

## Title

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**Religious Reading in a Secular Society:  
Learning for Life in a Liberal Democracy?**

## What this Study Contributes

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The research project investigated the education of 14-year-olds in five schools with a Christian ethos in order to evaluate how well they were prepared for life, work and citizenship in a secular liberal democracy.



## Team

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**Principal Investigator:** Dr Mark Pike (Leeds)

**Co-Investigator:** Prof Leslie Francis (Warwick)

## University

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University of Leeds

## Award

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Phase 1 Small Grant £42,076

## Research Partners

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The Emmanuel Schools Foundation, The Christian Schools Trust, Jacobus Fruytier Christian College, Apeldoorn, The Netherlands.

## Approach

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Ethnography, observation and semi-structured interviews were conducted with students and teachers alongside content analysis and a survey of over 1000 participants at five schools of a Christian ethos.

## Findings

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Project finished 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008 and the findings may be summarized as follows:

1. The schools studied possessed the religious resources to transform expectations and raise attainment while providing character education. The conviction that human beings are, in some sense, 'created in God's image' emerged as a theme of central importance.
2. Children and young people in these schools with a Christian-ethos engaged in a good deal of critical reading of 'religious' truth claims. All five schools shared a conviction that it was not enough to be effective and efficient or to focus only on achieving examination results and academic success. For these schools, education is about helping students consider the 'bigger picture'.
3. The focus upon the Bible in all the schools studied provided a common point of reference for the exploration of a range of moral and ethical issues as well as cultural and literary study.

Given the success of the schools in this study, their potential to influence practice in other schools should be recognised.

## Activities and Outcomes

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- Pike, M. 2009 'The Emmanuel Schools Foundation: sponsoring and transforming education at England's most improved academy', *Management in Education*, vol. 23, no 3, pp 139-143:  
<http://mie.sagepub.com/content/23/3/139.full.pdf+html?rss=1>.

## Further Information

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Access the project's final report here:

[http://www.religionandsociety.org.uk/uploads/docs/2010\\_01/1262795461\\_ESRCAHRCPIkeReport.pdf](http://www.religionandsociety.org.uk/uploads/docs/2010_01/1262795461_ESRCAHRCPIkeReport.pdf).