12 (8.6%)
Comparing different pupil opinions about J (unit 12: chart/poem)	11 (7.9%)
Learning perspectives of diff people/religions (pp8-9+13-15)	7 (5.0%)
Parables (unit 7: letter to Good Sam'tan and writing own parable)	7 (5.0%)
Activity not in booklet	7 (5.0%)
Invalid response (inc 1 who said 'none')	5 (3.6%)
Reading Bible/Gospels/Learning about the Bible	5 (3.6%)
Answering questions	4 (2.9%)
Comparing different accounts of the same event (p17)	3 (2.2%)
Learning about the resurrection (units 5 and 11)	2 (1.4%)
Surveying what people think Son of God means (p25)	1 (0.7%)
Discussing why people opposed Jesus (unit 10 Imagine)	1 (0.7%)
Individual work	1 (0.7%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>139 (100.0%)</b>



**Table 19 Which activity or task did you enjoy least? Why?**

<b>Activity least enjoyed</b>	<b>Count (%)</b>
Writing: hard vocabulary, too much, too factual, hard work	28 (20.1%)
Questions: too hard, took too long, write too much	18 (12.9%)
Jesus in art (inc collage): inappropriate, boring + difficult	12 (8.6%)
Reading: too much, too hard to understand	10 (7.2%)
Homework tasks: work alone, boring, waste of time	9 (6.5%)
Studying other people's/religious opinions (unit 1+2) inc Christian	9 (6.5%)
Spec task types: reflect/resp, record, imag, discuss, indi/gp wk	8 (5.8%)
Invalid response (inc 1 who said 'nothing enjoyed everything	6 (4.3%)
Looking at birth narratives (unit 6) esp comparing accounts	6 (4.3%)
Learning about Jesus the teacher: boring	5 (3.6%)
Learning about the crucifixion: boring and gruesome	5 (3.6%)
Giving/discussing personal opinions: too hard, boring	5 (3.6%)
Unit 5 out of chronology/boring, hard, unusual questions	5 (3.6%)
Learning about miracles: boring, incredible, unit7 q6	4 (2.9%)
Activities not in booklets (teacher tasks/research related)	4 (2.9%)
Learning about historical Jesus (unit 4): confusing	3 (2.2%)
Looking at resurrection: Roadside recognition	1 (0.7%)
Looking stories up in the Bible	1 (0.7%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>139 (100.0%)</b>

**Table 20 What would you change about these teaching materials to make them better? Why?**

<b>How would you change teaching materials?</b>	<b>Count (%)</b>
Pictures, art and colours (usually requesting more)	35 (25.2%)
Simplify the language/Make it easier	20 (14.4%)
Introduce more fun activities and games	20 (14.4%)
Less writing/text, shorter paragraphs, change font/format	12 (8.6%)
Make questions easier/require less writing	8 (5.8%)
Invalid response	7 (5.0%)
Give more opportunity to express opinions/discuss in groups	7 (5.0%)
More plays/role plays	6 (4.3%)
Less questions/tasks (inc Imagine qs)	6 (4.3%)
Introduce use of videos	4 (2.9%)
More on world religions' perspectives	4 (2.9%)
Produce more imaginative hwks/art & craft tasks	3 (2.2%)
No changes are necessary	3 (2.2%)
Provide more explanation	2 (1.4%)
Use more poems/stories about Jesus	2 (1.4%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>139 (100.0%)</b>

**Table 21 One thing I don't understand about Jesus is:**

<b>One think I don't understand about Jesus is</b>	<b>Count (%)</b>
How/why he resurrected? Other res'n events: ascension/why no app now?	20 (14.4%)
Why did he die? was he killed? did he let himself be killed?	19 (13.7%)
How/why he performed miracles	17 (12.2%)

Parentage/Family (J's dad?/Was M a virgin? How? Siblings?)	11 (7.9%)
Everything/Lots	9 (6.5%)
Nothing, I fully understand him	7 (5.0%)
Was Jesus the Son of God? How?	7 (5.0%)
Why do/did dislike him? Why put a crown of thorns on him?	6 (4.3%)
Meaning of teaching/parables (including origin of stories)	5 (3.6%)
Why did he love everyone and do good to everyone?	5 (3.6%)
What did(n't) J do in his life (inc occupation)?	5 (3.6%)
How/Why did he get so many followers/crowds	4 (2.9%)
What did he look like? Was he male or female?	4 (2.9%)
Did he exist?	4 (2.9%)
How he changed to be a prophet	2 (1.4%)
Why Christians have different views about Jesus	1 (0.7%)
Why a Jesus look-a-like died	1 (0.7%)
Invalid response	12 (8.6%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>139 (100.0%)</b>

**Table 22 One thing I now understand better about Jesus is:**

<b>One think I now understand better about Jesus</b>	<b>Count (%)</b>
Why he died and the details of his crucifixion	33 (23.7%)
How helpful, caring, kind, loving and trustworthy he was	18 (12.9%)
The miracles/healings he performed	15 (10.8%)
How others/religions view him (eg as prophet in Islam)	10 (7.2%)
How/why he resurrected, who witnessed it, other events associated with the resurrection	9 (6.5%)

His life generally	8 (5.8%)
His birth, childhood and upbringing	7 (5.0%)
He was great/respected/special/good leader and had many followers	7 (5.0%)
His parables and teaching	6 (4.3%)
How Christians view him, That and how he was the Son of God and his purpose here	5 (3.6%)
His Jewishness + historical/geographical context	5 (3.6%)
How he wasn't always good and happy	3 (2.2%)
Nothing	2 (1.4%)
I'm not sure/Don't know	2 (1.4%)
Fully understand him/everything	2 (1.4%)
He is a con-artist	1 (0.7%)
You have to undertake research to understand him properly	1 (0.7%)
Invalid response	5 (3.6%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>139 (100.0%)</b>

**Table 23 Do you think your opinion of Jesus has changed?**

<b>Has your opinion changed?</b>	<b>Count (%)</b>
No response	4 (2.9%)
Yes	40 (28.8%)
No	67 (48.2%)
Not sure	28 (20.1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>139 (100.0%)</b>

**Table 24 Give reasons for your answer.**

<b>Do you think your opinion of Jesus has changed?</b>	<b>Count (%)</b>
Confirmed previous opinion/opinion unchanged	35 (25.2%)
Know and understand more (no reference to opinion)	29 (20.9%)

Decreased belief/ confirmed lack of belief in J/existence/credibility of bible	22 (15.8%)
Increased/confirmed (Christian) belief in J/his existence/bib credibility	11 (7.9%)
Difficult to decide whether opinion has changed	9 (6.5%)
Increased/ confirmed lack of certainty/difficulty of making a decision	7 (5.0%)
Iteration of/confirmation of Islamic beliefs	7 (5.0%)
Nothing could change my opinion	6 (4.3%)
Changed previous beliefs/opinions	2 (1.4%)
No Response	11 (7.9%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>139 (100.0%)</b>

### Likert Scale

The raw scores on the twenty Likert items are shown below, together with the percentages:

	<b>No Response</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
	<b>Count (%)</b>	<b>Count (%)</b>	<b>Count (%)</b>	<b>Count (%)</b>
is not important	4 (2.9%)	19 (13.7%)	25 (18.0%)	91 (65.5%)
was the kind of person who cared for people	3 (2.2%)	112 (80.6%)	18 (12.9%)	6 (4.3%)
died for me	4 (2.9%)	29 (20.9%)	60 (43.2%)	46 (33.1%)
was a normal person	5 (3.6%)	42 (30.2%)	42 (30.2%)	50 (36.0%)
tried to bring peace	5 (3.6%)	106 (76.3%)	19 (13.7%)	9 (6.5%)
told people about God	4 (2.9%)	110 (79.1%)	19 (13.7%)	6 (4.3%)
rose from the dead	5 (3.6%)	44 (31.7%)	46 (33.1%)	44 (31.7%)
is hard to believe in	6 (4.3%)	50 (36.0%)	58 (41.7%)	25 (18.0%)
told stories to make us better people	2 (1.4%)	77 (55.4%)	39 (28.1%)	21 (15.1%)
loved everyone	4 (2.9%)	84 (60.4%)	33 (23.7%)	18 (12.9%)
was sent by God	3 (2.2%)	60 (43.2%)	44 (31.7%)	32 (23.0%)
was kind and generous	7 (5.0%)	102 (73.4%)	26 (18.7%)	4 (2.9%)
was/is God	7 (5.0%)	5 (3.6%)	33 (23.7%)	94 (67.6%)
was not real	6 (4.3%)	18 (12.9%)	48 (34.5%)	67 (48.2%)
healed people	4 (2.9%)	67 (48.2%)	44 (31.7%)	24 (17.3%)
was willing to lose his life for others	6 (4.3%)	76 (54.7%)	40 (28.8%)	17 (12.2%)

was not the Son of God	8 (5.8%)	45 (32.4%)	55 (39.6%)	31 (22.3%)
makes prayers come true	7 (5.0%)	21 (15.1%)	64 (46.0%)	47 (33.8%)
is a bit confusing	4 (2.9%)	79 (56.8%)	29 (20.9%)	27 (19.4%)
cares about me	3 (2.2%)	52 (37.4%)	53 (38.1%)	31 (22.3%)

### 3.3. Summary and further analysis

The pupils cited that the most significant things they had learnt about Jesus while using the course materials were in relation to his:

- Miracles (21.6%)
- Death (15%)
- Moral actions (14.4%)

By far the most enjoyable activities were those involving group work and discussion (29.5%), this being cited more than twice as often as the next most popular activity which was looking at Jesus in art (12.2%). By far the least enjoyable activities were those involving writing (20.1%). The suggestions made for improving the teaching materials were that it should be more visual and colourful (25.2%), and to use simpler language (14.4%). Taken together the suggestions that request greater active involvement (14.4%) and less passive involvement such as writing (8.6%) account for 23% of the sample.

The aspects of the life of Jesus that pupils found most difficult to understand focused on the resurrection (14.4%), the reasons for his death (13.7%) and the miracles (12.2%). Although in contrast the reasons for his death is also the most commonly cited aspect (23.7%) that pupils state they now have a better understanding of having studied the materials.

Most pupils stated that the teaching materials had not changed their opinion about Jesus.

Has your opinion changed	Percentage
No	48.2
Yes	28.8
Not sure	20.1
No response	2.9

25.5% stated that their opinion had been confirmed and remained unchanged, 20.9% did not mention their opinion but suggested that their knowledge and understanding had increased. 15.8% stated that their lack of belief had either been confirmed or

increased, compared to 7.9% who said that their existing belief had been confirmed or had increased.

The pupils considered 20 statements about Jesus, with which they had to agree or disagree, or declare that they were not sure. The statements about which there was most consensus were:

- An agreement that Jesus cared for people (80.6%)
- An agreement that Jesus was kind and generous (73.4%)
- An agreement that Jesus tried to bring peace (76.3%)
- An agreement that Jesus told people about God (79.1%)
- A disagreement with the statement that he was God (67.6%)
- A disagreement with the statement that Jesus was not important (65.5%)

The 20 statements were subjected to factor analysis to identify underlying constructs within the 20 statements. The process involved the recoding of some statement to remove the ambiguity of negative statements, thus the statement Jesus is not important was recorded as Jesus is important. Both orthogonal and oblique rotations were tried and yielded similar results. The emerging factors were tested both for unidimensionality and internal reliability. The process resulted in the identification of three factors. They are listed here in the order of significance, with factor 1 accounting for the greatest variance and factor 3 the least.

Factor 1 (Divinity). This consisted of six items related to the divinity of Jesus.

- ‘was the Son of God’
- ‘died for me’
- ‘cares about me’
- ‘rose from the dead’
- ‘healed people’
- ‘was sent by God’

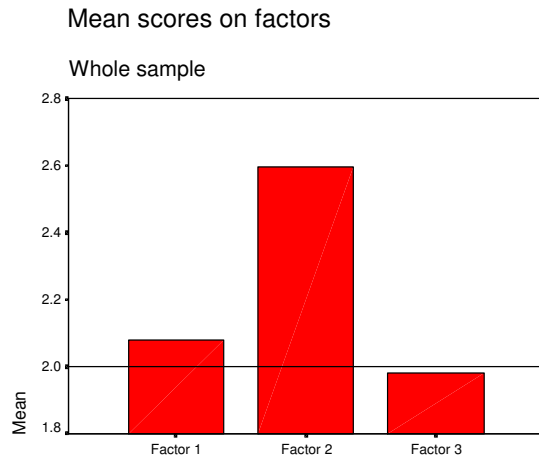
Factor 2 (Humanity) This factor consisted of eight items related to Jesus’ actions and qualities as a person.

- ‘told people about God’
- ‘tried to bring peace’
- ‘was kind and generous’
- ‘was willing to lose his life for others’
- ‘was the kind of person who cared for people,
- ‘told stories to make us better people’
- ‘is important’
- ‘was real’

Factor 3 (Credibility) This factor contained six items related to how easy it is to believe in Jesus and his supernatural powers.

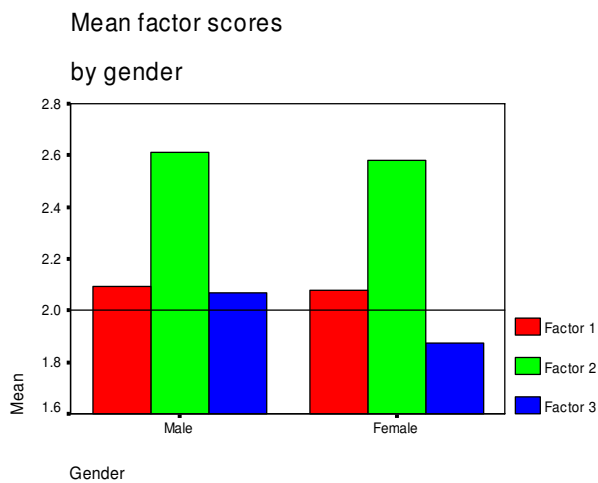
- ‘was sent by God’
- ‘is not a bit confusing’
- ‘is not hard to believe in’
- ‘was not a normal person’
- ‘makes prayers come true’
- ‘was real’

The average scores on the three factors are compared, in order to provide a picture of the areas of Christian belief about Jesus that the children tended to agree or disagree with.



It is clear from the graph that the children scored higher on factor 2 than on either of the other two factors. The reference line on the graph shows the neutral score. Bars going above the line show that pupils tended to agree with Christian teachings about Jesus on these factors. Thus pupils, on average, were neutral regarding the divinity of Jesus and credibility of his supernatural powers, but positive about the humanity of Jesus. In addition the standard deviations were lower for factor 2 than for factors 1 and 3, indicating a greater uniformity of response to factor 2 than to the other two factors.

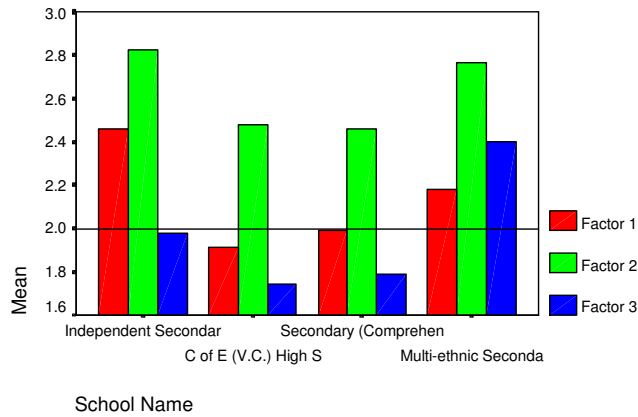
Comparing by gender yielded a significant gender difference with regard to factor 3, the credibility factor, whereby boys had a slightly positive belief, on the whole, while girls were slightly negative





### Mean factor scores

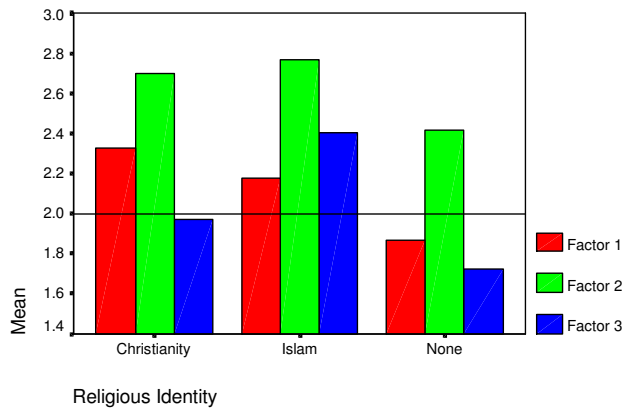
#### by school



Comparing by school revealed that on factor 1, the divinity factor, the independent school scored higher than the other schools, but statistical significant was marginal depending on the method of analysis. On factor 2, the factor relating to the human characteristics of Jesus, all schools were positive but the independent school and the multi ethnic schools were significantly higher than the comprehensive school. While the multi-ethnic school scored significantly higher than the other three schools on the credibility factor.

### Mean factor scores

#### by religious identity



Comparing by religious affiliation revealed some statistically significant differences. On the divinity factor the Christian group scored significantly higher than those who were non-affiliated. The Muslim group scored higher than the non-affiliated group on the humanity factor as did the Christian group though less significantly higher. On factor 3, the credibility factor the Muslim group scored higher than both the non-affiliated group and the Christian group who in turn scored higher, though less significantly, than the non-affiliated group.

## 4. The Key Stage Three Interviews

In addition to the KS3 questionnaire survey, we also conducted interviews with a sample of 40 children taken from the schools in which the curriculum materials were trialled. The interviews focused on the children's perceptions of the figure of Jesus within the RE curriculum after having studied the new materials. The interviews were designed to explore what pupils knew, understood or misconstrued about the figure of Jesus. The interviews were not used to gauge further responses to, and critiques of, the curriculum materials per se. There was, however, a focus on those things that were difficult to understand, and how these issues had been tackled within those RE lessons that had been using the materials. One of the aims when developing the materials had been to address those issues which children found the most difficulty engaging with. In particular these included the incarnation, resurrection, miracle accounts and salvation. The interviews therefore were semi-structured and facilitated conversations that explored these areas. They were recorded and subsequently transcribed, then analysed in line with the theoretical framework of grounded theory, using Nvivo software to code the transcripts. (See Appendix 3: KS3 interview schedule)

The responses made by the children focused on four key concepts:

1. Knowledge: Statements that reveal what the children know or don't know;
2. Education: Statements that reveal the children's perceptions of RE, particularly in relation to the figure of Jesus;
3. Belief: Statements which reflect the children's awareness that the figure of Jesus occupies a place within a belief system, and that believing or not believing will have consequences for the believer's perceptions, values and lifestyle;
4. Understanding: The previous three areas are concerned with what children know **about** belief, or RE or about the figure of Jesus himself. These statements reveal the children's attempts to understand ideas and concepts. There is however considerable crossover between this and the belief codes. (See Appendix 4: Final coding frame)

*Within the report, bold print indicates the name given to a theme that emerged as the interviews were coded. Numbers appear in brackets, these represent the number of children whose views contribute to any theme being discussed. Although this report is more concerned with breadth of opinion, these numbers give a clue to strength of opinion. Care needs to be taken however in attributing any meaning to the numbers, because in some cases high numbers of children contributing may be caused by posing a direct question in the interview. Clearly the picture and the gospel story used will predispose children to focus on some ideas more than others.*

### **Knowledge**

These statements are principally concerned with known facts, and so merely record the facts recalled by the children, some are more directly related to the content of the interview than others. Of the 40 students 31 recognised the picture as Jesus rising from the dead, although only four used the term resurrection. Other stories from the life of Jesus were also recalled, five children spoke of his death on a cross, while a further five used the term crucifixion. Two children identified the crucifixion and resurrection narratives as being part of the Easter story. Two children referred to Mary encountering either Jesus or an angel in the garden, while one child referred to the crown of thorns, and another child quoted from scripture: 'Truly this man was the Son

of God.’ Two children referred to the Christmas story. One child mentioned the story of Jesus asking the disciples to cast their nets on the other side of the boat, while another referred to the story of Zacchaeus. Perhaps most remarkable of all is the respondent who referred to the miracles of water into wine and the feeding of the five thousand, two titles for Jesus: Lamb of God and Bread of Life, and referred to the image of Jesus sitting at the right hand of God. One reference outside the gospels was from a girl who used the image of Paul (Saul) as an illustration of an unbeliever.

Of the nine students who did not recognise the picture, two said they didn’t know what it was, four recognised the figure as Jesus and speculated that the yellow flash symbolised something such as power or goodness. Two believed it represented Jesus leading people on the right path. One boy said it was a picture of Jesus raising someone else from the dead. One girl believed it was an image of a bomb.

*I: What’s it a picture of?*

*P: It’s a picture of Jesus.*

*I: Yeah.*

*P: And something behind him. Like a bomb or something.*

*I: Like a bomb, yeah. What’s this here?*

*P: That’s a grave.*

*I: Yeah? What else might a Christian tell you?*

*P: Say that, he’s killing himself or something or someone’s... he killed someone.*

Two children who eventually recognised the picture as an image of the resurrection originally speculated that it represented the Big Bang.

Some other misconceptions revealed in other parts of the interview include:

- *That ...he didn’t die? ...And he was sent up to heaven and, er, God put a person like him so the people thought he was going to die - appear like him, and when he died then the real one came back down and, er, then the people saw him. Only Mary saw I think.*
- *Some people don’t quite understand that Christmas is a time where Jesus died,*
- *That Jesus is magical and he comes from the sky.*

### **Education**

The children’s views on RE lessons pictured them as having five possible characteristics. As being principally concerned with delivering **information** (19), as being a means of **propaganda** (20), as being **multi-cultural** (9), as an **opportunity to ask questions** (18) or as an **opportunity to discuss** (7). The perception that RE should be about delivering information, spoke of this information taking two main forms: story and knowledge. Children spoke of wanting more detail or more explanations and particularly focused on the belief that it should be concerned with proof and evidence. Often what they required was information that was not available such as what Jesus looked like or an account of Jesus growing up. Many of their expectations in relation to the RE curriculum seemed more appropriate to the science or history curriculum where evidence based information would be the norm and actively encouraged. It is possible that RE has a lot in common with ideas based

subjects such as English, and has somehow become positioned inappropriately in the minds of children. This is further illustrated by some children considering RE as being concerned with propaganda, in the sense that it is perceived as having an explicit faith agenda, which is taught as truth rather than an invitation to think.

- *'They should always remember they're teaching us and not telling us their own views.'*

RE in this sense is pictured as a forum for 'telling' rather than 'asking' children about their own views and perspectives. Children stress the need to be unbiased, and speak of some teachers getting '*carried away*.' They speak of needing to make their own minds up. In expressing the view that children of other faiths or of no faith might both have a problem with RE, one child, not only perceives RE as having a faith agenda but as having a specifically Christian agenda. As to whether they actually do experience RE that is predisposed to any belief system is unknown, though unlikely, but it is a common perception that it is so.

- *'If I was a teacher I wouldn't tell the pupils what religion I was, because they might think that, I don't know, that you're supposed to be that religion because you're ...that religion.'*

A common view expressed in relation to this perception was that RE was only really suitable for those who had a belief.

- *'If they don't believe in him they've got no reason to really do RE, learning about something they don't believe in and trying to persuade them that he does and that they don't believe then they won't.'*

The majority of those who spoke about the faith agenda in relation to RE, spoke of a perceived desirability to believe. There were other views expressed. Two boys, one Muslim, one not, actually advocated a proselytising style for RE.

- *'I would tell them that at school, sir, like that God gave him the power to perform miracles and you should believe that.'*
- *'Tell them how they can communicate with God and get closer to him... Maybe encourage them to go to church and to give it a go and see how they find it.'*

While two children, a boy and a girl, seemed aware that RE was not concerned with conversion or persuasion but with understanding.

- *'RE just tries to make you understand what happen. They don't make you believe in anything. If you believe in something they're not going to try and force you to stop your beliefs and go with theirs. They're not trying to force you, or in any way to change your beliefs or to make you believe. They're just trying to make you understand by telling us about other religions, and about Christianity, what happened.'*

Only nine children referred to RE as having a multifaith focus. Of those who did it was principally motivated by the respect agenda, and the need to understand and value cultural and religious differences. A minority expressed different perspectives on multiculturalism, one suggested it was confusing, one suggested it was a means by which children could select their preferred faith option and one particularly wanted to focus on religious conflict, the crusades for example.

In contrast to the perception by some of RE as having a faith agenda was the belief that RE was potentially a forum in which to ask questions. Many questions were suggested and one boy believed that his questioning was prompted by genuine curiosity. This raises the question of whether RE seeks to discover or exploit any genuine curiosity that might exist. There were three main areas of questioning advocated, those that look a lot like the literary criticism children may encounter in English or history: why did he do that? What makes people behave that way? The second might be described as theological in that they are concerned with the big questions: why are we here? Is God real? The third is concerned with moral issues, why is there war? What is the right thing to do? In referring to questioning some children refer to the lack of comfort they feel in the RE classroom, leading to embarrassment when they ask questions, suggesting it may not be common to have a climate that encourages questioning or the possibility of thinking aloud. A further theme that emerged in relation to asking questions was the notion that there may not be any answers, and that teachers themselves may not have any answers.

- *They don't have the answers themselves and because they are only teachers they don't know - I mean they won't know what's after life but yes that's probably why they side track.*
- *There's not really an answer to it. But it's just, you have to believe in it.*

Such comments provide a different perspective to the proof- evidence- fact agenda. (See section on belief)

A much smaller cluster of responses formed around the idea that RE provides a forum for discussion, although very similar to the responses on questioning, these statements imply students may have something to say to one another. Again they focus on the respect agenda, and the value in listening to other opinions, and sharing your own.

In commenting on what they **enjoy in RE lessons** (34) it is no surprise to discover that children prefer active, interactive and novel lessons to passive, listening and writing activities. Many of the things they mention may be things they do anyway: watching videos, doing drama, having discussions, making posters, handling artefacts. They spoke of going on school trips and visitors coming into the classroom. It is interesting how many children highlight 'story' as a positive and writing as a negative.

- *I enjoyed the stories. I think hearing the stories clears it. I know they are old stories centuries old stories but you can but people find meanings in them they can say oh yes I had that problem. I guess I like that that you can find meanings in it and say well yeah I could do with that I could do with some help.*

As far as content is concerned the exploration of different cultures and belief systems is most commonly flagged up as a positive. Several children refer to *'making things easier to understand.'* The **lessons they don't enjoy** (23) read as the reverse of the above, they don't like passive activities such as reading and writing and a common complaint is against *'doing worksheets'* or *'just copying.'* The children make very little reference to the content of the lessons they don't enjoy except for a general notion that the Bible is boring.

### **Belief**

The children speak about belief and in doing so reveal their understanding of the place it has in people's lives. They recognise not only that external influences can affect belief patterns, but also that belief can influence, behaviour, choices and values. Three different external influences were referred to, those of the family, of formal Christianity and of the Islamic community. Children spoke of **Family Influence** (8) as affecting the likelihood both of believing or of not believing. There is a common idea that some children are *'bought up to believe.'* **Muslim Influence** (8) is acknowledged by Muslim children, of whom there were ten in the interview sample. These children were aware that Jesus has a difference place within their own faith to that of the Christian perspective. They speak of Jesus as special, as a prophet, as one sent by God, but not as God or as the Son of God.

- *'He's a prophet for us lot and he's not the son of God. And he's a servant, an agent for God, and that's why we don't - it's hard for us lot to believe that Jesus was the son of God.'*

None of these responses imply that this might represent a problem for themselves as Muslim children in RE classrooms.

- *'Well, sometimes people may think they might be breaking their own religion when learning about other peoples, when they're not, they're just consuming more information about this when they do GCSEs, and they're exams.'*

There are far fewer references to the **Christian Influence** (5). RE teachers are sometimes seen as likely to be committed to the Church, and therefore as having a particular incentive for teaching RE. A few children also refer to their own church experiences. There is a perception that the church and Christianity has an image problem and is perceived as at best outdated and at worst weird. The Christian influence on non-Muslim children is very different to the Muslim influence on Muslim children, for whom there is a much stronger and positive identification with their faith tradition. This is less true for non-Muslim children. Indeed the need to refer to them as 'non-Muslim' reflects that they cannot necessarily be identified as Christian. Twelve children confess to having a **belief of their own** (12), this represents six of the ten Muslim children and six of the thirty non-Muslim children. Non-Muslim children typically confess to believing in God, or believing in Jesus, rather than saying I am a Christian, while for Muslim children the statement of belief is more likely to take the form, I am a Muslim. One girl suggests that 90% of her class are likely to not believe, while a boy suggests belief is something that you grow out of.

- *Because they grow out of believing the magical stuff and ...and they find it hard to get back into it and believing that he's real.*

Only six children, however, admit explicitly to not believing, all of them from the non-Muslim group. These are coded as **statements of disbelief** (21), the other 15 statements refer to the non belief of others, and children commonly cite this lack of belief as the reason people have difficulty understanding the resurrection, miracles or the concept of Jesus as the Son of God. The idea that it is difficult to understand the things you don't believe is explored further in the section on the interplay between their perceptions of belief and understanding, as opposite or complimentary concepts. Two children also refer to the idea of **not wanting to believe** (2). These comments reflected the perception of the church as having an undesirable image rather than the idea of someone wrestling with issues of faith and doubt.

- *'Because they haven't even really thought about it they just like to be a Paul and say they don't believe in it. They because they say they think it's a story but they probably say it but they probably do actually believe in it they just don't like saying it.'*

Several children are aware that **being a believer** (9) has consequences in terms of lifestyle, values, attitudes and choices. These perceptions include awareness that religious faith can offer a new start. This relates particularly to the parable retold in the interview. The view that faith can offer security and comfort, a feeling of being watched over and cared for was also expressed. One child refers to the idea that Christians are likely to have a relationship with Jesus, while another speaks of a relationship of trust, of putting your faith in something. Some children associate belief with being required to believe in certain concepts such as Jesus being the 'Son of God'. That there is a question in the minds of some children as to whether RE requires or promotes belief is one of the recurring themes throughout this report.

Although very few children referred to the idea of spirituality as an aspect of belief, two respondents reveal awareness that faith might include a spiritual or emotional response or a sense of awe and wonder.

- *'Believing is like with your, like, soul and actually ...you think that it actually happened and you approve of that and you feel strongly about that.'*

Some of the statements about being a believer are stated as negatives. Thus belief is seen to be prompted by self interest such as a fear of dying, a desire for a heavenly reward, the need to be on the right side of God, or the result of a herd mentality, whereby you believe in order to conform.

- *'I think that people are kind of a bit sometimes suck up, if you don't mind me using that word, to God, as in like, you're giving him stuff but then I believe that, um, people there actually think he will repay us back, and he will serve us well'*

There are a series of themes that deal with what makes belief difficult or incredible. Many of these responses were prompted by questions that include the phrase 'why is this difficult to understand.' Commonly the children replied with reasons for why it

was difficult to believe. Three strongly related ideas were that some things were difficult to believe because they were **'too fantastic'** (38), or they **'conflicted with other knowns'** (14) or that there was **'no evidence'** (19). These views reflect similar sceptical responses, the first stating that events such as the resurrection or miracles are just beyond belief. Often the language of magic is used to infer scepticism, the general tenor of these statements is to say that this sort of thing just doesn't happen. Secondly children spoke of those things that are hard to believe because they make no sense, or are in conflict with what they already know.

- *'People just are so involved in how this world goes...'*
- *'It's like denying the things they already know about.'*

Several comments refer to the virgin birth as contrary to a biological understanding of conception, others to known facts about medicine or science rendering the miracle accounts incredulous. One boy refers to the kind of heavy machinery and winches that might be required to lower a man through a roof. In reference to the resurrection a boy asks *'if he rose from the dead how come he ain't here now?'* The third group of statements refer to those things that are hard to believe because there is no evidence or proof, or because they have never witnessed such things, thereby identifying with the adage 'seeing is believing.' A common suggestion is that more people would believe it if there was more proof. The language and discourse of science, fact, logic and reason seems to be the principal reference point for most of these children.

In addition to statements about why these things are hard to believe from a modern scientific perspective there is a historical dimension that the events occurred **'too long ago'** (13). This is seen to have a variety of consequences, for some children it is just too long ago for us to be sure about what happened, others suggest that miracles just don't happen now, they belong in the past. A more mature reflection comes from those children who suggest that what has changed is the way we think, and what we know, and by implication that now we know better.

- *'Maybe because religion isn't like so prominent today and like it's not sort of very strong and like we don't think if you do one thing bad then you're going to go to hell and all the and terrible things like if you have done really nasty things then you will be in a lot of trouble after you are dead but I don't think people think that so much any more so they kind of they might not really know what God is'*

Several children reveal scepticism about sacred text and doctrine because these are perceived to have **a hidden agenda** (11), written with the intent of influencing or manipulating the reader. These comments range from the negative view that the writer is consciously lying to serve their own faith agenda,

- *'You just go by the word of someone and you don't know whether they are lying or making it up just to make a bedtime story or something.'*

Or that they were written in order to have a positive influence on the reader.



- *'Maybe somebody wrote about this person Jesus just to help people have a bit more confidence in themselves'*
- *'People just made him up because there were bad things going on and they just wanted to believe that there was a person who could help them.'*

There is also the view that the story has grown in the telling, that the faith of the writer might lead the account to be 'oversold.'

- *'I think that's over hyped a little, but even if he... - he might even be some kind of doctor maybe, or just understanding a different way of doctoring, in those times. Then they over-hyped them, a little bit'.*

A small group of statements offer a direct **alternative** (5) to the faith perspective, focusing particularly on explanations for the miracles, or what they might tell us about God, or about believers in God.

### **Understanding**

A whole cluster of statements reveal understanding of who Jesus is in terms of his human/divine nature. The narrative the children were told was the man lowered through the roof. This probably accounts for the high number of statements referring to Jesus as a miracle worker or healer. Many children quote the phrase *'only God can forgive sins.'* which appears in the text of the story and as it makes an association between Jesus and God this probably accounts for the high number of statements about Jesus as God's agent. The statements about Jesus fall into two groups, those that speak of the link between Jesus and God and those that speak of his human qualities. The interview used 'Son of God' as a title for Jesus, and this concept links all three of the codes that reveal children struggling to make sense of the relationship between Jesus and God. Many children view the notion of sonship as literal, making reference to the **virgin birth** (16) and speaking of God as the biological father of Jesus. This raises several credibility problems for them, and therefore serves to undermine the claim of sonship. Their view of Jesus as a **miracle worker**, (33), also focuses on the idea of Jesus being the Son of God. In this context however they speak of the miracles revealing holiness and power and see the miracles as serving to demonstrate the fact that Jesus is God's son.

Their scepticism about miracles however, also undermines their perceptions of Jesus, because many children see the miracle accounts as a means of persuasion, rather than narratives inviting the hearer or reader to speculate. If the ideas of virgin birth or Jesus as a miracle worker highlight their scepticism, then their views about Jesus as **the agent of God** (34) reveal the children genuinely thinking about who Jesus is, and reveal much more positive images and accounts. It is remarkable how broad a set of beliefs are revealed in this single code and in many ways their comments reflect the debate about Jesus that might be found in any theological work.

What follows is an attempt to capture that variety. There is the view that Jesus is God in human form, or that he is God's equal. There is the view that in Jesus, God is indwelling, or that Jesus is like God. Some children speak of Jesus as being sent by God, or being a worker for God in order to tell people how to live or how to make the world a better place. There is the view that Jesus is chosen by God, is trusted by God and that Jesus listens to what God wants of him. Jesus is also pictured God's

messenger or representative. There is even the Christian incarnational understanding that in Jesus people come to know that God is amongst them. Some of this breadth of opinion is captured in the following quotes.

- *That God sent his son to earth to help people 'cos I guess the earth was in a pretty bad shape so he sent Jesus like an emissary with all these kind of magical powers to help people. And they would say well here is proof that Jesus was the Son of God because someone said it about him.*
- *They just say he's the Son of God because God sent him. It sounds better I suppose to say I am the Son of God rather than say oh you know God sent me you know because anyone can say that oh God sent me and so it might be difficult to understand.*
- *Jesus was God's son. And he's, like, his blood and his spirit.*
- *The fact that God had a son, he sent him down from heaven to help us on our way and make sure that everyone... he teaches people that God is here, and like he said, help you. So they're probably trying to make people think, well, just make sure people are aware of the fact that Jesus is the Son of God and that God will always be there.*
- *That he, that God gave up his son from his place in heaven and sent him down to earth so he's God's representative so he would send someone personal like a son or something.*
- *Basically it's like God was his father and if we call ourselves Jesus' brothers then God is our father and Jesus is our brother.*

The second group of statements refer to the human characteristics of Jesus. Jesus is commonly referred to as a **moral figure** (18). This is often in reference to him forgiving sins and this is a direct reference to the healing miracle retold in the interview. Two children develop the idea of forgiveness, by saying that Jesus will forgive you no matter what you have done, moving the emphasis away from the paralysed man to themselves or to others. Most of the children refer to forgiveness of sins in the abstract rather than as having personal implications. Jesus is frequently referred to as a good man, but also as a good modal and who shows us how to be good, *'he was like, a really good person. And, um, he cared for everyone whether they were poor or rich or... and he just like helped people in every way he could.'* One girl adopts the idea of the innocence of Jesus *'he wasn't doing anything wrong so it was kind of not fair to make him die like the way he did.'*

The small number of statements that refer to Jesus as being a **normal person** (9), represent two different perspectives. The first and most common is to make explicit the idea that Jesus is *'just a good man'* rather than being God's representative in some way. While a smaller group speak of the surprise people may feel that God's representative appears as a normal man. Another common cluster of statements is the belief that Jesus is a **special person** (16). These statements employ adjectives such as important, extraordinary, different or holy. Picking up on the light imagery in the picture one boy suggests *'That God is all about light, and he's meant to guide you.'*

*Like Jesus is his son so he's going to guide you through life. And if you believe in him, that light will always be there to help you?'*

A significant number of statements make reference to the way that Jesus **relates to people** (12). These statements either refer to personal characteristics of Jesus or to the impact that he has on others. Often an interpretation of the picture is to describe the image as welcoming; the open hands are described as calling people to him, or as offering something to them. Jesus is described as charismatic: people wanted to see him and meet him, he is described as having power over people and as giving people courage. He is seen as having the ability to change our attitudes to one another, making us more accepting or friendly. One boy cites the story of Zacchaeus as an example of how Jesus changed people's attitudes to someone they had previously despised. There are two examples of children offering **unexpected images** (2) of Jesus. One boy compares the powerful nature of God with some of the more vulnerable images of Jesus, while a girl speculates about the idea of 'the daughter of God.'

There are examples of children expressing and engaging with ideas, some theological, others more philosophical. The **theological ideas** (11) they confront are largely concerned with how God can be contained in a single human life. There are 'why' questions: why only once? Why so long ago? Why then? There are also questions about the way God acts in the world, could he have stopped Jesus suffering, if he is God why would he choose to suffer, can he stop human suffering. *'I find it hard to believe that Jesus was real and like God's real because so many bad things going on like London [tube bombing] and stuff like that'*. The idea of God as spirit is also addressed. It is seen as an explanation of the title Son of God in that the term is seen as a metaphor to describe Jesus as representing God's spirit, rather than a literal description of Jesus. There are also questions about where Jesus is now if he was raised from the dead, and one child speculates about the second coming. There are also examples of children using the term 'saved.' It is a term that children recognise and use but do not necessarily understand. It is principally understood as being about 'going to heaven.' Another cluster of statements focus on the nature of **miracles** (10), they are described as extraordinary events, that should not really happen, but that have good outcomes. A significant number of children see the miracle stories as having a role in revealing who Jesus is, in this sense there may be a perception of why scriptural accounts might be viewed by some as revelation. A small group of statements refer to the human desire for **truth** (3). They speak of people needing to discern the truth for themselves, *'they find it difficult because they don't know what's the truth and what's not,'* or to find the truth in a story, or working out how to believe. There are also examples of children making direct, though not necessarily helpful, **links** (10) from biblical narrative to their own experiences. One child links the idea that there are things people don't see because they are preoccupied with their own version of the truth, with the film *The Matrix*. While another film influence is the idea of the zombie, the walking dead, which does not seem to have helped one boy make sense of the resurrection narrative. The miracles are frequently linked with the idea of stage magic and magicians, and the idea that you are being duped.

The children also speak of those things that making understanding difficult. They speak of the use of a **language** (9) they don't understand, sometimes biblical, sometimes the textbooks or sheets they are given. There is a sense in which they think

the use of grand language is deliberate to make it sound more difficult than it is. They also refer to the **confusion of others** (3), sometimes children but also an imagined group; they speak about *'people who don't understand'*, but don't always identify themselves as part of this group. Another source of confusion is an awareness of **conflicting beliefs** (13). These differences are seen between faiths, within faiths, within scripture, even within the classroom; they exhibit an awareness that we all see things differently and have different beliefs and opinions. For some children this seems to be a problem, the consequence of which is an inability to understand or to know who to trust. *'And everyone has their own views, because if they go to someone they tell them something, if they go to someone else they tell them something so they get a bit confused.'*

The list of things that are **hard to understand** (30) is very similar to the things that are hard to believe. The resurrection, the miracle stories and the virgin birth are commonly cited as hard to understand, just as they are claimed as things that are hard to believe. Other issues referred to include a problem with who Jesus is, and what his relationship with God is, also questions as to where he is now, if he rose from the dead. Perhaps a more interesting cluster of statements are those that speak of finding it hard to understand why Jesus died and why people wanted him dead given that he is now generally believed to be such a good man.

One large group of statements links together ideas about **believing and understanding** (35). This collection of statements captures a wide variety of perceptions. Many of these ideas create a dichotomy in which the two concepts are seen as contradictory. The most common of these is to link understanding with knowledge and facts and believing with more abstract notions such as God or morality. From this perspective understanding deals with things you can know to be true while it is possible to believe in something even when you don't know the full facts about it.

- *'I think when you believe something you don't need lots of proof, you just, you just know that's right, whereas when you understand something someone has shown you or something's happened to make you actually really know that that's true. Whereas believing you just know that it's right and you don't need lots of proof to know it'.*

The value that is placed upon facts, evidence and proof can lead to the assumption that understanding is superior to believing.

- *If I understand that there's... the maths question is right, and I believe that the maths question is right, the believing isn't as strong as the understanding.*

The link between understanding and formal education is further illustrated by the belief that parents teach you to believe but schools teach you to understand.

- *I suppose so I mean like if your parents are Christians then they might bring you up to believe Jesus and the only time when you really start understanding it is when you get into the school telling you about it*

Believing is also pictured as internal: concerned with the soul, while understanding is pictured as external: concerned with what is learned in the classroom. Believing is seen as being concerned with commitment, so understanding might lead you to be aware of two sides to an argument but believing requires you to commit to one of them.

- *'Understanding is where you know both sides of the story, you can understand people's point of view if they do believe, and whether you don't believe, and believing is obviously thinking it's completely true.'*

Believing and understanding are not always construed as oppositional, in fact they are sometimes seen as complementary. Understanding is pictured as moving towards believing, in this modal understanding is about seeking the truth, believing as about finding it. A stronger representation of this picture is to say that in order to believe you must first understand. This stands in direct contradiction to the view that often we do not understand the things that we believe, a view that is also expressed. More commonly however, is the view that believing is an *option* - it is possible to understand something such as the resurrection while not believing in it. From this perspective lots of people will understand but not everyone will believe. The fact that there is no consistent view about the definition of, or relationship between belief and understanding, merely reflects the fact that most of us might have different perceptions of these terms and how they describe our own attitudes and thinking. Many of the questions used in the interview began with the phrase 'why might young people find this hard to understand' to which one boy commented that it isn't just young people that find such ideas hard to understand. What is revealed in these interviews is that many of the perceptions and conflicts expressed by these young people perhaps mirror the debates and issues that the wider community also wrestles with.

### **Summary of key interview findings**

- There is a perception by some that RE promotes belief
- RE is often perceived to be about telling, rather than sharing, discovering or reflecting
- RE is seen to have the potential to be concerned with questioning, debate and respecting the beliefs and opinions of others
- Young people prefer active and interactive RE lessons
- Many young people highlight 'story' as a positive
- Belief is seen to be influenced by background and culture
- Belief is seen as exerting its own influence on perceptions, choices and values
- The language and discourse of science, fact, logic and reason is the principal reference point for most interviewees
- A 'factual' language construct creates problems for the delivery of the RE curriculum
- Children struggle with handling biblical narratives that relate to miraculous events; they rarely look beyond the true or false dimension
- There are a huge variety of comments made about the relationship between Jesus and God. These young people seem to have engaged with the ideas and concepts of the debate, so much so, that their ideas reflect the debate within both the church and the secular communities
- The terms belief and understanding are sometimes used interchangeably, while at the same time, these young people reveal a variety of concepts regarding the two terms, and any relationship that might exist between them.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

1 Religious education needs to make explicit to children exactly what it is – and is not – trying to do. This may be particularly important in religious foundation schools. It should be clear whether in the RE lesson *belief* is expected, encouraged or entirely a matter for the individual... But whatever the teacher thinks, hopes or expects, children will choose for themselves as many in our survey seemed to be doing.

2 Perceptions of RE and the role of the RE teacher affect pupil response to teaching about Jesus. Value neutrality by teacher or student is never possible, but making clear to the children what the teacher's role is may prevent misunderstanding or even antipathy.

3 Religious education syllabuses, schemes of work and resources for the classroom should ensure

- that teaching about Jesus presents Jesus as a significant figure in a number of world religions rather than exclusively Christianity
- that presentations of Jesus from within a faith perspective remain faithful to the diversity of beliefs and understandings about Jesus found within that tradition
- that children are encouraged to engage with complex theological concepts such as incarnation in such a way that opens up the variety of ways in which members of faith traditions might understand those terms
- that the place of religious language (eg symbol and metaphor) is recognised in the ways in which members of faith communities express beliefs about Jesus
- that teaching does not shy away from issues perceived to be 'difficult' eg Son of God or miracles... Teachers are not expected to 'solve' all queries; students are capable of quite sophisticated levels of understanding. We should be inducting children into an informed debate, not making choices for them
- that not only is 'story' used, but that its nature and diversity is 'unpacked' with children. Chapter 5 of *Echo of Angels* (Copley, T., University of Exeter School of Education, 1998) does this for teachers in six key points.

4 The sort of teaching about Jesus which appears to be most effective is one with which children can *engage* rather than be passive recipients of a particular teaching method.

5 Testing our particular teaching materials showed that some children are very much influenced by the classroom presentation of Jesus. It also showed that suitable materials can help to eliminate misunderstanding, at the same time stimulating discussion and thought.

6 Future research on teaching about Jesus needs to explore in greater detail

- the use of religious language in the RE classroom with particular reference to children's understanding of claims made about Jesus by faith traditions
- how Key Stage 2 children develop their knowledge and understanding about Jesus. This may mean research that extends into Key Stage 1, or which explores the influence of home, family and/or faith community, or it may mean exploring the impact of Jesus in the media and popular culture (eg the UK Christmas).

- how far Key Stage 2 teachers feel prepared to teach about Jesus, including issues such as Son of God, and how far they can be helped to prepare for this in a realistic way, which recognises that many of them are responsible for delivering all the National Curriculum subjects plus RE to their class.

### **7 Overall**

The whole point of undertaking Phase 2 of this project was to see how, having identified problems in Phase 1, some steps, properly based on research and evaluation, could be taken to remedy them. The expectation was that the results would feed into those communities with an interest in the research findings – RE researchers and classroom professionals, Standing Advisory Councils on RE, faith communities, the educational and religious media etc. But equally, it was hoped that by means of the publication of the revised curriculum materials, practice at classroom level might improve further. ‘Raising standards’ has become a slightly tired mantra in education. But there is scope for raising standards in teaching about Jesus.

The Co-Directors of the project feel that this can be achieved and that this research has provided evidence-based suggestions for the way forward. But this is not, of course, the final word. More needs to be done, by ourselves and by others. But first there is much to consider and implement in what we have found here.



# Appendix 1

## Key Stage Two Questionnaire

(Please note that the original questionnaire included clip-art, more varied fonts, section breaks and greater space in which respondents could insert answers. The format has been adapted for this publication).

### Section A: About you

To help with the analysis of this questionnaire, please answer the following questions about yourself by ticking the appropriate box.

1. Are you...?

- Male
- Female

2. Which of the following religions (if any) are you a member of?

- Buddhism
- Christianity
- Hinduism
- Islam
- Judaism
- Sikhism
- Other (please specify)
- None

3. How often do you usually go to a place of worship (eg Church/Chapel/Synagogue/Mosque etc)

- Never
- Rarely (eg Weddings / Funerals)
- Sometimes (eg for major festivals such as Christmas/ Easter)
- Often (at least once a month)
- Very often (at least once a week)

If you would be willing to help us further in our research in a short interview, please write your class and your name here.

---

All names will be selected at random.

Remember, your answers will remain confidential and no one else will see what you have written.

### Section B: What do you know about the life of Jesus?

Using your knowledge and understanding of the life of Jesus, please answer all of the following questions if you can.

4. What does the Bible say about **the birth** of Jesus that makes Christians believe he is special?

---

5. Why do you think Jesus chose fishermen like Simon and Andrew to be his disciples?

---

6. Jesus often taught people using parables (stories). One of the parables he told was the parable of

---

What do you think this parable means? \_\_\_\_\_

7. According to the Bible, why did some people want to arrest and kill Jesus?

---

8. What do Christians celebrate on Easter Sunday?

---

9. Why is the cross an important symbol for Christians?

---

10. What do you think Christians mean when they say that Jesus is the 'Son of God'?

---

**Section C: What do people think about Jesus?**

**Please answer all questions in this section. If you do not know or are not sure about the answer to a question, please say so.**

11. In general I think Jesus: (please tick ONE box for each possible answer)

<b>In general I think Jesus...</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Not sure</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
is not important			
was the kind of person who cared for people			
died for me			
was a normal person			
tried to bring peace			
told people about God			
rose from the dead			
is hard to believe in			
told stories to make us better people			
loved everyone			
was sent by God			
was kind and generous			
was/is God			
was not real			
healed people			
was willing to lose his life for others			
was not the Son of God			
makes prayers come true			
is a bit confusing			
cares about me			

12. One thing I don't understand about Jesus is

---

13. What do you think was Jesus' most important message?

---

14. I think I have got most of my ideas about Jesus from: (please tick relevant boxes)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Place of worship (eg Church or Mosque) | <input type="checkbox"/> Family                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sunday school                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Religious leaders (eg Vicar or Imam)   | <input type="checkbox"/> School                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading the Bible or Qur'an            | <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers                    |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> RE lessons                  |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Collective Worship/Assembly |

- Books/Magazines/Newspapers
- TV/Video/Film
- Own beliefs
- Other

15. Please complete the sentences below:

In general, my family thinks Jesus.....

---

In general, my friends think Jesus.....

---

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire and for helping us with our research.**

## Appendix 2

### Key Stage Three Questionnaire

1. Are you...?
  - Male
  - Female
  
2. Which of the following religion (if any) are you a member of?
  - Buddhism
  - Christianity
  - Hinduism
  - Islam
  - Judaism
  - Sikhism
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
  - None
  
3. What is the most significant thing you have learnt about Jesus this term? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Which activity or task did you enjoy **most**? Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Which activity or task did you enjoy **least**? Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
6. What would you change about these teaching materials to make them better? Why?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
7. One thing I don't understand about Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
8. One thing I now understand better about Jesus is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
9. Do you think your opinion of Jesus has changed? (please tick the relevant box)
  - Yes
  - No
  - Not sure

10. In general I think Jesus as: (please tick ONE box for each possible answer)

In general I think Jesus...	Agree	Not sure	Disagree
is not important			
was the kind of person who cared for people			
died for me			
was a normal person			
tried to bring peace			
told people about God			
rose from the dead			
is hard to believe in			
told stories to make us better people			
loved everyone			
was sent by God			
was kind and generous			
was/is God			
was not real			
healed people			
was willing to lose his life for others			
was not the Son of God			
makes prayers come true			
is a bit confusing			
cares about me			

### Appendix 3

#### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

##### (a) Resurrection

1. Present the pupils with the picture of the empty tomb.
2. Ask: 'What might a Christian tell you about this picture?'  
Use gentle probing questions to ensure that all pupils are involved and provide full answers. At all times, use their names so that we can identify their responses in the transcript.
3. Present the pupils with the first laminated question card: 'Why do you think that some young people today find it difficult to understand the idea that Jesus rose from the dead?'
4. Read the question aloud and listen to answers.  
We are interested in finding out why some children have difficulties with the concept of resurrection.

##### (b) Miracles

1. Give the pupils the laminated 'Story of the paralysed man' cards. Read through the story.
2. Ask: What might a Christian tell you about this story?

3. Present the pupils with the second laminated question card: ‘Why do you think that some young people today find it difficult to understand the idea that Jesus performed miracles?’
4. Read the question aloud and listen to answers.  
We are interested in finding out why some children have difficulties with the concept of miracles.

**(c) Son of God**

1. Give the pupils the laminated ‘Truly this man was the Son of God’ card. Read the quotation.
2. Ask: What do you think Christians mean when they say that Jesus was the Son of God?
3. Present the pupils with the third laminated question card: ‘Why do you think that some young people today find it difficult to understand the idea that Jesus was/is the Son of God?’
5. Read the question aloud and listen to answers.  
We are interested in finding out why some children have difficulties with the concept of ‘Son of God’.

**(d) Conclusion**

1. Is there anything else you would like to say about difficulties which young people face when learning about Jesus?

## Appendix 4

**Final coding frame**

Knowledge	I don't know	
	Known details	
	Misconceptions	
Education	RE as information	
	RE as propaganda	
	RE as multi-cultural	
	RE as an opportunity to ask questions	
	RE as an opportunity to discuss	
	RE lessons enjoyed	
	RE lessons not enjoyed	
Belief	Being a believer	
	Influences on belief	Family influence
		Muslim influence
		Christian influence
	Credibility gap	Too fantastic
		No evidence
		Conflicts with other knowns
		The hidden agenda
		Alternatives
It was too long ago		

	Statement of belief		
	Not wanting to believe		
	Statement of disbelief		
Understanding	Who is Jesus	Jesus and God	Virgin birth
			Jesus as a miracle worker
			Jesus as God's agent
		The human Jesus	Jesus as a moral figure
			Jesus as special
			Just a normal person
			Relating to people
		Unexpected images	
		Expressing ideas	Explanations of theological ideas
	What miracles are for		
	Making links		
	Discerning the truth		
	Things that confound understanding	Confused by language	
		Confused by conflicting beliefs	
The confusion of others			
Things that are hard to understand			
	Believing and understanding		