Context

- 1944 dual settlement
- 1988 ERA
  - compulsory weekly RE lessons (not RI)
  - daily acts of CW to be "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character"
- High number of schools non-compliant with the legislation
- Calls to review RE and CW
Key questions

◦ What place does Christianity occupy in primary school education?

◦ What is its role and function?

◦ How are CofE schools distinctive from non-confessional schools?
Research design

- 18 primary schools in the WM
  - 17 schools visited 2-3 times over one year
  - 1 school visited weekly over one year

- Non-participant observations
  - RE and CW/Assemblies
  - ...

- Semi-structured interviews
  - Senior management, teachers and pupils
Key findings

- **Christianity in CofE schools**
  - Ethos, CW and RE
  - Links with local CofE church

- **Christianity in non-confessional schools**
  - Ethos, CW and RE
  - Links with local CoE church

- **Construction of religion in RE**
  - World Religions Paradigm
  - Liberal Western Christian discourse
  - Christianity constructed as ‘true’ religion
Conclusions

° There can be little difference between VC CofE schools and non-confessional schools

° In some cases: paradoxes as some CofE schools eager to demonstrate inclusive ethos & some non-denominational eager to demonstrate compliance with law

° Non-confessional schools can remain ‘Christianised’ public spaces
  ° Reproduction of latent forms of liberal Protestantism
  ° Romanticised and moderate constructions of Christianity as a the norm against which other ‘world religions’ are compared
  ° In-group cultural norms (vs. ‘Others’)