The Inspectorate, Inspection, and Religious and Moral Education in Scottish Non-Denominational Secondary Schools, 1962 – 2020

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Abstract

The history of Religious and Moral Education (RME) as a subject within the Scottish secondary curriculum has been well-researched over the last six decades and more. Scholars have identified a range of factors and influences on its development. Scattered across this work is a recognition that Her (now His) Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) and individual inspectors have been influential in the development of RME. Much of this work recognises that a legal bar on the inspection of 'instruction in religion', enshrined in the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act and not lifted until 1981, was an influential limitation on the subject's development.

This study has set out to provide the first comprehensive analysis of the interplay between the activities of HMIE and the development of RME in Scottish non-denominational secondary schools from the 1960s until 2020. The study has sought to address two research questions connected to this overall aim. First, it aims to assess the extent to which and in what ways the work of HMIE has been a factor in the development of RME in Scottish secondary education between 1962 and 2020. Second, it examines what inspectorate documentation can tell us about the development of RME in Scottish secondary schools during this period.

This study is located within the discipline of history of education. It is a curriculum and educational governance history grounded in the objectivist interpretation of primary and secondary sources. The study is based on two broad groups of primary sources: official archival material and printed official sources. The former includes memos and correspondence to and between the Scottish Education Department and inspectorate officials. The latter includes the inspectorate's five national reports on RME published between 1986 and 2014 and school inspection documentation of fifty-four schools dating between 2016 and 2020.

This study's central thesis is that, overall, HMIE and its associated activities, including inspection, have been significant and important factors in the development of RME in Scottish secondary education since 1962. Grounded in historical and documentary research, this study qualifies this argument by demonstrating that inspectorate involvement was evident and substantial before the legal bar on inspection was lifted in 1981 and that in this period, inspectorate involvement was integral to the subject's development and

integration into national curricula reforms. This study also challenges existing scholarship around why the legal bar was removed. It demonstrates that improving the quality of RME provision was a central focus rather than examinations in the subject. Finally, the study also shows that after securing RME a position in the *5-14* and *Curriculum for Excellence* curricular schema, the inspectorate and school inspection have not been effective in continuing to secure positive developments for RME in relation to the extent and quality of provision in schools.

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When I decided to undertake a part-time PhD in 2017 whilst working full-time as a secondary RME and History teacher, I had no idea that I would be promoted to Depute Head Teacher in 2018, move on to a lectureship at the University of Glasgow in 2019, live through a global pandemic between 2020 and 2022, and move again to a senior lectureship at Queen Margaret University in 2023. All whilst experiencing the usual and unusual ups and downs of life. It would not have been possible to get to this point with this project without the support of others.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Aspects of this study have appeared in peer-reviewed publications in revised form:

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Signed: Stephen Craig Scholes

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List of Abbreviations

(A)CfE	(A) Curriculum for Excellence
ATRES	Association for Teachers of Religious Education in Scotland
CAB	Curriculum and Assessment Board
CER	Continuing Engagement Report
CIG	Curriculum for Excellence Implementation Group
CMRE	Committee on Moral and Religious Education
COSLA	Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
CRPB	Curriculum Review Programme Board
EEI	Educational Effectiveness and Improvement
EIS	Educational Institute for Scotland
ELTRE	*Effective Learning and Teaching in Scottish Primary and Secondary Schools: Religious Education. A Report by HM Inspectors of Schools* (1994)
ER	Evidence Report
ERIC	Education Resources Information Centre
FUR	Follow-Up Report
GTCS	General Teaching Council for Scotland
HGIOS	*How Good is Our School?*

HGIOS4	*How Good is Our School?* (4th Edition)
HMI	Her/His Majesty's Inspector
HMIE	Her/His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education
HSDU	Higher Still Development Unit
IR	Inspection Report
IRRME	*Religious and Moral Education 3-18* (2014)
LTRE	*Learning and Teaching in Religious Education: An Interim Report by HM Inspectors of Schools* (1986)
LTS	Learning and Teaching Scotland
MERU	Management of Educational Resources Unit
NIF	National Improvement Framework
NRS	National Records of Scotland
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
QI	Quality Indicator
RBV	Religious, Beliefs and Values Award
RDG(s)	Review and Development Group(s)
RE	Religious Education
RERC	Religious Education – Roman Catholic

REP	*Religious and Moral Education - A Portrait of Current Practice in Scottish Secondary Schools* (2008)
RI	Religious Instruction
RME	Religious and Moral Education
RMPS	Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies
RS	Religious Studies
(S)CCC	(Scottish) Consultative Committee on the Curriculum
SCCORE	Scottish Central Committee on Religious Education
SCET	Scottish Council for Educational Technology
SCMRE	*Suggestions for Curriculum Material in Religious Education* (1985)
SCOTVEC	Scottish Vocational Education Council
SEB	Scottish Examination Board
SED	Scottish Education Department
SIF	Summarised Inspection Findings
SJCR(M)E	Scottish Joint Committee on Religious (and Moral) Education
SO	Scottish Office
SOED	Scottish Office Education Department
SOEID	Scottish Office Education and Industry Department

SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SQRE	*Standards and Quality in Secondary Schools: Religious and Moral Education, 1995-2000. A Report by HM Inspectorate of Education* (2001)
STACS	Standard Tables and Charts

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Various aspects of the development of Religious and Moral Education (RME) as part of the intended and enacted curricula of Scottish non-denominational secondary schools in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have already been written about. Important milestones and key trends, such as the publication of major national reports, have been charted, and aspects of changing approaches in classrooms and schools have been investigated (Fairweather & MacDonald, 1992; McKinney & Conroy, 2007; McKinney, 2012; Nixon, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2013; 2015; Grant & Matemba, 2013; Matemba, 2013; 2014a; 2014b; 2015; Scholes, 2020; Barnes *et al*. 2023).

Across the scholarship, there has been a focus on the factors that have influenced the development of the curriculum and the extent and quality of the provision of RME in schools. This concern, in part, is a response to the potential 'marginalisation' of RME; as Schreiner (2023: 147) puts it, 'a failure of acknowledgement, a marginal place in the curriculum and a lack of training and support for teachers'. While this concern is not unique to Scotland, the particular factors identified by scholars include limitations in relation to curriculum space, resources and staffing (Anderson & Nixon, 2010; Matemba, 2013; 2014b), the quality of teachers' classroom practices (Conroy *et al*. 2013; Grant & Matemba, 2013), the content of the subject (Nixon, 2008, 2009, 2012 & 2015; Matemba, 2015; Scholes, 2020), the issue of examinations and external certification (*ibid*; Matemba, 2014a & 2014b) and school inspection. The last of these factors is the focus of this study.

1.2 Focus

School inspection and the other activities of HM Inspectorate of Education concerning RME in Scotland have long been highlighted as important factors in the development of the subject. This study aims to provide the first focused examination of the relationship between the inspectorate, inspection, and the

development of RME in Scottish secondary schools. It will examine and expand on the scattered scholarly insights to date.

Those who have commented on the topic first note the legal situation regarding inspection and RME as an essential starting point (Appendix 1). From 1872 to 1981, inspectors were legally prohibited from inspecting religious education. As stated in Section 66 of the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act,

> Every public school, and every school which is subject to inspection, shall be open at all times to the inspection of any of Her Majesty's inspectors, but it shall be no part of the duties of such inspector to inquire into any instruction in religious subjects, or to examine any scholar in religious knowledge or in any religious subject or book.

The prohibition, as it became understood by the inspectorate and educational authorities, extended beyond the inspection of individual schools to all issues concerned with religious education in state-funded schools and remained in place until 1981. Scholars have argued that the absence of inspectorate involvement and oversight through the inspection of schools was a significant factor leading to limitations in the development of the RME curriculum and quality provision in schools (Conroy *et al.,* 2013; Matemba, 2014a). Other inspectorate activities have also been considered significant in securing the subject's position in national curriculum developments and place in schools' curricular offerings. In particular, scholars have identified the role of specific inspectors in supporting developments in RME within the context of national curriculum reform programmes (McKinney, 2012; Conroy *et al.,* 2013; Matemba, 2015).

1.3 Research Aim and Questions

The overarching aim of this thesis is to analyse the development of RME in Scotland, focusing specifically on its relationship with Her (now His) Majesty's Inspectorate of Education between 1962 and 2020. 1962 was chosen as the starting point for this study to provide scope for charting the developments prior to the publication of the Millar Report in 1972, often taken as the starting point of historical accounts of RME. And 2020 was chosen as the closing year as it

reflects the chronological limits of the evidence base. Two research questions provide the orientating points for this study:

1. To what extent and in what ways has the work of HM Inspectorate of Education been a factor in the development of Religious and Moral Education in Scottish secondary education between 1962 and 2020?

2. What does inspectorate documentation tell us about the development of Religious and Moral Education in Scottish non-denominational secondary schools between 1962 and 2020?

1.4 Thesis Outline

After this opening chapter, the thesis is organised into four broad sections. The first section, consisting of three chapters, critically synthesises the background literature relevant to the research questions. Chapter 2 offers a discussion of the key concepts and ideas explored in this thesis. Chapter 3 will consider the research on how curriculum, inspection, and inspectorates are known to interact with each other and how they develop, providing the empirical and theoretical background for the study. Thereafter, the fourth chapter will offer an original account of the development of the curriculum and its interplay with the inspection of education in Scotland since the 1960s.

The following section, comprising the fifth chapter, will discuss the approach adopted to conduct the research presented in this thesis. It will locate this as a study of curriculum and educational governance history within the discipline of the history of education. After explaining the approach to interpretation, the chapter will explore the primary and secondary sources deployed in this study, considering the archival and printed official material in detail.

The final section of this thesis comprises the findings from the historical research that underpins the study in four chapters. Chapter 6 presents a new account of the historical relationship between RME, the inspectorate and inspection based on published primary sources. This is further developed in Chapter 7 through an analysis of archival material. Chapters 6 and 7 address the

first research question in detail. In Chapter 8, the focus shifts to five national reports on RME published by HM Inspectorate between 1986 and 2014. This chapter addresses the second research question through a thorough and comparative investigation of each report. Chapter 9 offers a further response to the second research question by discussing an analysis of the documentation produced through the inspection of individual schools between August 2016 and August 2020.

Chapter 10 rounds off the thesis with a concluding discussion. The discussion pulls together key findings from across the preceding four chapters, acknowledges broader limitations of the study and looks to where future research could focus.

1.5 Originality and Significance

This study's overarching claim to originality is that it is the first study of Scottish RME to focus specifically on the interplay and interactions with the activities of HM Inspectorate of Education over an extended chronological period. Previous extended work specifically on RME in secondary schools has laid important groundwork for the development of RME in Scotland more broadly but has had different priorities. For example, Matemba's (2011) doctoral thesis focused on the development of RME in Scotland but offered a comparative study with Malawi and considered inspection in passing. Nixon's (2012b) thesis was concerned very specifically with the place of philosophy in RME curriculum content and pedagogical approaches. Beyond the comments made in the works noted in Section 1.2 above, published scholarship on secondary RME in Scotland has tended to consist of summaries and provocations, such as those in the five editions of *Scottish Education* and other textbooks (Rodger, 2003 & 1999; McKinney & Conroy 2007; Nixon, 2008 & 2013; Robinson & Franchi, 2018, Barnes *et al.*, 2023) or specific studies of assessment (Grant & Matemba, 2013), curriculum priorities (Nixon, 2009 & 2012a; Scholes, 2020) and how the law, specifically the right to withdraw from the subject, interacts with practice in schools (Nixon, 2018). Similarly, the school inspection documentation explored in Chapter 9 of this study has been studied as an example of the interactions

between the law and RME in a special issue article for the *British Journal of Religious Education* (Scholes, 2022).

Beyond the original contribution of being the first extended study on the specific topics of inspection, the inspectorate, and RME, the nature of the evidence deployed in this study also adds to the claim for originality. Specifically, this study has used archival material to investigate the research questions more thoroughly. This material has not been featured in any scholarly work on the subject to date. This material, consisting of official minutes and communications from the Committee on Moral and Religious Education (1968-1972) and the Scottish Education Department (1962-1999), offers new evidence that the inspectorate and inspectors were involved with RME prior to 1981 and after in a range of ways. The archival evidence sits alongside a thorough re-reading of key publications, explored in Chapters 6 and 8, and a systematic exploration of a sample of the documentation produced as part of the school inspection process by the inspectorate. Again, this thoroughgoing exploration of documentary evidence is the first of its kind for RME in Scotland, focusing specifically on inspection and the inspectorate.

This study's core argument is that, overall, the inspectorate and inspection have been a significant and important factor in the development of RME in Scottish secondary education since 1962. Specifically, this study demonstrates that this involvement was evident and substantial prior to the bar on inspectorate involvement being lifted in 1981. Moreover, and most importantly, in this period, the activities of the inspectorate and specific inspectors were key to RME being secured as core to and fully integrated into the intended curricula of Scottish secondary schools. The study also highlights that the primary motivations for removing the bar on inspection were centred on ensuring a positive place for the subject in schools. In the period following 1981, as RME is securely positioned in the national curriculum projects of *5-14* and *Curriculum for Excellence* (*CfE*), this study finds that the inspectorate and school inspection are not effective in securing positive developments for RME in relation to the extent and quality of provision in schools.

In direct response to the second research question, this study also demonstrates that the documentation produced by the inspectorate is a rich source for developing an understanding of the development of RME in Scotland since the 1960s. As shown below, national reports, individual school inspection

reports, and associated items require careful navigation and appreciation of how they are constructed. However, systematic and comparative analysis of these documents does provide insights into national curriculum policy developments and its enactment.

The significance of this study can be asserted through three key points. First, it enriches the historical account of the development of RME in Scottish secondary education. As noted in later sections, historical research into changes and continuities in education should remain a priority. This study makes a much-needed contribution to the literature on Scottish RME. In contrast to research on other jurisdictions, notably England, research on the Scottish situation is particularly limited (Matemba, 2014a; Freathy & Parker, 2010). This point of comparison also highlights that this work is significant as it lays the foundations for further comparative work at a time when international knowledge sharing about religious education has been a priority area for researchers (Schreiner & Schweitzer, 2021). However, without context-specific work that can be brought into dialogue with research from different territories, this would not be possible. This study is a vital starting point for such endeavours.

Second, this study's significance extends beyond scholarship on RME and offers a case study of how inspection and inspectorates interact with curriculum change initiatives and development. For Scottish-specific developments, this is important to understand as national curriculum policies have no legal force behind them in Scotland and never have (Scott, 2018). Therefore, it is the interactions of a range of organisations, groups and individuals that shape curricula development and enactment over time. This study demonstrates the need to take the role of the inspectorate, inspectors, and inspection seriously in historical and contemporary analyses of the Scottish curricula. Furthermore, this study highlights, in broad step with the literature on policy and curriculum enactment, that what is intended to happen and what does happen needs to be carefully considered based on a thorough analysis of evidence. The chronological sweep of this study does, however, draw attention to the need to be aware that such interactions do change over time and that context should encourage more nuanced consideration of the particular dynamics under consideration.

The mix of documentary sources deployed in this study is significant as it highlights the opportunities that such materials offer to researchers. As will be discussed in Chapter 10, the archival material explored here highlights

tremendous opportunities to develop further historical research on RME in Scotland. Moreover, the systematic exploration of subject reports and school inspection documentation with a specific focus demonstrates that more refined understandings of curriculum developments and changes in classroom practice can be developed through documentary research.

Chapter 2: Key Concepts

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a critical discussion and a shared understanding of the concepts, ideas and phenomena under examination in this study, providing points of reference and orientation. It is acknowledged here that the definition of 'concept' and any subsequent articulation of something identified as a concept is open to challenge and critique depending on context (Casasanto & Lupyan, 2015). For Curtis *et al.* (2014), this is an important consideration in research regarding education as its interdisciplinary nature opens any concept or idea to multiple interpretations.

Key terms and ideas, for example, may be contested not only between but also within different disciplines. However, recognising these challenges, Humes (1986: 16) provides an orientation for this chapter by suggesting instead that we can see any discussion of a concept as an attempt to 'represent reasonable interpretations which can serve to illuminate'. In selecting the concepts included below, the research questions provided the primary stimuli, and the selection has been expanded and clarified via a subsequent review of the available literature. The concepts discussed below are non-denominational schooling, Religious Education, curriculum, inspection, governance, and within that policy, and accountability, with a focus on both performativity and surveillance. The discussion of the concepts has paid attention to the context considered in this study, namely Scottish education over the last sixty years.

2.2 Non-Denominational Schools

It is important to understand that state-funded schools in Scotland have long been identified as either non-denominational or denominational with respect to their religious affiliation. Scholars highlight the significance of the 1918 Education (Scotland) Act, which is seen as the statutory stepping-off point for these distinct approaches to both schooling and RE therein (McKinney & McCluskey, 2019).

Since 1918, a denominational school in the Scottish context can be understood as referring to a school which has an affiliation to a particular faith, supported by the associated Church or religious hierarchy, but is still funded by the state and governed by local education authorities in line with associated legislation. In Scotland, this is and has been mostly, though not exclusively, Roman Catholic schools (McKinney, 2018; Franchi, 2018). However, this study is focused on what, following 1918, became known as non-denominational schools.

A non-denominational school is understood to be one without an explicit religious affiliation, subject to national legislation, administered by local authorities and funded by the state. This, however, can be complicated further, as non-denominational schools have and continue to be, or are at least expected to be, responding to the needs of their local community. Historically, this could have meant that in a Presbyterian locale, a school would have engaged with and encultured the corresponding Protestant beliefs and ethics in practice (SCCORE, 1978). More recently, particularly in more ethnically diverse areas, this may mean that a school today embraces a plurality of faith and non-faith-based influences. Therefore, non-denominational does not always strictly mean non-religious. Rather, non-denominational schools could best be described as secular in relation to issues of curriculum and teaching (McKinney & McCluskey, 2017; Matemba, 2014a).

2.3 Religious Education

Religious Education (RE) is not a clear-cut term that refers unproblematically to a particular phenomenon. Rather, RE can be variously understood as an aspect of human experience throughout the life course, found in both public and private expressions of distinctly religious practices or as a constituent part of education, spanning secular and faith-based endeavours (Parker *et al.* 2019: Gearon, 2014). In this study, the focus is on RE as a school subject within the curriculum of the non-denominational secondary schools that have been and continue to be a constituent of the national public education system in Scotland.

Scholarship on what became, in its various contemporary guises, Religious Education in Scottish schools has tended to focus on select historical milestones. In some accounts, there is a reaching back to pre-modern institutions and

practices, suggesting a lineage extending to medieval monasticism or sixteenth-century catechetical education (Nixon, 2012a & 2012b; Lyall, 2013 & 2016). Yet, this is somewhat ahistorical and creates a mythical genealogy wherein more recent RE becomes a direct heir of the religious instruction offered to children in the elementary, song, grammar or writing schools of the period (Holmes, 2015; Devine, 1999; Smout, 1990; Paterson, 1983). Instead, as scholars have identified, the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act is a much more concrete starting point. This Act initiated the beginnings of a national system of elementary education via a process whereby the plethora of educational providers, in the form of Church, burgh, parish, charity and private institutions, could be transferred to the state (McKinney & Humes, 2021). The significance of this was that Religious Education, at this point still called Religious Instruction (RI) and confessional in nature, was entangled in a system where the state now held increasing authority over education (Fairweather & MacDonald, 1992; McKinney, 2012 & 2019; Matemba, 2014a).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, international developments, namely the inauguration of the Religious Education Association in the United States of America in 1903, influenced both considerations as to the purpose and content of Religious Education within education systems and even began to shift the nomenclature from Religious Instruction or, in some places Religious Knowledge, to Religious Education (Franchi *et al.*, 2016). In Scotland, the shift from 'instruction' to 'education' is documented from at least as early as 1916, and in this instance 'religious' also appears alongside 'moral'. As the 1916 Educational Institute of Scotland's (EIS) annual report noted regarding the establishment of a sub-committee 'to deal with the methods and materials of moral and religious education…' (EIS *Annual Report 1916*, Quoted in Stevenson, 2015b: 84). From this point on Religious Education in Scotland would variously be referred to using these terms interchangeably, with 'instruction in religion', usually phrased as 'religious instruction', relegated primarily to refer to the subject in legal instruments by at least the 1960s.

The presence of 'moral' is also significant, with the subject in non-denominational schools being referred to as Religious and Moral Education (RME), where it was not studied as part of a course for examination. However, it should be noted that, learning in RME has been and can be certificated by exam boards where schools opt to have pupils complete aspects of exam board

specifications and associated assessments, such as the individual units belonging to a full award. Some have argued that the term RME originates from the *Millar Report* of 1972, but it has had currency in Scotland in the manner described above since at least 1967 (Ruthven, 1968; McKinney & McCluskey, 2017; Conroy *et al.*, 2013). However, the *Millar Report* certainly normalised the term RME as referring to the (non-examined) subject in non-denominational schools. RME is the focus of this study. Where the term is used in the rest of this study, it refers to this specific description. Religious Education (RE) will be used to refer to the field of research and to the subject when there is a need to also make reference to denominational provision alongside RME. RE or 'Religious Education' may be used in quoted material, but this, unless noted, refers to RME as described above.

It is important to note here that 'moral' as used in RME was and is concerned more with education regarding issues of morality rather than a more holistic focus on moral formation (Kincaid, 1991). That 'moral' has maintained an association with RME in the Scottish context is perhaps best explained by the longstanding conflation of religion and morality in (once) Christian societies and the curricula of schools (Withrington, 2001 & 1983; Bruce, 2014; Gatherer, 2004; Brown, 1997). As Alex Rodger (1982: 150), a then lecturer in Religious Education at the University of Dundee, explained in the early 1980s:

> There is thus a convergence of the moral and the religious impulses at the point where the justification of morality is sought and questions are asked about its place within the nature of things. Whereas moral education often stops short of such questions, they are unavoidable within religious education.

As Grimmitt (1987) highlighted and Nixon (2008) notes more recently regarding the trend of invoking philosophy in RME in Scotland, the staying power of 'moral' might stem from practitioners' attempts to keep the subject popular and relevant in the context of increasing secularisation over the last half century (Brown, 2009). Such attempts are potentially necessitated too by the statutory framework that insists on the universal provision of RME for all children in state-funded schools. Such a situation, in step with Nixon's (2018) discussion on the right to withdraw from RME, might seem anachronistic.

Since the 1960s, RME in Scottish non-denominational secondary schools can be understood as adopting aims and approaches that are best described as non-confessional. As numerous scholars have commented, a broad dividing line can be drawn between school-based confessional and non-confessional RE (Hand, 2006). Confessional RE serves the purpose of contributing to faith formation within a particular tradition. Since the mid-1990s, the curriculum guidance available for Roman Catholic schools has led to such provision in Scotland being labelled more explicitly, and this is referred to in this study as Religious Education Roman Catholic (RERC), as it is now referred to under the current curriculum, *Curriculum for Excellence* (*CfE*). Non-confessional Religious Education is that which seeks to explain, explore, and gain insights from religion without the aim of inculcation into a particular faith (Jackson, 2018, 2012 & 1997; Stern, 2007; Grimmitt, 2000a & 1987). However, non-confessional does not necessarily mean a learning experience that does not have an affective or personal dimension. The non-confessional RE, specifically RME, envisaged in curricular and professional guidance in Scotland over the last five decades aligns well with Jackson's (2018) description of one version of the non-confessional approach. Contrasting it with the objective study of religion as a socio-scientific phenomenon originating from university Religious Studies contexts, Jackson (2018: 8) explains that an alternative non-confessional approach to RE is one that:

> aims to provide accurate information about religions (and sometimes other world views) together with opportunities for students to discuss what they have learned, with one another and with the teacher…adopting methods which aim to promote impartiality, rather than detachment or neutrality… [and] the possibility of contributing to students' personal and social development.

Such characterisation of RE has been variously understood as emerging from the results of secularisation or dechristianisation, plurality and globalisation shaping culture, demography, communication and contact with, and responses to peoples and issues (Jackson, 2018; Avram & Dronkers, 2013). Here, Bråten (2013; 2015) also draws our attention to the need to understand that such drivers of change have incorporated global and local patterns of influence, impacting Religious Education nationally, within individual schools, within

individual classrooms and the experiences of individual teachers and students. Significantly, this creates a dynamic environment for non-confessional RME in Scotland as various actors at various levels at various times have responded to and shaped the subject in light of such developments.

An understanding of non-confessional RME in Scottish non-denominational secondary schools is not complete without a consideration of the place of examinations and certificated learning. Labelled Religious Studies (RS) from 1982 to refer to the Ordinary, Standard and Higher Grade qualifications and, then, Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies (RMPS) since 1999, examinations have shaped RME in schools. For example, attention has been drawn to their role in providing the subject with an enhanced academic image, opportunities to market the subject to pupils and the way in which certification has been used within RME to develop the curriculum (Scholes, 2020, Conroy *et al.*, 2013; Nixon, 2012a & 2008a). The developments in certificated RME provision and its relationship with RME provision across the secondary curriculum will be an important area for consideration in this study.

RE, then, as understood in this study, has been shaped by historical and contemporary changes from within and beyond the Scottish education system. RE, or more specifically, RME, as explored in this study, is a school subject, and its provision is legally mandated and embedded in national curriculum developments as a core area of learning. It is taught in non-denominational schools in a non-confessional way, developing as such over the last six decades. Moreover, formal accreditation in the form of examinations is not just a pathway for pupils that shares a similar nomenclature but rather a potentially significant component of RME provision itself in the curriculum of Scottish schools.

2.4 Curriculum and Syllabi

Curriculum is a challenging concept to pin down succinctly, especially when considering the concept over a considerable span of time, as is the case in this study. The existence of numerous curriculum development projects over the last fifty years in Scottish education is both complex and evidently 'never-ending' (Hartley & Roger, 2000: 378). These will be unpacked in detail in Chapter 4.

What is important at this point is to provide some clarity regarding the ideas and practices that are considered in this study as defining curriculum.

Following Nieveen and Kuiper (2012: 359-360), I contend that curriculum is both rightly seen 'as document' and 'as process'. There is both the curriculum as created and communicated by its authors and architects and that which is put into practice, a 'theoretical curriculum' and a 'lived curriculum in schools' (Priestley, 2018: 901). Curricula, understood as both imagined and implemented, are composed of aims, directives and outcomes that can refer variously and with varying levels of detail to overarching high-level framings, rationales and justifications, descriptions of content, processes, and desired outputs (Nieveen & Kuiper, 2012). However, as Van den Akker (2003) reminds us, such a clear-cut framing may only suggest interconnectedness and coherence and hide epistemic fragilities and inconsistencies in implementation. Indeed, as Nieveen and Kuiper (2012: 362) continue, when considering the curriculum, there is a need, when seeking to explore how it is shaped and responded to as is central to this study, to explore what the 'ideal', 'perceived' and 'experiential' encounters of the curriculum are and have been as gauges of the curriculum as 'intended', 'implemented' and 'attained' respectively. A broad conception of curriculum, such as this, affords discussion of aims, practices and outputs in relation to both how they are articulated in available documentation and how they are enacted. In this study, any discussion of enactment will, of course, be determined by the available written evidence, such as school inspection documentation. As Priestley (2018) highlights, this all occurs at various levels within an education system, and this is acknowledged here, too, for curriculum in general and for RME in particular (Bråten, 2013 & 2015).

The curriculum in Scottish secondary schools over the last sixty years has changed considerably and is charted in detail in Chapter 4. In the period up until the early 1990s it is difficult to speak of *a* curriculum in the secondary sector. Rather, the curriculum as text was in the form of guidance from the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum (CCC) and other subject-specific associations and driven from the top-down by the demands of the syllabi of certificated courses from the Scottish Examination Board (SEB). Here, it is worth noting the distinction between curriculum and syllabus. Scholars such as Rocha (2021) have offered alternative visions of the notion of a syllabus, but for this study, it is sufficient to explain a syllabus as the list of content and specifications set by an

examination board or authority. Such prescriptions are aligned with the knowledge and skills that would be subsequently assessed, usually via an examination.

A more clearly defined curriculum (at least in terms of curriculum as text) was introduced into the first two years of secondary school with the advent of *5-14* in the early 1990s. This curriculum covered the primary education phase through to the end of the second year of secondary education, with its title reflecting the age range it covered. However, the SEB exam syllabi very much continued to hold sway and directed curriculum delivery in the middle and final years of secondary schooling into the twenty-first century. Indeed, as will be detailed in Chapter 4 below, new qualification pathways were developed for implementation in the 2000s for learners in the middle and final years of secondary education. Not a complete curriculum framework as would follow with *CfE*.

A rather abrupt break occurred with the dawning of *CfE* and its implementation from 2010 onwards. Despite an infrastructure (material and cultural) that drew a sharp distinction between the examined and non-examined, *CfE* extended the curriculum – again, at least as text - from ages 3 to 18. This brought that which was once the domain of the exam board into alignment with the broader aims and structures of the curriculum. This point will be significant later in terms of how RME interacted with inspection in the period from 2010 to 2020, especially as *CfE* can be understood as both curriculum and policy.

2.5 Inspection and Inspectorates

This study's originality lies partly in its emphasis on the interplay between RE and inspection. The concept of the inspection of education in this study includes both the inspection of schools itself and the work of inspectorates and their agents, the inspectors, in other activities that are concerned with the curriculum and the work of schools. This includes, for example, the providing of professional advice and guidance and contributions to policy formation. The existing literature on inspection is largely quiet on this later point. However, more recent work is highlighting the wider role that inspectorates have as actors

in education systems in relation to governance, policy, and different understandings of accountability (Grek *et al*. 2015).

The focus on both inspection and the wider activities of the inspectorate in this study is justifiable due to the dynamics of the Inspectorate within the Scottish education system over the last sixty years. The development of the Scottish inspectorate has seen inspectors lead on and contribute to various other activities within the system in their formal capacity as HM Inspectors beyond that of school site visits and assessments (Humes, 1986). This is recognised here and demonstrated throughout the study, but it is important to acknowledge the dynamic at the outset to ensure that the fullest account of the impact of the inspection of secondary schooling on RME is provided.

During the period under consideration in this study, the official nomenclature of the Inspectorate in Scotland has shifted. From its origins in the early nineteenth century, the Inspectorate's full title was and continued to be HM Inspectorate of Schools (Bone, 1968; Humes, 1986). As the Inspectorate was recast as an executive agency in 2001, the Inspectorate was rebranded as HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) (Weir, 2003). Since July 2011, the Inspectorate has officially been a constituent part of Education Scotland, another executive agency that combines both curriculum development oversight and the Inspectorate (Hutchison, 2018). Whilst Education Scotland is the official title of the current incarnation of the Inspectorate, HMIE retains currency in the profession as a term of reference. For ease, this study will refer to the 'inspectorate' when making reference to HM Inspectorate of Schools (1840-2000), HM Inspectorate of Education (2001-2010) or Education Scotland (2011-present) and will use the more specific terminology where specific points demand it. Inspectors themselves have been labelled HM Inspectors, accompanied by various modifiers at different times to indicate rank, status, and portfolio within the inspectorate over the years, for example, HM Chief Inspector (Humes, 1986). Under Education Scotland, HM Inspector is a more ubiquitous title, and roles are less differentiated by title though still by remit. The generic term inspector(s) will be utilised in this study unless an individual or role is relevant and demands explicit consideration.

2.6 Governing Education

In historical and contemporary contexts, education, and especially schooling, has been and continues to be an issue inseparable from the politics of the day. Indeed, the inspectorate and inspection have been most carefully studied when it has been considered in relation to debates and discussions of the political settlements, processes and actors surrounding schooling and education in Scotland (Humes, 1986 & 1994; McPherson & Raab, 1987; Grek & Lindgren, 2015). This study both acknowledges this and contends, in line with existing international scholarship, that inspection and inspection must be understood as aspects of the governance of education (Grek & Lindgren, 2015; Ozga *et al.*, 2011; Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

Research on the relationship between the political arena and education has posited that what was once the preserve of the governments of nation-states is now demonstrably a field of policy ideation, contestation, formation, and promulgation that is characterised by an increasing number of actors, organisations, and institutions (Clarke, 2015; Ozga *et al.*, 2011). In short, education policy is not exclusively the preserve of governments acting alone. Rather, education policy is constructed in concert with and in opposition to multifarious agendas at local, national, and international levels. This evolution away from a national government setting and charting the course for education towards a negotiated settlement amongst many players is seen as a shift from government to governance.

For Scottish schooling and this study, the concept of governance is significant in that it draws our attention to the need to ensure that the analysis of inspection and the inspectorate's role in relation to RME is considered as a potentially dynamic and collaborative one and not simply hierarchical and unilateral (Baxter *et al.*, 2015; Ozga *et al.*, 2013).

2.6.1 Policy

The governance of education is focused principally on the matter of policy, but as contemporary scholarship highlights, there are multiple dimensions to policy in education spheres that demand attention (Singh *et al.*, 2013; Ball *et al.*, 2012;

Rizvi & Lingard, 2010; Ball, 1993). Chiefly, for this study, policy is recognised not simply as a document providing directive or aspirational information for education. Rather, here, policy is understood to mean the governance ambition for an educational issue or area. This includes the ongoing work of ideation, consultation, narrative construction, and marketing that goes on to produce and refine the ambition and communicate it, usually via an official and agreed text(s). The generation and communication of a governance ambition are variously influenced by the policy community and networks of decision-makers, influencers, and obstructers at the macro (national and international) level. As the governance ambition is cemented in texts and other media, education policy subsequently becomes a matter of interpretation at the various levels within the system. This might be at the level of the local education authority, the school or the classroom, with different professionals and stakeholders adopting different dispositions towards the policies that shape their interpretations of them and how they take or do not take the policy forward in those contexts (Wahlström & Sundberg, 2018; Singh *et al.*, 2013; Ball *et al.* 2011). As Basil Bernstein put it, beyond the formulation and communication of the governance ambition, policy is 'recontextualisation' (Singh *et al.* 2013).

Bernstein also draws our attention to why considerations of policy, or governance ambitions, are important to discussions of the curriculum and practice in schools. As Rizvi and Lingard (2010) explore, Bernstein identified the three core components of schooling as the curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation and that their interconnected nature renders each individual domain susceptible to disruption if there is a change in any of the others. Therefore, in a context where governance ambitions directly affect these domains at various points and in various ways, policy needs to be taken seriously when thinking about how inspection and RME will have interacted over the last six decades. As noted above, this is particularly true of the more recent decades of the period under consideration in this study and certainly with the introduction of *CfE*. While CfE, as captured in an ever-increasing plethora of documentation, is a curriculum for schools in Scotland, it is also a governance ambition. There is and has never been any legal force behind any curriculum project in Scotland, though there is legislation mandating the provision of some form of Religious Instruction in schools (Scott, 2018 & 2003). Rather, *CfE* is ultimately a governance ambition. It

is something that is intended by the Scottish government and other vested interests, such as the inspectorate and Education Scotland, to be implemented.

2.7 Accountability

The lack of a statutory impetus to drive forward governance ambitions has and continues to necessitate other strategies for achieving the envisaged outcomes in Scotland in relation to the curriculum. These strategies, including inspection, can be captured under the broad label of accountability. In this study, the concept of accountability will work around two central ideas posited by Poulson (1996).

First, accountability is understood here as referring to the ways that control is exerted over policy implementers, specifically teachers and schools, in this study. Studies have highlighted how governance ambitions are driven forward through accountability measures as they work to ensure that policies and policy actors are producing the desired outcomes and attempt to avoid spaces for deviation from policy directives (*ibid*). Inspection and, increasingly, the use of data (e.g. attainment statistics) are the principal accountability strategies utilised in education (Ozga, 2012). These notions have largely been inherited and adapted from the private sector, modelled on the ideas of auditing and checking and encouraging comparison and competition (Keddie, 2013; Power, 2005; Ball, 1997; Rose, 1991). For example, as Gillies (2007: 25) notes, the Scottish Inspectorate's approach to inspection between 2001 and 2010, guided by exemplifications of expectations and descriptions of 'excellence', was directly influenced by frameworks from the European Foundation for Quality Management.

Second, it is also recognised here that accountability is not a fool-proof guarantee that a policy will be implemented successfully, implemented as envisaged or even implemented at all. As Poulson (1996: 592) explains, 'imposed requirements may be transformed within institutions and by individuals in accordance with value systems and beliefs.' Here, and in line with the more recent work of Biesta *et al*. (2015) in relation to teacher agency, it is recognised that the interpretations and implementations of policy are variously affected by context and individuals in ways that cannot be completely planned for or

controlled. This is not to deny that accountability is a feature of policy recontextualisation but that the existence of accountability measures, namely inspection, do not in themselves lead to the achievement of specified curriculum, pedagogy or assessment developments coming to fruition. This point is developed further below as performativity is considered and how, for this study, the idea of surveillance is a useful concept for understanding how inspection and RE have interacted.

2.7.1 Performativity

Discussions of inspection and accountability in the context of education often utilise the metaphor of the panopticon, as developed by Foucault, to analyse the interactions between accountability measures and those they are holding to account. For Foucault (1977), Jeremy Bentham's plan for a circular inspection house, the panopticon, was a useful metaphor to explain the operation of socio-political power to control society at large. The panopticon was envisaged as a circular building that suggested the eternal presence of supervising individuals. The supervisors were supervising those deemed to require supervision to elicit required behaviours. The supervisors themselves may at any time be present or, equally, may not be present. The supervised could not tell, and therefore, as the plan suggested, the supervised would behave as if they were supervised. For subsequent Foucauldian-inspired analyses of education, this has been a useful image for thinking about how inspection works. In short, because inspectors could inspect, teachers and schools would work in ways which would produce the results required for a successful inspection outcome and thus fulfil governance ambitions (Perryman *et al.*, 2018; Page, 2017a; Perryman, 2009).

Panopticism, meaning the permanent threat of external supervision, can lead to what is called performativity. For Ball (2003: 216), performativity is 'a technology… that employs judgements, comparisons and displays'. It is something that people and organisations do as they attempt to 'stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organisation within a field of judgement'. Thus, a panoptic perspective on inspection suggests that what is expected from governance ambitions is achieved through the threat of being found not to be doing, to be doing it poorly or the

potential benefits of being found to be complying. As such, this study recognises that performativity can be both a last resort and a strategy for success. However, as Perryman (2010) highlights, the nature of that success could be narrowly defined and recognised as success in relation to very particular and imposed measures and gauges. Indeed, Perryman *et al*. (2018: 149) also highlight this more broadly, as 'it is through the in-school culture of performativity and accountability that conformativty, discipline and normalisation are achieved, as teachers learn to police themselves and to perform the successful inculcation of the normalised behaviour.' The concept of performativity here is something that informs this study as it highlights the need for caution in relation to the inferences that can be drawn from school inspection reports, recognising that the various processes that produced them are not neutral.

2.7.2 Surveillance

To date, the full heuristic force of performativity and panoptic performativity has not been brought to bear on either historical or contemporary inspection and inspectorial activities in Scotland. Even the most recent work, by Peace-Hughes (2021), avoids any use of it and the wider literature on performativity and opts for a socio-cultural rather than political framing. The findings of the multinational project *Governing by Inspection: School Inspection and Education Governance in Scotland, England and Sweden* also make no explicit mention of the concept, though there are traces of its influence (Grek & Lindgren, 2015). Moreover, the conclusions that the project presents can be dynamically linked to a useful discussion regarding surveillance and the idea of post-panoptic performativity. Here, the 'post' signals a developmental relationship and, indeed, as Page (2017a) contends, a hybrid arrangement.

If panoptic performativity is characterised by performing in preparation for the threat of embodied supervision by agents external to the context of the supervised, post-panoptic performativity is the embodiment of governance ambitions and execution of actions solely in service of the ambition (Page, 2017b). In such a context, embodied and present (panoptic) modes of scrutiny do not disappear but are rather complemented in ways that increase surveillance. Page (2017a) has suggested a theoretical model of hybrid

surveillance where horizontal, vertical, and intrapersonal connections within the ecology of the school have been exploited as opportunities for surveillance, largely aligned to achieving central policy objectives and outcomes (Page, 2017b; Courtney, 2016).

In the context of inspection in Scotland, School Self-Evaluation (SSE) has, under the framing of the above-noted international project, been shown to be doing precisely this. As Grek *et al*. (2015: 122) write,

> Self-evaluation is entering a new phrase: in this construction of the work of inspection knowledge becomes linked to self-awareness, self-management and self-improvement … this broadens the vision of self-evaluation into becoming much more than an accountability mechanism; it represents and encapsulates a new governing idea.

The significance of this for this study is that it suggests a question to take forward in understanding the relationship between inspection, the inspectorate and RME. If, as is suggested, practitioners and inspected institutions are proactively self-managing and self-improving, what does this mean for the development of RME?

2.8 Chapter Summary

The concepts explored above are central to the rest of this study. This study focuses on RME and, specifically, its relationship to inspection and the broader activities of the inspectorate in Scotland since the 1960s. It is a study that considers curriculum stasis and changes as a matter of education governance that is taken forward through policy. It recognises too the centrality of concepts such as accountability and how performativity and surveillance are significant elements of understanding the work of inspectorates and inspection within education systems. The next chapter will provide a more thorough review of current discussions regarding the ways in which inspection impacts schools, focusing on curriculum.

Chapter 3: Inspectorates, Inspection and Curricula

3.1 Introduction

A review of academic literature on inspection and inspectorates highlights that the sub-field of educational effectiveness and improvement research (EEI) dominates discussions (Chapman *et al.*, 2016; Chapman, 2012). However, EEI researchers have recognised that it has had little to say on curricula (Scheerens & Ehren, 2016; Chapman et al., 2016). Therefore, for this study's broad focus on understanding how inspectorates and inspection interact with curricula, it has been necessary to consider work across three other broad areas of research: studies of the development of national education systems, policy research and curriculum studies.

Such research covers a range of European countries and, while recognising that there will be critical contextual differences, this chapter will engage with this research specifically for the relevant insights it offers for the Scottish context. This approach is further supported by recognising that the development of inspectorates and inspection processes has also occurred through interaction between inspectorates across Europe, with the Scottish inspectorate learning from and contributing to the developments in other countries (Croxford *et al.* 2009; Grek, 2014). Where examples from different countries are discussed in this chapter, the intention is that they illustrate a thematic point from across the research literature. The range of countries covered reflects the literature base, with a significant amount of the work coming from collaborations focusing on comparative studies of several predominately western European countries but extending to include examples from central and eastern Europe at times too. There is no intention in this chapter at a systematic comparative analysis of inspection across these countries. Rather, as noted, general points of convergence or significant anomalies in the literature are explored to orientate an exploration of the situation in Scotland from a research-informed perspective.

The first part of this chapter will consider insights from the wide-ranging research literature about how inspectorates, in particular, and curricula interact. In addition to an engagement with theory-focused literature, this

section will also examine the extensive research that centres on Scottish developments or compares them with those in other jurisdictions in the UK. This part of the discussion is directly focused on developing an informed understanding to answer the first research question of this study, namely the extent to which and how HM Inspectorate of Education has been a factor in the development of Religious and Moral Education (RME) in Scottish secondary education between 1962 and 2020. In sum, this part of the chapter will highlight theoretical perspectives on curriculum and educational governance that point to the potential for the Scottish inspectorate to be an essential broker in what subjects become part of the curriculum.

The second part of this chapter extends its focus to insights from across Europe to pay attention to how inspections operate, and it draws out important points for consideration in relation to understanding inspectorate documentation. This focus links directly to this study's second research question, which is to explore what inspectorate documentation might tell us about the development of RME in Scottish schools. The key discussion areas in this part of the chapter are the definitions and purposes of inspection, inspection processes, including site visits, setting standards, providing feedback, and, finally, the impacts and consequences of inspection. From this discussion, it will become clear that this study needs to attend to the purposes of inspection, the significance of set frameworks relating to standards, the nature of different types of feedback and the unintended, though well-known, consequence of curriculum narrowing when considering inspection documentation in the Scottish context.

3.2 Inspectorates and Curricula

Research on curricula and curriculum development indicates that the most significant point for this study is that inspectorates can significantly influence which subjects are incorporated into state curricula.

Secondary school curricula comprising a range of subjects under a standard framework, rather than disparate exam syllabi, were established in Scotland, as well as in England, in the 1980s due to the Conservative government's increased control of school curricula (Priestley, 2002; Kelly, 2009 &

Grimmitt, 2000a & 2000b). As Goodson and Marsh (1996: 134-140) argued, the subjects that found their way into curricula were those that aligned to key 'institutional categories' or frameworks. Here, frameworks can be understood as key authorities' priorities or broader governance ambitions. Significantly, they highlighted that these institutional categories were, and continue to be, set by 'state bureaucracies', including inspectorates. Thus, as an active bureaucracy within the wider state apparatus surrounding education, inspectorates can be identified as significant in developing national curricula as they, at least partly, establish what is and is not part of curricula. As Goodson and Marsh continue, the inspectorate shapes curricula by conferring legitimacy upon subjects with reference to the system's priorities.

Such ideas also connect with Bernstein's (1971: 49-50) position that the curriculum is shaped by *classification*, 'the degree of boundary maintenance between contents', and *frame,* 'the degree of control teacher and pupil possess over the selection, organisation and pacing of the knowledge transmitted and received in the pedagogical relationships', wherein external authorities are identified as significant influences on the 'educational code' or, broadly, the nature of the curriculum.

In addition to influencing curricula development, inspectorates have been identified as significant in shaping how the curriculum is enacted in schools. Kelly (2009) has suggested that inspectorates, via inspection processes, drive through curriculum changes. As a result, inspectorates can be considered as driving schools to prioritise and action what has been laid down in centrally produced curricula frameworks. For Kelly (*ibid*: 130), this is 'change or innovation by enforcement'. This relationship leads to schools narrowing their curricula to prioritise areas that will be inspected and reported on and even narrowing the content covered within curriculum areas to align more efficiently with what will be assessed and, in turn, improve outcomes (Ehren *et al.*, 2016). Notably, this point is the main finding on inspection's impact on curriculum that emerges from EEI research (Hofer *et al*. 2020).

Research focused on curriculum development has, however, been developing a more nuanced analysis of the interplay between inspectorates and curricula, suggesting that inspection is part of multifaceted curriculum regulation processes (Alvunger *et al.*, 2021; Priestley, 2014; Nieveen & Kuiper, 2012). For example, Nienke & Kuiper (2021: 139) have highlighted that, in the

Netherlands, there is a decades-long struggle to create the right balance between 'regulation and space' concerning control of the curriculum between central oversight and teacher autonomy. Commentary on Scotland and Wales suggests the presence of similar historical baggage but a more recent dynamic wherein a range of organisations, such as Education Scotland, the Scottish Qualifications Authority and schools and individuals within them influence, guide, advise on, direct, create, evaluate, review and redirect curricula (Hizli-Alkan, 2022; Humes & Priestley. 2021).

While considering the nature of curriculum regulation helps to analyse the degree of centralisation in an education system, it is important to highlight that the notion of curriculum regulation, partly through inspection, allows for Kelly's (2009) more blunt assessment to be tempered and suggests that inspection is part of the apparatus of governing curriculum change within complex systems. As Priestley *et al*. (2021) have suggested, processes of curriculum-making take place at different 'sites of activity' and with various 'actors' interacting therein. Here, the point is to acknowledge that an inspectorate's influence on school curricula might be less direct or unilateral than theoretical models or EEI research might imply. Indeed, processes beyond direct inspection may be significant.

Scholars have also suggested that curriculum policy in Scotland, Wales and other European countries, such as Cyprus and the Czech Republic, has developed to position teachers as 'curriculum developers' or at least position teachers to take on an active role in school-based curriculum developments (Dvořák, 2021; Kontovourki *et al.,* 2021; Hizli-Alkan & Priestley, 2019; Priestley *et al*., 2012: 87; Sinnema, 2016 & Sinnema & Aitken, 2013). However, Kelly (2009) highlights that the development of school self-evaluation, often linked dynamically to inspection criteria, is again just an aspect of curriculum regulation once curriculum-making is reoriented away from macro, or 'state', level control. However, more recent work on teachers in Scotland and Wales suggests a more varied set of responses from teachers. Rather than simply acquiescing to the inspectorate expectations embedded within inspection and self-evaluation frameworks, teachers 'agential responses can vary greatly' (Hizli-Alkan & Priestley, 2019: 750). Therefore, although more multifaceted responses from schools and teachers should be considered, the demands of inspectorates

regarding curricula might still determine their actions in more complex curriculum regulation processes.

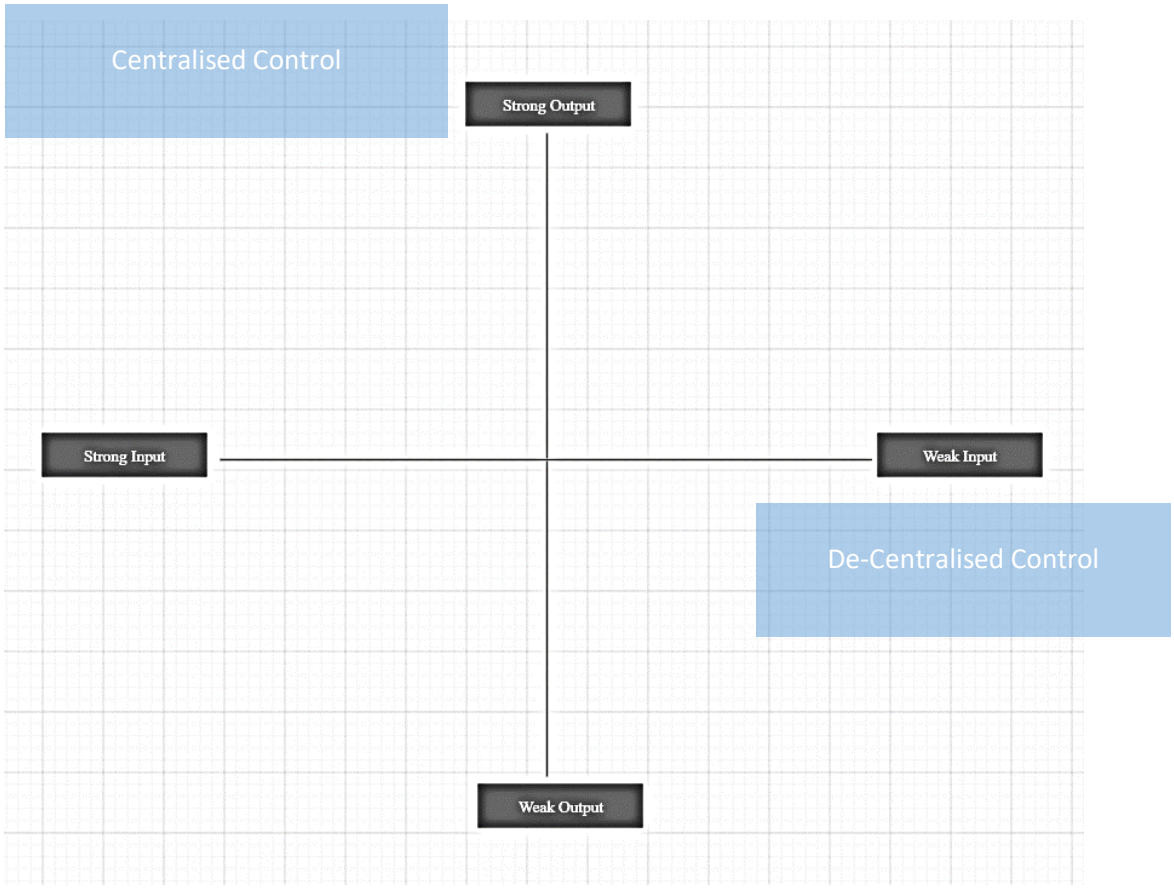
3.3 The Inspectorate and Curriculum Regulation in Scotland

The preceding discussion provides important points for considering the interplay between inspectorates and curriculum in Scotland. To develop this, the issue of how education is governed in Scotland needs to be explained. In short, the inspectorate has been consistently recognised by commentators as an important player in the Scottish education system (Humes, 1986; McPherson & Raab, 1988; Gatherer, 1989; Kirk & Glaister, 1994; Paterson, 2003; Priestley *et al.*, 2015). However, its relationship with the state needs to be more carefully articulated. Within the Scottish context, such discussions tend to be linked to debates over pluralism and corporatism in devolved administrations (Mitchell, 2003; Paterson, 1997; Midwinter et al., 1991; McPherson & Raab, 1988; Humes, 1986). The tension between these two positions is ultimately about the degree to which the state controls the agenda for change, access to it and implementation of it. Corporatism sees the state as *primus inter pares* (first among equals) and the instigator and evaluator of all policy and governance manoeuvres. Pluralism considers the state to be one amongst many regarding the agendas set and pursued in Scottish education, and consensus-building is pivotal in achieving and understanding any change. Such positions exist on a spectrum, from extreme forms of one to severe forms of the other. Within the literature on education governance in Scotland, there is also an appropriate awareness that positions on this spectrum change over time (Arnott, 2011; Humes, 2000). This is a significant point for understanding the inspectorate and inspection within the state's apparatus for governing education, as it is recognised that the inspectorate fulfils different demands with varying degrees of independence from and for the state (Ozga *et al*. 2013; Ball *et al.,* 2011). Indeed, as will be demonstrated in Chapter 4, the inspectorate's relationship with the state is best understood as moving from one wherein it is a relatively distinct and autonomous partner in a pluralistic context to being a constituent member of the state's apparatus for the corporatist governance of education in Scotland.

The inspectorate's role concerning the curriculum is, of course, what is of interest here. That role and its operation can be best understood in the Scottish context by exploring the model of curriculum regulation developed by Priestley (2014), building on Nieveen and Kuiper (2012). In his four-quadrant model, Priestley draws out that recent curriculum change in Scotland can be understood by considering central authorities' degree of prescription and control over the input and output on a continuum from strong to weak (Figure 1). This is proposed as a helpful way to conceive of the interactions between inspection and curriculum. The model asks that we consider what inspection and the inspectorate concern itself with regarding input into the curriculum and its outputs. Moreover, Nieveen and Kuiper's (2012) model is demonstrably relevant as it is used in their study to consider curriculum change over a timeframe similar to this study's.

By 'input' Priestley provides only a brief note of 'curriculum content, etc.' to explain the term (*ibid:* 62). This is extended here, as discussed in Chapter 2 and in line with Nieveen and Kuiper (2012), to include not just what is taught but also what is expected, suggested, or imposed in relation to implementation and pedagogical processes. In terms of regulating via 'outputs', the focus is on, as Priestley (2014: 62) puts it, 'the ways in which their outcomes are measured and evaluated'. This includes what is inspected, measured, and assessed using performance data and other sources of information.

Figure 1: Curriculum Regulation Model (Priestley, 2014: 62)



Priestley (*ibid*) proposes that the overall balance of curriculum input and output regulation determines the degree of centralisation or decentralisation permitted by central authorities. Combining this with the point noted above that the inspectorate becomes increasingly enmeshed in the work of governing education, it is possible to position the inspectorate and the inspection of education as drivers of state-desired curriculum developments. Whilst the framework is useful in suggesting these points, it must be acknowledged that it has limitations. Despite at least a theoretical relationship between inspection and curriculum and the position that inspection enables state control and influence, there is no doubt about the potential for considerable variation in practice as suggested by the above-noted scholarship on teachers as curriculum making.

The variations are in no small part a result of the various levels for potential change and the range of actors within each level. As Chapter 4 will show, the change considered is primarily that at the national or 'macro' level, in contrast to that of the local or regional authorities at the 'meso' level or indeed

the change at the 'micro' or school level. Equally, it is also recognised that the nature of the changes and developments considered involves actors within and beyond the inspectorate fulfilling a variety of roles that are not mutually exclusive. Such actors may or may not be part of the group of individuals identified by Humes (1986 & 2022) as the 'leadership class', those who can be considered as being conscious members of the inner circle of policy change, serving to establish the particular visions of a corporatist government. However, as Raab (1987) suggested, it is likely to include a much broader and far less homogenous group than envisaged by Humes. Beck's (2024) more recent work suggests that both positions may be present in the dynamics operating in education policy formation contexts, with a critical observation that teachers' voices may be present in development activities but not always heard.

As much theoretical and empirical work on policy acknowledges, the complexities of policy work in education and the challenges of implementation in practice involve multiple players operating in a variety of contexts with a range of professional and personal dispositions towards the intended changes (Livingston & Doherty, 2020; Singh *et al*. 2013; Biesta & Priestley, 2013; Ball *et al*., 2011; Munn, 1995; Ball, 1993). This means that it is unlikely that there is a straightforward relationship between the inspectorate and curriculum changes. Moreover, as official direction in terms of curriculum in Scotland has no legal force behind it, the need to navigate the various levels and actors in the system is a significant factor when considering curriculum developments over time (Macnab, 2001).

3.4 Understanding Inspection: Definitions and Purposes

The rest of this chapter turns its attention to the insights that research on inspection, its purposes, processes, and impacts can offer into the research questions posed in this study. As noted above, the research from the field of EEI supports much of what follows. However, the broad geographical sweep of this scholarship means that key points relevant to the Scottish context have been extracted for discussion.

Inspectorates have been in existence for varying durations and in various guises in different contexts. For example, those in Scotland, England and the Netherlands date back to the nineteenth century. In contrast, they have only

been a feature of German federal states since the 1990s (Dedering & Muller, 2011). Each has been influenced by their local context and international developments in education, and a range of activities can be grouped under the broad heading of inspection (Fuller & Stevenson, 2019; Jones *et al.*, 2017; Ozga *et al.*, 2015; Altrichter & Kemethofer, 2015; Ehren *et al.*, 2013; Ozga, 2012 Dedering & Muller, 2011; Ehren & Visscher, 2006). As a result, there have been attempts to differentiate inspection from other evaluation activities within education (Janssens & Ehren, 2016; Ehren & Swanborn, 2012; De Wolf & Janssens, 2007). Hofer *et al.* (2020: 2) have offered the following effective definition, namely that inspection is 'a systematic goal-oriented, and criteria-based process conducted by an external authority consisting of data collection (most often including site visits) and data feedback on school quality'. As explained in the introduction to the present chapter, this study is concerned with the broader work of the inspectorate in Scotland, including but not exclusively school inspection. However, regarding inspection, this definition captures a suitable description for school inspection in Scotland as carried out by the inspectorate.

Contained in the definition, too, is an indication of the possible purpose of school inspections, ultimately the examination of 'school quality', but, as Hofer *et al.* (*ibid*) continue, the purposes may also include 'accountability/control purposes, enforcement of policy and/or school improvement'. Indeed, as the variations across different discussions of the purposes of inspection highlight, any or all of these could be the focus within any one system (Brown *et al.*, 2018 & 2016; Jones & Tymms, 2014; Gaertner *et al.*, 2014; Penninckx & Vanhoof, 2015; Landwehr, 2011; Perryman, 2009; De Wolf & Janssens, 2007; Ehren & Visscher, 2006; Macnab, 2004; Millet & Johnson, 1998; Ouston *et al.* 1997). Such discussions highlight the need to consider how the purpose of inspections might be framed historically concerning RME in Scotland and what influence any overarching purpose might have on inspection documentation.

3.5 Inspection Processes

Research on inspections highlights three components common to inspections that are relevant to addressing the priorities of this study: a site visit to an individual school, standard setting, and the provision of feedback. Each of these aspects of the inspection process and the research around them draws attention to significant points for consideration in relation to RME, inspection and the inspectorate in Scotland.

3.5.1 Site Visits

Visits to schools by inspectors can be carried out on a cyclical or differentiated basis (Ehren *et al.,* 2015). The former happen at least once every few years, and the latter are visits carried out in addition to an established cyclical visit, usually in response to a problematic initial visit as part of the cyclical visits or in response to indicators that reveal areas of concern.

Inspectorates can change their approach to visiting schools over time, sometimes in response to pragmatic factors such as resources and capacity to conduct the required number of visits (*ibid*; Ehren & Swanborn, 2012; Gray & Gardner, 1999). In addition, schools may also be visited as part of thematic inspections that explore particular aspects of provision in detail across multiple establishments (Ehren *et al.,* 2013). The duration of a visit can vary depending on the size of the school to be inspected and the demands of inspectors' remits, with these points also determining the size of the inspection team (Dedering & Sowada, 2017; Hutchison, 2018; Dedering & Muller, 2011; Perryman, 2009; Chapman, 2002; Millet & Johnson, 1998; Wilcox & Gray, 1996). Such visits are normally communicated to schools in advance, but researchers have identified the practice of 'no-notice' inspections as a feature of school visits (Hutchison, 2018; Dedering & Muller, 2011). The issue of the notice period is also considered a significant factor in determining how accurate a picture inspectors get of a school. Whether a no-notice inspection leads to any more of a true reflection of a school in the final reporting is debated, given some of the consequences of inspection discussed below (Ouston & Davies, 1998).

Research on inspectorates highlights commonalities in what inspectors do when visiting a school. As Ehren and Visscher (2008) identify, inspectors will interview various stakeholders across the school community. In addition, inspection teams may also issue questionnaires to school staff, parents and carers, pupils and other organisations the schools work in partnership with (Gaertner & Plant, 2011). Reviewing existing qualitative and quantitative information provided by the school or related to the school is also a core task. This often includes analysis of performance information from external examinations and testing and interrogating policy statements and forward plans. Lesson observations also feature frequently in school visit schedules. Observation allows for first-hand experiences of pedagogical practice in classrooms and is the principal way to examine such aspects of the work of schools. Indeed, inspectors' classroom experiences arguably have been the key to their unique insights into educational practices and development work (Grek *et al.,* 2013). Such activities in schools are central to the work of inspectors when they visit schools, and they are dynamically linked to the standards and evaluative criteria central to the process of inspection.

For this study, the visiting of a school by inspectors is significant. It highlights that school inspection documentation will offer accounts of practice in schools by individuals present and engaged in situ. The issue of no-notice inspections does, however, raise the problem of performativity and the extent to which inspectors are offered particular versions of a school that are then reflected in their reporting. Indeed, as explored below, even without no-notice inspections, schools can attempt to align themselves to what inspectors want to see or their understanding of it. This is particularly true in cases such as Scotland, where shared national frameworks exist for inspection and self-evaluation (Baxter *et al.,* 2015). Peace-Hughes (2021) has most recently paid some attention to performativity in Scottish secondaries, but their study focused on only one school and further research, with a focus on subject areas and particular topics, remains to be done.

3.5.2 Setting Standards

The research literature highlights standards as foundational to how inspections operate. The standards, variously collected into frameworks of different forms, set the expectations regarding the work of schools and provide the criteria or indicators used by inspection teams to judge schools. As Ehren *et al*. (2013) identified, such standards are common to many inspectorates, including the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) in England and the Dutch Inspectorate in the Netherlands, with frameworks also found in the Czech Republic, Sweden, and Ireland. The standards are shared with schools, often publicly, in frameworks and models through guides, handbooks and proforma. Again, these models and criteria change over time, and in England and Scotland, in particular, they keep pace with changes in national educational policy (Baxter *et al.*, 2015).

Ehren *et al*. (2013) have identified three broad types of standards involved in the inspection process. First, there are standards that focus on whether schools are meeting legal requirements associated with their work. The standards focused on legislative requirements can equally concern compliance with operational and procedural issues, the meeting of curriculum guidance and the degree to which schools meet their duties to report on their progress to local and national authorities. Second, there are standards related to how schools and teachers work, particularly concerning school-level policies, processes, and practices. This group of standards are those most concerned with learning and teaching and are those that motivate the use of classroom observations by inspectors, as discussed above. Finally, inspection frameworks also feature standards that are concerned with the outputs from the work of schools and teachers. Most often, this refers to the levels of attainment in examinations (Baxter *et al.*, 2015).

On one level, the setting of standards, shared in advance, leads to a degree of standardisation across inspection processes and points to an attempt to ensure consistency across the judgements reached (Ehren and Visscher, 2008). Dedering and Sowada (2017) have demonstrated that this is not easily achieved in practice, with inspection teams often having to negotiate individual, team and contextual dynamics before making decisions. Furthermore, and in line with the ideas of Perryman (2009), Ehren *et al*. (2015) have highlighted how the

various frameworks that underscore inspections both contain and seek to transmit particular ideas about what schools, learning, achievement, attainment and education more generally should look like within a specific system. From this perspective, the frameworks and standards are aimed at engendering conformity across a particular education system. They seek to ensure that the inspection can reinforce expectations in the desired areas, something that feedback aims to achieve as part of the inspection processes. Here, for this study, the standards deployed during inspection activities relevant to RME need to be considered for how they might have shaped the provision of the subject in schools and influenced the reporting in inspectorate documentation.

3.5.3 Feedback

Building on Coe (2002), Ehren and Visscher (2006) provide a helpful exposition of feedback in the context of inspection. They posit that feedback is the information provided to a school that illuminates the extent to which the activities of schools do or do not meet the standards laid down in the relevant frameworks. Across education systems, and as identified in the research literature, the assumption is that inspection feedback will lead to school improvement (*ibid*). Jones and Tymms (2014) noted this as a clear aim for OFSTED in England, while Penninckx *et al*. (2016b: 334) described the Flemish Inspectorate as having 'accountability- and improvement-oriented aims'. It is proposed that this focus on improvement works by schools reviewing the feedback, planning in response to it, implementing those plans, and improving the quality of educational provision in some way (Ehren *et al.*, 2015; Ólafsdóttir *et al.*, 2022).

Inspection feedback has been found to have been delivered along a spectrum described as going from 'directive' to 'reserved' (Ehren & Visscher, 2006: 211-212). Directive feedback is that which highlights the areas where a school is performing well and the areas where it needs to improve. It also goes beyond this, articulating the causes of the perceived successes and weaknesses. Moreover, inspection feedback that can be described as directive also offers potential solutions for areas that require focus. Reserved feedback begins and ends with only a communication of strengths and weaknesses. Reserved

feedback can be found across inspection frameworks that practice issuing inspection grades or ratings. These take the form of scales with several increments, each marked by an adjective that gives a one-word or phrase summary of the outcomes of different aspects of inspection. Most infamously, for example, are OFSTED's ratings of 'outstanding' or 'special measures' (Perryman, 2010 & 2009). This distinction between directive and reserved feedback is also noted here as an important point of orientation, as it supports a closer analysis of the inspection reports used in this study.

Feedback, either direct or reserved, can be communicated verbally or in writing to schools at various points of an inspection. On one level, inspection feedback is expected to be formal and official at all points (Ehren & Visscher, 2008). However, there is also some evidence of more informal guidance and direction, often through verbal feedback, being issued by inspectors during inspections (Chapman, 2000 & 2002). The two main forms of verbal feedback explored in the literature relate to feedback to individual teachers and the feedback conveyed at the conclusion of a visit. As noted, a component of site visits by inspectors are observations of learning and teaching sessions within the school. Following such sessions, there is evidence, primarily from studies of inspection in England, that inspectors provide verbal feedback to individual class teachers (Chapman, 2002; Wilcox & Gray, 1996). However, the research highlights this as a contentious area of the inspection process. Teachers claim there is a lack of such feedback opportunities, and teachers' emotional responses to such feedback are not always positive (Grek *et al.*, 2015). Following an inspection, verbal feedback is also provided to school leaders and often the wider staff team. These feedback sessions tend to focus on the overall judgements of the inspection team (Quintelier *et al.*, 2018; Behnke & Steins, 2017). It is important here to point out that whilst inspectorates position feedback as central to the inspection process, the quality or standing of the inspectors issuing the feedback is regarded as important by school staff (Chapman, 2002).

While verbal feedback is significant, a written report is the primary vehicle for feedback across inspectorates. The construction, content, and delivery format of such reports varies from inspectorate to inspectorate and over time. However, there are commonalities. Namely the inclusion of points of strength and development areas aligned to the indicators and criteria in the

frameworks used to conduct inspections. Such reports, as Altricher and Kemethofer (2015: 33) write, either directly state what schools' subsequent actions should be in the form of directive feedback or, at the very least, 'imply' these via reserved feedback.

The dissemination of these reports is handled differently across different inspectorates. They are often issued formally a few weeks after the site visit. Some inspectorates, including all those in the United Kingdom, make them publicly available via the internet. Other inspectorates, such as those of the German federal states, do not publish inspection reports, and the Netherlands inspectorate publishes lists of failing schools (Ehren *et al.*, 2013). Inspectorates also expect schools to engage with their content as the impetus for further action. Such action can involve working with local education authorities to improve on the targeted areas, using the feedback to inform improvement planning, or directly responding to the feedback in light of planned follow-up visits (Behnke & Steins, 2017; Dedering & Muller, 2011; Perryman, 2010 & 2009; Ehren & Visscher, 2008; Janssens & Van Amelsvoort, 2008). Feedback is also intended to inform stakeholders, particularly when made available publicly.

3.6 Impact and Consequences of Inspection

This study seeks to assess the impact of HM Inspectorate of Education on the development of RME in Scotland, and in the opening part of this chapter, a broad theoretical outline of how inspectorates and curricula interact was offered. In the following section, the focus is extended to the impacts of school inspection activities as explored in the research literature. Significantly, the focus on unintended consequences is highlighted as an important consideration for this study.

While some commentators note that the purpose of inspection is to improve school quality, there is ultimately a very ambiguous evidence base that inspection achieves this (Penninckx *et al.* 2016a & 2016b). There is, most significantly in this regard, a notable lack of evidence that attainment outcomes can be demonstrated to be sustainably improved by school inspection (Kyriakides, 2012; Perryman, 2010; Ehren & Visscher, 2006; Rosenthal, 2004; Shaw *et al.*, 2003; Close, 1998).

The research literature does, however, highlight that one consistently observable outcome of inspection is that of unintended consequences. Jones *et al.* (2017) found, from self-reports by school leaders, that such unintended consequences were features of Austrian, Czech Irish, Swedish and Swiss inspections. They also noted that they were particularly noticeable in the high-stakes contexts of England and the Netherlands. Such consequences are those which inspection elicits from schools and practitioners but were not envisaged by the set inspection standards and processes (Ehren & Visscher, 2006). Some of these outcomes are considered strategic on the schools' part to control as much of the inspection experience and final evaluation outcomes as possible. These range from improvements to the aesthetics of the school environment to managing the impression inspectors get about a school via strategies such as careful wording of promotional materials and documentation or careful data selection and presentation. At the less desirable end of this spectrum of activities also lies outright cheating, falsification and manipulation (Ozga, 2016 & 2012; Ehren & Swanborn, 2012).

In addition to schools' performative or strategic responses, inspection research has also found that schools' and teachers' reactions to inspection have had impacts that practitioners had no intention of bringing about. The central point within this discussion is that inspection can lead to a protectionist disposition that promotes conformity within a limited frame of reference, that of the inspection framework. In classrooms, the primary unintended outcomes of teachers' actions have been identified as teaching to the test and being concerned with box-ticking approaches to reporting and prioritising paperwork (Ehren *et al.,* 2015). Such practice has been identified as leading to an 'ossification' of teaching methods and approaches (Jones *et al.,* 2017: 807; Ehren & Visscher, 2006). For this study, wherein the impact of inspection on RME is being considered, the potential for stagnation in pedagogical repertoires because of inspection is a significant consideration, mainly where curriculum transitions occur. Indeed, much of the work of Priestley and his collaborators draws attention to the potentially limiting power of accountability mechanisms, such as inspection, on teachers' enactment of the *Curriculum for Excellence* (*CfE*) (Priestley *et al.*, 2015 & 2012).

At the school level, decisions are also taken to maximise the likelihood of a positive inspection that negatively impacts school practice. Research has

suggested that short-termism can develop, with schools and practitioners prioritising inspectorial expectations. Moreover, a situation wherein any innovation is aligned to what has already been identified as 'what works' elsewhere, described by Ehren *et al*. (2015: 383) as 'mimetic isomorphism', can develop. Despite the recognition from EEI research that 'what works' in one context may not necessarily commute the same benefits to another (Biesta, 2010a & 2010b; Ehren & Visscher, 2006). By doing what other schools are doing that has already been evaluated positively, schools can again be seen as playing the game of protecting against a negative inspection outcome.

Of note for this study is the practice of curriculum narrowing. Linking back to the point made above, teachers' in-class focus on assessments could limit the curriculum experienced by learners. Furthermore, and in line with Livingston and Doherty (2020), curriculum narrowing could also refer to limitations in providing curriculum areas, subjects, or options for certificated learning. Significantly, for this study, the literature on the impact of inspection draws attention to the phenomena of 'curriculum narrowing' and, therefore, draws out that there is indeed a relationship between inspection and curriculum and that such a phenomenon should be considered in the rest of this study.

3.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has highlighted how research on school inspection suggests significant points of orientation for the research questions in this study. The chapter has raised the need to consider the multifaceted purpose of inspection and highlights the significance of the school visit as key to understanding the construction of inspectorate documentation. It also raises the centrality of school inspection standards and the usefulness of the concepts of 'directive' and 'reserved' feedback for engaging with the available documentation. Equally, curriculum narrowing emerges as an important but unintended consequence of school inspection activities and can be considered in relation to RME in the Scottish context.

By drawing on the broader research based on inspection, inspectorates and curriculum, this chapter has also established that there is a dynamic relationship between the broad areas of interest in this study. Curriculum theory

has highlighted that inspectorates and curricula interact and that the inspectorate in Scotland has the potential to influence curricula, given its positioning in the broader educational governance landscape. The details of this relationship are fully explored in the next chapter, where I offer an analysis of the role of inspection and the inspectorate in relation to curriculum developments in Scotland since the 1960s.

Chapter 4: Inspectorate, Inspection and Curriculum in Scottish Education, 1962 – 2020

4.1 Introduction

The overarching aim of this chapter is to provide a critical survey of the interplay between the inspection of education and curriculum developments in Scotland, with a particular focus on non-denominational secondary schools in the period since the 1960s. The central research focus of this study, understanding the relationship between inspection and RME, is attended to in this chapter as it draws attention to the influence of inspection and the inspectorate across developments regarding the curriculum in Scottish secondary schools since the 1960s.

First, the chapter will provide relevant, but necessarily summarised, background on the development of inspection and curriculum prior to the 1960s. It will draw attention to the inspectorate's control of examination as a key part of how curriculum and inspection become intertwined. The chapter will proceed to cover the period between the mid-1960s and the early 1990s and draw attention to the inspectorate's role in the oversight of the curriculum as part of corporatist governance. The penultimate area of focus will be that of the relationship between the inspectorate, inspection, and curriculum, with a renewed focus on quality and accountability. Finally, the chapter will explore the role of inspection and the inspectorate as Curriculum for Excellence (*CfE*) was conceived and implemented in the early 2000s.

4.2 Schooling, Inspection, and the State before 1962

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, schooling in Scotland was provided by an assortment of Christian Churches and private ventures. The provision was primarily for elementary education and, whilst not universal, was to be found across Scotland in various guises. It was loosely supervised by a mix of local boards, and official oversight came from the Privy Council in London (Stevenson, 2012 & 2015a & 2015b; Anderson, 1983). The provision of education in this form

saw increasing sums of money, including capital grants from 1833 onwards, given over to the plethora of denominational providers. Whilst much more historical research is needed to unpick developments, the increasing expenditure, at least in part, brought about a major state intervention for schooling in Scotland. In January 1840, school inspection by the state was legally instituted. By July, the first inspector, John Gibson, was appointed (Weir, 2003; Devine, 1999; Smout, 1986; Bone, 1968).

Inspection of the Church-led and various other schooling provisions was not a novel intervention at the time. Church provision had long since been inspected via visitations and denominational-specific reviews. The state itself could also glean insights into schooling from various sources. For example, the Old and New Statistical Accounts of Scotland reported on the nature of schooling in the parishes (Ritchie, 2016; Cameron, 2015). What was novel, though, was the state's use of individuals, who had mostly been teachers themselves, to inspect the quality of education and teaching in state-funded schools (McDermid, 1997).

The next two decades witnessed both positive reactions to and results from state-run inspections of schools. Indeed, by the mid-1860s, the Argyll Commission, a national review of education in Scotland, found that state inspections were contributing to improvements not only in teaching quality but also in terms of school ethos and management (Cameron, 2010; Cruickshank, 1967; Bone, 1968). The work of the inspectors at this point was set by the Committee of Council on Education and, through various codes, linked school funding to requirements assessed by inspectors. By 1846, this also included running examinations in reading, writing and arithmetic. This was one aspect of the inspector's work that was less positively received by teachers, and it certainly had a direct impact on what was being taught and how it was being taught in schools at the time. The examinations placed a burden on schools in terms of the time taken to complete them and on individual teachers in terms of their rating by inspectors (Bone, 1968).

The Education (Scotland) Act 1872 is often seen as the beginning of a national system of education in Scotland. However, in relation to secondary schooling, this is not an entirely accurate interpretation (McKinney & Humes, 2021). Secondary provision at this time was provided in three main forms. Either elementary institutions offering advanced studies or (and usually in urban settings) there were 'higher class' schools that could be either public or private.

Both forms of the 'higher class' school depended on fee income. Whilst the act did see public 'higher class' and elementary schools transfer from parish, burgh, and other denominational control to newly established school boards, there was no financial provision for higher class schools in the 1872 legislation. Indeed, as many commentators have observed, there was little in the way of state-led developments for secondary education provision until the mid-1880s and local school boards prioritised little else other than the 'Three R's' to ensure positive outcomes when inspectors conducted examinations (Wade, 1939; Humes, 2000; McDermid, 2015 & 1997; Finn, 1983; Bone, 1968).

The Scotch Education Department, established in 1885 and operating from London, brought further administrative control over Scottish education and positioned itself to take the lead in state-level interventions regarding secondary schooling and curriculum. Under Henry Craik, the introduction of the Leaving Certificate in 1888 set the standard for basic secondary education and parliament offered to fund public secondary provision in 1892, supported by oversight from Country Secondary Education Committees (Paterson, 2011). Bone (1968) and Humes (2000), who offer the most extensive commentaries on these developments, highlight that it was the inspectorate that disseminated the expectations of these changes, saw that they were implemented at school level and reported back to inform future work. In so doing, the very separate institution of the inspectorate worked harmoniously with the administrative elements of the Scotch Education Department. This work also saw the influence of the inspectorate at the level of school curriculum developments expand, as they directed the content of examination syllabi, set assessments, and enforced the standards expected of schools and individual teachers (Anderson, 1985). Indeed, these areas of work remained the prime roles for the inspectorate throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

Between 1903 and 1918, 196 'Higher Grade' schools offering three to five years of secondary education had been established as a result of legislation and additional funding (Paterson, 2011: 99). This complemented the post-elementary provision that continued to be available in what became known as Advanced Departments of primary schools (Paterson, 2003, Wade 1939). The 1918 Education (Scotland) Act saw the Scottish Education Department (SED), as it was relabelled, increasingly remove fees and provide an unprecedented level of bursary support for secondary education, though fees were still charged in

places (Paterson, 2018 & 2015). At the same time, the numerous local school boards were replaced by local authorities that took over control of educational provision between 1919 and 1929 and the first of a series of Advisory Councils on Education were established (Young, 1986). These were significant developments for the political and administrative operation of education, and they introduced a more cogent and united level of bureaucracy within any one particular region and a forum for challenging the SED across the education system. The SED had to navigate this change and did so through the relationships established by and the insights gained from the work of inspectors in schools (Humes, 2000).

The curriculum within the secondary, 'Higher Grade', schools was primarily driven by the demands of the Leaving Certificate. This involved the study of courses in English (which also tended to incorporate History and Geography), other languages (namely French and Latin), and Mathematics and Sciences (Paterson, 2011). The content of the curriculum, whilst accessed by ever-increasing numbers of students, was largely the result of the SED's focus on aligning secondary education with the demands of university entry and study (Gray *et al.*, 1983). At the same time, Advanced Departments ran Higher and Lower Day School Certificates, which were also set, monitored, and assessed by the inspectorate. Here, the inspectorate, as Bone (1966: 185) notes, 'came to exert full pressure upon the secondary curriculum and methods of teaching' through their administration and accreditation of the various certificates of education available throughout the 1920s and 1930s.

The Education (Scotland) Act 1936 was set to further develop the state's attempts to expand secondary education in Scotland. It both raised the leaving age to 15 and initiated the rationalisation of secondary provision into either three-year junior or five-year senior secondaries. However, the ambition was only partially realised with the leaving age remaining at 14 as attention turned to another global war. The organisation of secondary education did proceed, and the dual-track provision, with pupils' future educational pathways determined by a variety of assessments at the end of the primary stage, remaining in place until the 1960s (Paterson, 2003; McPherson & Raab, 1988).

Discussions regarding secondary education did not cease in Scotland during the war, with the Sixth Advisory Council on Education giving extensive consideration to the issue from 1942 onwards. By 1947, *Secondary Education* was published, driven by the energies of council member James J. Robertson,

headteacher of Aberdeen Grammar School. It offered a 'tour de force' in terms of educational thinking at the time that can be understood as both building on pre-war developments and as a reconstruction plan for post-war education (Young, 1986: 263; Cameron, 2010; Devine, 1999). The content of the report concerned the structure and philosophy of secondary schooling. It proposed a common four-year experience for all, with the option to continue to examination in a final two-year, post-16 phase. *Secondary Education* advocated for a reorientation too in terms of the focus of study and suggested that there was 'the need to correct an over-intellectualised schooling by giving a larger place to the physical, the practical, the affective, and the aesthetic' (McPherson & Raab, 1988: 79). In addition, it proposed that the job of running examinations should be removed from the inspectorate. This suggestion attracted particularly vitriolic comment from SED and inspectorate officials alike. Indeed, the SED did little with the report and none of its recommendations were officially actioned following its publication. Here, it is clear from SED and inspectorate meeting documentation that this was about control (McPherson & Raab, 1988). The proposal to expand secondary education could lead to a demand for certification at the end of the four-year course and certainly increase demand in the post-16 phase. This demand would overload the inspectorate and, in turn, have the potential to lead to the establishment of an examination board that would lead to the SED and inspectorate losing influence. As the minutes record it, 'the Department, as a result of no longer controlling the examination which the great majority of pupils would take, would largely lose effective control of the curriculum of most pupils under sixteen' (Scottish Records Office, 1950, 18th July 1947, Quoted in McPherson & Raab, 1988: 85).

McPherson and Raab (1988), in their study of policy making and governance in Scottish education in the post-war period, observe that *Secondary Education* was, however, not consigned to history. In the 1950s, under J. S. Brunton, the senior chief inspector and former assistant secretary of state in the SED, many of its recommendations were taken forward. In particular, a valuable four-year programme of study for all pupils was instituted. By 1953, after a few years of inspecting sub-standard provision, the inspectorate was motivated to review curricular provision in the junior secondaries and the pedagogical approaches deployed in the senior secondaries (Bone, 1968). By 1955, they had produced a report on the junior secondary curriculum aimed at addressing its

suitability for learners in the post-war era (Paterson, 2003). For senior secondaries, the inspectorate had reviewed teaching in English, Mathematics, Modern Languages and History and had identified weaknesses in terms of the creativity and novelty demonstrated. In response, new syllabi and directives appeared. Yet, it was their work with teachers in their endeavours that brought such moves credibility (Bone, 1968). By the close of the 1950s, the inspectorate had moved towards a more collaborative approach with teachers on the curriculum than had appeared likely at the beginning of the decade. They had worked with practitioners on key curriculum developments. In particular, inspectors and teachers had worked together to create and begin to implement the recommendations of the *Report of the Working Party on the Curriculum in Senior Secondary School*. This report laid the foundations, via Circular 412 issued in 1959, for the introduction in 1962 of the 'Ordinary Grade', a course to be taken in the fourth, fifth or sixth years of secondary education at a level below the Higher Grade Leaving Certificate (Gray *et al.*, 1983). This, combined with their leading role at the national level, based on the local insights they gained from their work in schools, granted the inspectorate a controlling influence in the education system and across curriculum developments more specifically (Bone, 1986).

4.3 Realignment and Refocusing, 1960 – 1966

By 1960, secondary education in Scotland was developing and changing to ensure increased accessibility for all, even if the concern was still very much with those aiming at university (Paterson, 2000a; Paterson, 2003; McPherson, 1992). At the beginning of the decade, junior secondaries that traditionally offered three years of post-primary education were increasingly developing into four-year institutions, taking advantage of the Ordinary Grade (Paterson, 2000a; McPherson, 1992). The more selective five-year senior secondaries continued to offer higher grade qualifications, which were only marginally better completed by middle-class students than by their working-class peers (Paterson, 2003). In 1965, the two-model system was rationalised by Circular 600, issued by the SED, which began to establish the comprehensive secondary school as the normal institute for post-primary education. Such secondaries were to be non-selective

and were intended to cater to all (Paterson, 2003). This structural reorganisation of secondary education was the consequence of long-term changes that had led to an increased demand on the system and on the inspectorate. Bone's (1968: 235) assessment of the inspectorate, inspectors, and its work by the opening of the 1960s is one of a decidedly positive and productive constituent part of the education system:

> the relaxation of central control, the sharing of responsibilities and the partnership in development work have brought about greatly improved relations between teachers and inspectors… Inspectors may not be feared any more, but, as a body, they are accorded a more healthy respect than ever was the case in the past.

Yet, despite such developments, the inspectorate's place in the education system was not immune to change. In only a few years, by 1966, the domains where the inspectorate had held sway would be drastically reduced. The inspectorate's control of examinations and of approving new teachers would be redistributed to other organisations, and its relationship with curriculum development would be reconfigured (Humes, 1986).

In 1964, the SEB was inaugurated and led on the provision of exams at the secondary school level from January 1965. The SEB itself was composed primarily of teachers and representatives from the university sector, and the role of inspectors in administering examinations came to an end (Bone, 1968). Equally, the constitution of the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS), via the Teaching Council (Scotland) Act 1965, also took over an aspect of the inspectorate's work. At the level of the individual teacher, the inspectorate had played a significant role in their early career, as they were responsible for approving or otherwise a new entrant's standing to join the profession. However, the establishment of the GTCS, beginning its work in February 1966, saw this duty removed from an overworked inspectorate and passed to the new body (McPherson & Raab, 1988).

Curriculum guidance had long been an area of focus for the inspectorate, but between 1945 and 1955, the Secretary of State of Scotland had tended to rely on the Advisory Council to lead on curriculum developments, even if the more systemic changes proposed in *Secondary Education* were not taken forward. However, the Advisory Council had largely become defunct by 1960 and

the inspectorate had reclaimed a central role in relation to the curriculum, guiding curricular initiatives and setting future priorities (Humes, 1986; Young, 1986). In resuming its focus on leading curriculum developments, the inspectorate was doing so more because of tradition than as a consequence of official direction. When specific instruction was issued in October 1965 to establish the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum (CCC) by the Secretary of State for Scotland, the inspectorate's role in setting and developing curriculum across school education was reconfigured. The CCC was intended to be the direct descendant of the Advisory Council. However, rather than existing at a remove from the inspectorate, the CCC included HM Inspectors as leaders and contributors to the curriculum development work carried out under its auspices (Humes, 1986; Bone, 1968).

These developments signalled two priorities arising from the Secretary of State and central SED officials regarding the desired role of the inspectorate in the education system going forward. First, inspectors' abilities to navigate policy and practice and to lead on curriculum development were to be harnessed by incorporating them into the CCC and reducing the burden of other duties. Second, any influence the inspectorate had across the system was to align with the agenda coming from the SED.

4.4 Infighting and Expansion, 1966 – 1978

The mid-1960s saw the SED focused on the reorganisation of secondary schooling in order to provide comprehensive post-primary provision (Paterson, 2003). Such changes meant that curriculum and certification needed consideration (McPherson & Raab, 1988).

The CCC was chiefly composed of HM Inspectors and practitioners who were organised into standing or 'Central' committees. These committees were, for secondary education, concerned with curricular developments on a subject-by-subject basis, with an early example being that of the Central Committee on English, which was already publishing bulletins on key aspects of the curriculum by 1967, informing professional debate and influencing the content of teacher education programmes (Humes, 1986). As noted, the CCC's inclusion of inspectors can be understood as an attempt by the SED to control and better

channel the inspectorate's influence over curriculum developments. From their positions on CCC committees and subject groups, the inspectorate could impact the design of curricular expectations and the guidance issued to professionals. However, an unintended consequence of the rationalisation of the inspectorate's duties was the clash with the SEB (Hunter, 1972).

The creation of the SEB at precisely the same time when the need for certificated provision was about to increase in the late 1960s and on into the 1970s allowed the education system in Scotland to meet the demand for comprehensive secondary education with suitable and increasingly diversified certification options (Paterson, 2003). However, the growing role of the SEB challenged the CCC and, by association, the inspectorate in relation to curriculum development in the secondary sector (McPherson & Raab, 1988). Two factors drove this situation. First, the SEB's role in setting certification led it to specify curriculum content and even attempt to shape curricular offerings by offering certification options in particular subject areas. As practitioners would be occupied with the need to prepare pupils for examination, the mandatory content laid out by the SED guidance would be a priority in their planning of the curriculum in schools. Consequently, any guidance from the CCC that was not relevant to the specifications for examinations was limited in its impact in practice. Second, as the CCC itself noted in *The Communication and Implementation of Aims in Secondary Education* report published in 1974, the SEB was able to communicate its expectations of practitioners and schools very effectively. The SEB commanded practitioners' attention because they set the syllabi, sent out the information that practitioners needed, and, through the examinations themselves, held teachers and schools accountable (*ibid*).

In response to the SEB's challenge to the inspectorate's authority, the Munn Committee was set up as part of the CCC. At the same time, members of the Munn Committee were also members of the Dunning Committee (Paterson, 2003). Both committees were concerned with the curriculum for the third and fourth years of secondary school in Scotland, with both committees reporting back in 1977. The Munn Committee published *The Structure of the Curriculum in the Third and Fourth Years of the Scottish Secondary School* (known as the *Munn Report*), which considered the content and mix of subjects, including RME, that should make up the third- and fourth-year curriculum. The Dunning Committee released *Assessment for All: Report of the Committee to Review Assessment in*

the Third and Fourth Years of Secondary Education in Scotland (known as the *Dunning Report),* which addressed the issue of appropriate certification for increasing numbers of school pupils completing more than three years of post-primary education.

Whilst these committees and their reports ultimately became the foundations for the Standard Grade qualifications that were first sat in 1986, they also illustrate that the CCC, with involvement from the inspectorate, were not content with handing over the regulation of the curriculum to the examination authority. Rather, the CCC was repositioned in the late 1970s as central to curriculum structure and design, and so too was the inspectorate as a key contributor to CCC endeavours (McPherson & Raab, 1988).

Despite the jostling for control over the curriculum and the recent removal of central functions to other agencies, the number of inspectors increased by six between 1964 and 1970 and by a further twelve by 1976 to a total of 125 inspectors. Notably, in 1972, the SED highlighted the need to assess the work of education authorities, considering all the sectors and levels of educational provision (SED, 1972b). In the following five years, the inspectorate conducted authority-wide inspections across all of Scotland, producing a series of reports that 'attempted to describe and assess all sectors of education for which the Authority has responsibility' (HMIE, 1976: 34). In completing such an undertaking, the inspectorate demonstrated its extensive capacity for evaluative work, the extent of the resources it could deploy and the opportunities for gathering and using system-level insights to support national benchmarking.

4.5 Efficiency and Effectiveness 1978- 1983

The reclaiming of lost ground with regard to curriculum guidance and development and the expansion in numbers may have been successes from the inspectorate's perspective, but they also raised substantial questions regarding the quality of its work. By 1980, the SED, having previously attempted to curtail the inspectorate's influence, was critical of the work of the inspectors. Such concerns arose at a time of significant debate about the efficiency and funding of public services across the UK, and by December 1980, the inspectorate was the subject of a parliamentary-ordered enquiry (Arnott, 2011; Humes, 1986).

The enquiry was instigated by the then Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Education and Industry, Alex Fletcher and was to be conducted by Peter Rendle, formerly an administrator in the Scottish Office. The enquiry resulted in the *Rendle Report*, which was completed in July 1981 but was only made public in 1983. The initial brief for Rendle's review was to examine the inspectorate's 'role, organisation, staffing and effectiveness… including the main priorities of work to be undertaken' (Quoted in Humes, 1986: 66). To complete the review, Rendle interviewed over eighty people, including inspectors at all levels of the organisation's hierarchy, SED administrators, local authority education officials and promoted teachers, as well as a selection of university and further education lecturers (Rendle, 1981). For this study, as explored below, the *Rendle Report* provides evidence of the nature of inspections themselves at this point. However, it should be noted that inspectors criticised Rendle's report at the time for not offering an accurate account of the inspectorate's work.

Through the *Rendle Report,* it becomes explicitly clear that the traditional role of inspecting schools, chiefly secondary schools, was the main function of the inspectorate. Moreover, it was also the aspect of the inspectorate's work that demanded the most resources and time (*ibid*: 19). Whilst advocating for a more strategic deployment of inspectors in relation to visiting schools, Rendle's report recognised the key reasons why such visits mattered to inspectors and the organisation (*ibid*: 19-20). First, the visits allowed inspectors to be visible to other actors in the system, leading to the conclusion from one interviewee that 'visibility is credibility' (*ibid*: *16*). Second, in-person inspections allowed the inspectors to develop their professional knowledge, affording them the insights required to respond to the questions that they were asked by SED officials and the Secretary of State and to guide national developments. Third, inspections were relationship-building opportunities and enabled the inspectorate to get to know schools, practitioners, and local authority officials.

The 'effectiveness' of the visiting, as Rendle labelled it, was to be gauged by the 'outputs and how these affected the quality of decisions and of education generally. The outputs included 'what they [the inspectors] say and to whom, and what they write, what is published and what is not; and who reads or benefits or is influenced by it' (*ibid:* 41). Rendle's assessment of the

effectiveness of the inspectorate draws attention the inspectorate's involvement in preparing, or at least being involved in the preparation of, key reports that developed aspects of the curriculum and education provision (*ibid*: 41). Overall, this emerged as a positive aspect of the inspectorate's work, but Rendle did raise the point that inspectors' involvement in curriculum developments was a 'question of emphasis and balance' (*ibid*: 23). In other words, the inspectorate could, and did, extend its influence too wide across a range of priorities. In turn, atrophying practitioners' capacity for innovation and adding to the workload of the inspectorate.

Another chief concern of the *Rendle Report* was that the inspectorate could work more efficiently. Rendle suggested that the inspection of schools by teams of individual inspectors at the current level was too much. He argued that it left the inspectorate occupied by 'low geared' work. This was work that was important, but it limited the inspectorate's ability to influence and lead developments in education (*ibid:* 15). As a possible solution to this, Rendle suggests that the increasing number of local authority quality improvement staff could take on the role of inspecting schools and feeding their findings into the inspectorate to provide the nation-wide perspectives so valued by inspectors and central authorities (Humes, 1986: 69-71; Ross, 2001: 19).

The *Rendle Report's* broad conclusions that the inspectorate's work was valuable but inefficient were not well received by the inspectorate and the SED, who were also criticised for demanding too much of the inspectorate's time to answer policy-related questions. The response from these bodies was to impede any publication of the report but also to take it to task on the grounds that Rendle had insufficient understanding and insight to accurately evaluate that which he was tasked to review (Humes, 1986). Despite this reaction, the *Rendle Report* was published in 1983. At the same time, a new statement on the inspectorate's duties was issued by the Secretary of State for Scotland. The six key areas broadly covered advising the government and other authorities, inspecting, and liaising across the system to bring around required developments (*ibid*: 74). Here, it is worth noting that successive drafts of the new brief were edited between the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister, with a direction from Margaret Thatcher that the new brief would 'give a sharp enough image of how the work of the inspectors helps to improve what actually happens in

schools' (Scottish Office, 1983: 17). A point that would be further addressed with the publication of school inspection reports.

4.6 Inspectors, the Public, and the Practitioners, 1983 – 1986

In 1982, Nigel Grant, a Professor of Education at the University of Glasgow, published a short pamphlet through the Saltire Society, entitled, *The Crisis of Scottish Education*. In the 54-page document, Grant articulates that, in his view, there was a crisis in Scottish education. Grant highlighted that the crisis was a result of a lack of direction, a lack of resources and a loss of identity (Grant, 1982: 4). Combined with the general scrutiny of public services, views such as Grant's help to highlight the emerging pressures that pushed the Secretary of State to announce that inspection reports of individual schools would be published for public consumption from 1983 onwards (Ozga *et al.*, 2015: 70).

Whilst extensive archival material, chiefly newspaper coverage, awaits further study, there is very little scholarly commentary on this significant development to date. For the situation at the time, Humes (1986) offers the most extensive treatment based on a small selection of inspection reports published between 1983 and 1986. For Humes, the points most worthy of note are that the content of the reports is consistently bland and generic, suggesting that the inspectorate was conscious of possible legal consequences for any misrepresentation. Moreover, Humes also notes that this was compounded by a lack of explicit criteria on which inspection was based. As a result, as Gallacher (1999) notes, the inspectorate had to become ever more rigorous and aware of how what was recorded could impact professional relationships. As Humes (1986) points out, for example, local education authorities were already aware of the negative impact a poor report could have and the reputational damage it did not just to individual schools but also to the local authority as a whole.

As mentioned above, the *Munn* and the *Dunning* reports of the late 1970s provided a framework for what would in 1984 become the two-year Standard Grade qualifications, first certificated in 1986 at either Credit, General or Foundation levels with Credit representing the highest level of attainment. Despite the Rendle inquiry and the possible challenges of public reporting, development work on the Standard Grade qualification, completed over the

third and fourth years of secondary education, continued with the inspectorate at the helm. And whilst the inspectorate may have been sensitive to what it published, it may have been less considerate of the demands it placed on teachers developing the new material for Standard Grade. Through maintaining their partnership working with teachers, the inspectorate had developed resources, piloted programmes, and held conferences with school-based practitioners to develop the Standard Grade courses. However, as McPherson and Raab (1988) note, the inspectorate's leadership of the development was at a pace that outstripped the capacity and resources of practitioners. Indeed, this at least in part contributed to teacher strike action in 1984, delaying the implementation of the full suite of Standard Grade courses by about a year from the original plans (SED, 1987; Kirk, 1982). This is a significant point for this study, as this delay led to the SED keeping the original Ordinary Grade qualifications available during the implementation of the Standard Grade qualifications, and therefore, the Ordinary Grade in Religious Studies (RS) remained an available option for developments concerning RME (SED, 1987).

4.7 Curriculum Change and The Quality Agenda, 1987 – 2000

Following the phased implementation of Standard Grade for the middle years of schooling, attention turned next to the first two years of secondary as a result of a wider focus on primary education and a perceived need to ensure that there was continuity in learning as children progressed between the sectors (Paterson, 2003: 118-122). Following the publication of *Curriculum and Assessment in Scotland: A Policy for the 1990s* in 1987, Secretary of State for Scotland Malcolm Rifkind announced the initiation of the *5-14* programme in October 1988 (Arnott, 2011; Adams, 1994). The approach taken was to place oversight of the project in the hands of senior members of the inspectorate, with *5-14* having been identified as originating very much from the centre of government and a project that was intended to be and remain under the auspices of such authorities (Boyd, 1994; Arnott, 2011). Working through the Scottish Consultative Committee on the Curriculum (SCCC), as it had become known, school practitioners worked in 'Review and Development Groups' (RDG) to create

curriculum guidance, including for RME, within a pre-designed framework (Adams, 1994; Boyd, 1994).

As Gallacher (1999) notes, the inspectorate was both instigator and advocate for the 5-14 developments. Here, what is significant is that at the very centre of another major curriculum development project, the inspectorate was front and centre in both setting and advancing the agenda. Indeed, as all the various curriculum areas came together and advice was assembled for full implementation from 1994, it was the inspectorate that provided the final statement of guidance in *5-14: A Practical Guide for Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools* (Adams, 1994). Moreover, the inspectorate also continued to regulate input into the curriculum through the ongoing publication of advice and good-practice guides over the years that followed.

Concurrently, rationalisation of provision in the upper secondary (the fifth and sixth years of study) was underway in Scotland, beginning with the appointment of the Howie Committee in 1990 (Raffe, 1993). Reporting back to the SED in 1992, the Howie Committee drew attention to the problem in the upper secondary school. Chiefly, the existing Higher Grade qualification was the main priority in post-16 secondary education, and this only worked to the benefit of those who had attained well in their Standard Grade qualifications. Other learners were either destined for failure in Higher Grade courses or lacked appropriate and meaningful certification options beyond a smattering of modules at the right level (Raffe *et al.*, 2007). The Howie Committee diagnosed the problem, but it failed to provide a remedy, and the task was passed to the inspectorate in 1993 (Raffe *et al*. 2002).

The inspectorate provided the basis of a workable solution, and in 1994, *Higher Still: Opportunity for All* was published. This established five levels of courses (Access, Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Higher and Advanced Higher) with courses available in a range of academic and vocational subjects, including RMPS. These Higher Still or National Qualifications (NQs) replaced the Higher Grade, and the Access, Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2 courses paralleled but did not replace the Standard Grade Foundation, General and Credit levels, respectively. The aim of this was to enable learners to move to an appropriate post-Standard Grade level and to allow them to progress. Each course was to be made up of a selection of usually three units, and these units were assessed internally. The courses at Intermediate 1 level or above were also assessed by an

external exam, externally assessed coursework or both (Raffe *et al*. 2007). The Higher Still Development Unit (HSDU) began work straight away, again under the auspices of the inspectorate (*ibid*: 171-172).

By 1999, the first year of courses had been underway in schools, and they were due for certification in August 2000. To administer this, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) was established in 1997, following a merger of the SEB and SCOTVEC, and its processes combined in 1999/2000 to meet the demands of the NQs (Raffe *et al.*, 2002). However, certification of NQs in August 2000 was hampered by delays and errors. Whilst various investigative processes of the Scottish Executive identified that the issues lay at the operational level with the SQA, there was also a significant focus on the inspectorate.

In trying to understand why the problems had arisen, the Education Committee unearthed a tension within the processes of curriculum change, as they put it:

> So many sectors of the Scottish educational community voiced their concerns to the Committee that there was a conflict in the role of the Inspectorate as controllers of the Higher Still Development and evaluators of its success that it is essential that their role be redefined… They should act solely as the quality assurance agents for such developments. (Scottish Parliament, 2000, Quoted in Raffe *et al*. 2002:176)

In sum, the inspectorate had not necessarily been negligent in the execution of their duties, but their position in the system left little room to challenge their approach. This subsequently left teachers and schools within the system with no recourse to raise their issues regarding resources, pace of change and workload (*ibid;* Humes, 2015; Paterson, 2000b). The control over Higher Still and the NQs demonstrated that the inspectorate had extended its control of the senior school curriculum considerably by regulating the examination syllabi. However, the ultimate outcome was that their role in curriculum development and policy-making was seriously curtailed. In 2000, HMIE was reoriented as an executive agency focused on school quality through inspection (McIlroy, 2013; Weir, 2008).

Before 2000, the inspectorate was, of course, still concerned with inspecting the work of schools. Over the preceding decades, this work was increasingly guided by frameworks that sought to be the benchmark for quality and against which quality was to be assessed. In the 1980s, the emerging field of educational effectiveness research, led in Scotland by the Centre for Educational

Sociology at the University of Edinburgh, combined with the evermore present spectre of public accountability, as evidenced by the *Rendle Report*, motivated the inspectorate to adopt evermore systematic and refined approaches to their work (MacBeath, 2012; McGlynn & Stalker, 1995). By 1985, the Management of Educational Resources Unit (MERU, later known as the Audit Unit) was instituted within the inspectorate to provide analytics at a whole-system level and to ensure value for money for the inspectorate's work (Scottish Office, 1988). Moreover, the inspectorate authored guides illustrating both what an effective school should look like and what their inspections looked at and for. The first of these was published in 1988 as *Effective Secondary Schools,* and its primary counterpart followed the next year (MacBeath, 2012).

These guides reflected the key areas of schools evaluated during inspections and highlighted that the focus was on pupil attainment, the quality of learning and teaching, pupil guidance and leadership at the whole school and departmental level. Archie McGlynn, the director of the inspectorate's audit unit, and Harvey Stalker, then HM Chief Inspector of Schools, further described the process of inspection:

> In secondary schools a small core team of inspectors, who operate throughout the inspection, is charged with identifying key features of the institution and inspecting whole-school aspects of provision. The work of the core team is complemented by detailed inspection of a cross-section of subject departments undertaken by a larger inspection team. Subject departments are always inspected by specialists in the relevant subject (McGlynn & Stalker, 1995: 15)

The trend of making performance criteria increasingly clear, for example, in *Effective Secondary Schools*, continued in the early 1990s as schools were encouraged to use them to conduct annual reviews of their own work, mimicking the methods of the inspectorate (*ibid*; SOEID, 1996). This blend of published criteria that underpinned the inspection process and were also expected to inform schools' own reviews culminated in 1996 with the publication of *How Good Is Our School? Self-Evaluation Using Performance Indicators* (HGIOS) (SOEID, 1996).

4.8 Inspection and the Beginnings of Curriculum for Excellence, 2000 – 2010

As the recently established Scottish parliament recovered from the administrative failures of the exam diet in 2000, education became a central component in the political agenda of the Labour-led government (Humes, 2015; MacDonald, 2009; Johnston & MacKenzie, 2003). At the time, the inspectorate had been repositioned as an executive agency within the Scottish Executive, and further developments altered its role and relationships with the secondary curriculum.

First, the Scottish Consultative Committee on the Curriculum (SCCC), overseen by the inspectorate, in the role of 'assessors' sitting on the council and sub-committees, was merged with the Scottish Council for Educational Technology (SCET) on 1st July 2000 (MacBride, 2003). The merger formed Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) which became 'a non-departmental public body' with responsibility for curriculum development in Scotland. This move drew a sharp line between the responsibilities of the different players in the educational landscape. LTS was to deal with the development of the curriculum and associated resources, the SQA was to concern itself with the administration of national examinations, and the inspectorate's role was to monitor and evaluate the outputs and outcomes at various levels of the system. The division of labour had been demarcated, allowing for the inspectorate to regain credibility as it was now, in theory at least, independent from policy and curriculum generation and implementation and concerned only with output regulation.

The scrutiny work of the inspectorate was also given a refreshed statutory impetus and increased importance through the *Standards in Scotland's Schools, etc. Act 2000*. The new legislation made it a legal requirement for schools to engage in improvement activities across all aspects of their work and produce annual documents reporting on progress and next steps, in line with the inspectorate's self-evaluation guidance. Initially, this was the 1996 version of *HGIOS,* but a second updated edition followed in 2002. The differences between the two versions are minimal, but there is a subtle shift in how evaluations of the curriculum were to be made. Across both the 1996 and 2002 editions, there is a shared focus on key sub-components of the curriculum quality indicator, including: 'Structure of the curriculum' (QI 1.1) and 'Courses and programmes'

(QI 1.2). In the detailed descriptor for QI 1.2 in the 2002 version, there is, however, a recognition of the potential for justifiable flexibility in relation to curriculum design:

> Where courses or programmes of study differ significantly from recognised best practice as embodied in national and local advice, consideration should be given to the extent to which differences are based on a clearly stated alternative rationale which takes account of parents' and pupils' views and raising attainment (HMIE, 2002: 36)

Whilst this is not a radical step-change, it does highlight a loosening of the inspectorate's grip on the curriculum following the changes noted above and the increasing focus on school improvement more generally.

In March 2002, Cathy Jamieson, Labour MSP and then Minister for Education and Young People, inaugurated a nationwide discussion on the future of schooling, consulting professional and public stakeholders across Scotland. The result, in 2004, was the publication of *A Curriculum for Excellence* (*ACfE*) by the Curriculum Review Group. The report initiated a curriculum reform that ultimately aimed to reinvigorate learning in a joined-up aged 3 through to 18 curriculum that was not overcrowded, allowed for increased learner autonomy and deployed assessment to support learning (Scottish Government, 2004; Priestley, 2011 & 2010 & 2005). Whilst the foundational document was ultimately concerned with curriculum development, it is important to note that the inspectorate was a leading partner in these national discussions, represented in the first report by Chief Inspector Bill Maxwell.

Over the next six years, LTS led on a range of development activities to design and prepare for the new curriculum. At the same time, the inspectorate continued to drive forward self-evaluation, school improvement and inspection initiatives. In the secondary context, the emphasis was placed on performance in external examinations, with statistical analysis of departmental and school performance, using the Standard Tables and Charts (STACS), driving the agenda and linking into aspects of HGIOS (Cowie *et al*., 2007). Inspecting examination performance drew the inspectorate into monitoring curriculum outputs, and, as Cowie *et al*. (2007) suggest, this influenced curricular provision in schools. As schools sought to improve the outcomes of inspection, they could strategically axe or promote courses depending on their performance.

The intensity with which the inspectorate turned its attention to engaging in the inspection of schools and seeking to improve the quality of schools' work is also highlighted by the impact it had on the support offered to schools by their local authorities. Central support in the local authorities provided by officers and advisors, variously entitled 'Education Officers' or 'Quality Improvement Officers', was increasingly focused on the demands of inspection. The council officers would spend time involved in an annual cycle of quality assurance activities, ranging from reviews of results and annual quality reports through to school visits that included the observation of learning and teaching sessions and focus groups with teachers, parents, and pupils. Officers would also spend time supporting schools with their preparations for imminent inspections. Previously, the extensive time spent on school improvement and quality monitoring had been devoted more to matters concerning the content, delivery, and resourcing of the curriculum. At a time when there were increasing demands in relation to curriculum development, with the developments emerging from *ACfE*, the inspectorate's priorities had adversely affected the quantity, if not the quality too, of curriculum input support that had once been offered by local authority officials (Boyd & Norris, 2006; Ross, 2001).

In March 2007, the inspectorate published the third edition of HGIOS and emphasised that inspection was concerned with the outcomes of schooling. As HM Senior Chief Inspector Graham Donaldson explained in the introduction:

> The indicators within *How good is our school?* reflect the developing context within which schools now operate. They focus specifically on the impact of schools in improving the educational experience and lives of Scottish pupils through learning and their successes and achievements, particularly the broad outcomes for learners within *A Curriculum for Excellence*… (HMIE, 2007: 2)

In the previous two versions of HGIOS, quality indicators concerned explicitly with the curriculum were the first in the lists provided and these were rated on a four-point scale. In the 2007 edition, there is a six-point scale (unsatisfactory, weak, satisfactory, good, very good and excellent), and Curriculum sits as QI 5.1, preceded by seven other indicators under the four thematic headings: 'Key performance outcomes', 'Impact on learners', 'Impact on staff' and 'Impact on the community'. Again, the primacy of impact and outcomes is suggested by

these titles and the ordering. At a time when curriculum development was front and centre in national developments, the inspectorate prioritised product over process and output over input. Indeed, as Reeves (2008) has highlighted, any claims made at the time that the new edition of HGIOS was aligned to *ACfE* were entirely rhetorical. This appears to have been recognised by the inspectorate at the time as additional guidance was published in September 2008 ahead of the implementation of inspections based on the 2007 edition of HGIOS (HMIE, 2008a). *Improving our Curriculum Through Self-Evaluation* was an inspectorate publication directed at schools that provided an exposition on how the curriculum would be inspected. It made explicit use of expressions, ideas and wording found in *ACfE* and offered models and examples of how to approach curriculum development and evaluation within the framework of the new curriculum (*ibid*). In this publication, the inspectorate's attention turned more towards regulating curriculum input, something that it had tended to avoid since 2000 (Ozga *et al.*, 2013 & 2015). Indeed, Priestley and Humes (2010) have observed that the underlying design of *ACfE* was, and remains, theoretically suspect, blending a mix of different curriculum types in, at best, a pragmatic way and, at worst, a confused and contradictory manner. The absence of the inspectorate from such work may have, at least in part, exacerbated this as the priorities within *ACfE* presented an epistemological and practical clash (Humes, 2013).

By the end of 2009, a suite of strategic, content, and operational guidance had been published for *ACfE*. The architecture and guiding principles of the curriculum, building on *A Curriculum of Excellence*, were published in the *Building the Curriculum* series (with the final instalment, *Building the Curriculum 5: A Framework for Assessment,* arriving in 2011). Curriculum area aims for the eight curriculum areas, including RME, were issued in *Principle and Practice* papers, each providing a rationale for inclusion and possible approaches and intended impacts. The content, in the form of open-ended and non-prescriptive 'Experience and Outcome' statements covering five levels (from early to fourth) in each curriculum area, was arranged by sub-organisers and shared with practitioners after consultation and review (Humes, 2013). As implementation began in 2010, the 'A' was dropped from *ACfE,* and the standard nomenclature in documentation and practice became *Curriculum for Excellence* (*CfE*).

4.9 Implementation and Inspection, 2010-2020

The challenges of understanding the implementation of *CfE* link back to the same challenges identified in the theoretical literature on understanding policy change and enactment (Singh *et al.,* 2013; Ball *et al.,* 2011; Ball, 1993). The extent and nature of implementation could be charted and disputed in relation to particular levels of the educational system, different components within the system (primary or secondary schools) and, as Priestley and Minty (2013) note for *CfE,* the level of engagement from different actors in the system itself. What is consistently acknowledged is that the nature and focus of inspection was, and indeed remains, a key factor in the implementation of *CfE*, particularly in secondary schools (Wallace and Priestley, 2017; Priestley *et al.,* 2012 & 2014; Priestley, 2010; MacKinnon, 2011; Reeves, 2008).

By October 2010, the SNP government had decided that the inspectorate was to be combined with LTS, and in July 2011, the amalgamation of the two created Education Scotland (Hutchison, 2018). The new organisation, which saw curriculum and inspection established as bedfellows in one organisation, may have been an attempt to address the concerns regarding the challenges of implementation. Equally, work on the governing strategies of the SNP also suggests that such a move could have been about ensuring effective control of key governing technologies and resources, namely inspection (Arnott & Ozga, 2016 & 2010; Arnott, 2016; Clarke, 2015).

The inspectorate, now part of Education Scotland, quickly began to reassert itself in the context of curriculum change and the implementation of *CfE*. In August 2011, *Arrangements for Inspecting Schools in Scotland* was published, identifying QI 5.1 The Curriculum of the 2007 edition of HGIOS as one of five main areas of focus. The inspections themselves would have 'a particular focus on learning, teaching, literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing within the context of a broad general education' (Education Scotland, 2011: 10). This specific focus links to a concern with understanding the extent and nature of the implementation of *CfE*. In addition, the inspectorate actively outlined specific expectations for schools for aspects of their curricula through the issuing of 'Inspection Advice Notes' or 'raised expectations notes' (Hutchison, 2018; Education Scotland, 2013 & 2014a & 2015a & 2015b). In no small way here was

the inspectorate regulating curriculum. Inspectors were ensuring that plans for implementation were of a suitable standard and that they were bringing about change in line with the policy expectations of *CfE*. The inspectorate's commitment to understanding and directing improvements with regard to the curriculum was further evidenced in 2014 with the publication of a range of Curriculum Area Impact Reports. These reports reviewed provision across Scotland by focusing on individual curriculum areas based on focus groups and reviews of individual school reports for both the primary and secondary sectors.

Throughout 2014 and early 2015, Education Scotland consulted across the education system on HGIOS and on approaches to inspection. The demands of *CfE* and a variety of new policy initiatives that were increasingly making demands on schools, from new examinations and employability schemes to child welfare and safeguarding, made a compelling case to refresh HGIOS (Education Scotland, 2015b). In September 2015, HGIOS 4th Edition (HGIOS4) was published and acknowledged the significance of curriculum change as a driver for change in the system and as an area for continued scrutiny:

> the aspiration for all schools to be ambitious, excellent schools has continued to be driven forward through Curriculum for Excellence and other policy initiatives… This edition of How good is our school? aims to support your improvement within this significant agenda through a continued focus on learning and learning outcomes. (Education Scotland, 2015c: 6)

In academic session 2015-2016, Education Scotland spent time testing out different approaches to inspection under the new framework of *HGIOS* 4th Edition. In June 2016 Bill Maxwell, the HM Senior Chief Inspector and, now also, Chief Executive of Education Scotland, wrote to schools to announce the new arrangements to be implemented in August 2016 (Education Scotland, 2016a).

Inspections of schools would take one of two forms, either a 'Full' or 'Short' inspection. The 'Full' inspections would cover four quality indicators that would be evaluated using the six-point scale, including QI 1.3 Leadership of Change, QI 2.3 Learning, Teaching and Assessment, QI 3.2 Raising Attainment and Achievement and QI 3.1 Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion. There would also be an additional focus on the theme of 'Learning Pathways' from the QI 2.2 Curriculum and on aspects of QI 2.7 Partnerships, which would not be

formally evaluated. Schools would also be able to select a quality indicator which they could ask inspectors to review to inform future developments. The 'Short' form of school inspection would only focus on two quality indicators, the selection of which has varied for one of them over time but has consistently included QI 3.2. The changes also saw the inspection report altered to a short one to two or three-page letter, which would be published online, alongside questionnaire returns and a fuller record of inspection findings (*ibid*).

Education Scotland's decision to focus on 'Learning Pathways' within QI 2.2 Curriculum is a significant development for the inspectorate's involvement with the curriculum. In the exposition provided in HGIOS 4th Edition on what 'Very Good' Learning Pathways look like, the inspectorate demonstrates both a concern with regulating what goes into constructing school curricula and what they produce. Schools are advised that 'Learning pathways are based on the experiences and outcomes and design principles of progression, coherence, breadth, depth, personalisation and choice, challenge and enjoyment and relevance' and a successful curriculum 'provides flexible learning pathways which lead to raising attainment… build on their prior learning and ensure appropriate progression for all learners.' (Education Scotland, 2015c: 34).

The raft of developments and implementation activity that had occurred since 2010 demanded a reorientation across the system, and in August 2016, the HM Chief Inspector of Education issued *A Statement for Practitioners from HM Chief Inspector of Education.* Whilst the primary focus of the statement was on ensuring both equity of and improved outcomes in literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing, the statement highlighted the core aspects of the curriculum that mattered to the inspectorate at that time. In terms of regulating input, the inspectorate was evidently keen to make sure that, whilst teachers would 'identify what will be taught and how…' their curricula 'ensures appropriate progression and levels of attainment for all children and young people.' (Education Scotland, 2016b: 4). Progression was the main concern in terms of what the inspectorate expected school curricula to offer, and, from this, they expected to see improved attainment. The *Statement* also notes that practitioners should be using 'Benchmarks' to make assessment judgements. The issue with Benchmarks at the point the *Statement* was issued was that they were still very much in development and would only be finalised in March 2017.

These local developments should also be understood, at least in part, as a response to the OECD's (2015) *Improving Schools in Scotland: An OECD Perspective* report. Published in December 2015, the report highlighted that there was a need for the Scottish education system to have a better, data-informed overview of how well *CfE* was being implemented and what outcomes learners were achieving (Priestley, 2018). The above-noted refocusing of the inspection processes evidently sought to generate more local information on implementation and, in turn, engaged with the OECD's points for improvement.

In 2017, the Curriculum for Excellence Management Board was replaced by the Curriculum and Assessment Board (CAB). This group was set up to be 'the key forum for oversight of curriculum and assessment activity in Scotland' and was initially co-chaired by the Scottish Government's Director of Learning and Gayle Gorman, the newly appointed Chief Inspector of Education and Chief Executive of Education Scotland (CAB, 2017: 1). As the minutes of the CAB also evidence, representatives of the inspectorate have been present at CAB throughout its history. Much more extensive documentary and empirical research on the CAB, never mind the whole range of governance groups established post-2015 in Scotland, needs to be undertaken to establish its impact and significance. For now, Humes (2020) has highlighted that the CAB maintained much of the same governance arrangements for curriculum and, as evidenced in the minutes, continued to see the inspectorate involved in high-level groups driving curriculum change.

CAB was the group that led the development of the final major milestone in curriculum development within the timeframe of this study, the *Refreshed Narrative*. Issued as a digital resource in September 2019, the *Refreshed Narrative* reframed curriculum priorities around the four capacities of *CfE* and streamlined advice with the aim of supporting practitioners' engagement with the curriculum (Scottish Government, 2019). Humes & Priestley (2021: 190) noted that it was 'too early to say how helpful the refreshed narrative of CfE' would be and, given the interruption of the pandemic shortly after its publication, other priorities might have eclipsed this refocusing on the curriculum. For this study, it is notable that, at least as far as documented in the CAB minutes, there were no inspectors involved in the 'Curriculum Narrative' CAB sub-group that were responsible for developing the *Refreshed Narrative* (CAB, 2019: 4). This situation of inspectorate involvement in national

curriculum initiatives and a lack of clarity on the nature of their activities, influence and impact is certainly a feature of the post-2010 education system.

4.10 The State and the Inspectorate

Considering educational governance across the period under consideration, it is clear from the account of the inspectorate's interactions with curriculum development above that the inspectorate has increasingly become part of the state's apparatus for delivering on its governance ambitions. Or, to use the framing explored in Chapter 3, the inspectorate has moved from being one of many organisations involved in elements of education governance to one organisation directed by the central government in a corporatist governing of education.

While it must be acknowledged that different elements of the inspectorate's work with aspects of education beyond schools, such as colleges, might offer different perspectives, the 1980s can be identified as the decade where this transition began for the inspectorate (McGlynn & Stalker, 1995). Indeed, with the Standard Grade development programme and the initiation of 5-14, the inspectorate and inspectors become directly and explicitly embedded within high-profile national initiatives.

The debacle with the examination results in 2000, as discussed, highlights the inspectorate's involvement with the curriculum. However, in the Scottish Executive's re-positioning of the inspectorate and the later merging of it with LTS to form Education Scotland in 2011, there is too a clear demonstration of the central government managing its governing assemblage to attend to the challenges of the time. Concerning the first reconfiguration, the disgruntlement felt towards the inspectorate necessitated action. The latter organisational rearrangement was, at least in part, an attempt to scaffold the implementation of *CfE*.

Inspectors are involved with curricular developments as part of Education Scotland. However, it becomes less clear precisely what these involvements are and their impact in the last decade considered by this study. Admittedly, as the archival work discussed in chapters 5 and 7 suggests, this may result from the source material not being fully available due to restrictions on official

documentation becoming public. Yet it is, at least for now, considered a symptom of a pluralist governance arrangement that has the inspectorate and inspectors embedded in national projects, boards and groups in alignment with the central government's agendas. Indeed, while the developments sit beyond the timeframe of this study, at the time of writing, the Scottish Government is, again, disaggregating the inspectorate from the curriculum agency, Education Scotland, to create a more 'independent' body (Scottish Government, 2022: 6).

The inspectorate's work in inspecting schools has also been increasingly oriented towards the state's priorities, further highlighting that the inspectorate's work is contingent on overarching governance ambitions. This, as discussed, is evident in the third and fourth editions of HGIOS, which become ever more aligned with *CfE* in their language and focus areas. However, it is at its most detectable in the recalibration of the inspection process from August 2016 onwards. While the case has already been made that the attention paid to 'Learning Pathways' within QI 2.2 Curriculum was a response to national priorities highlighted by the OECD report, the other selected quality indicators that became the focus of full model inspections also share in this alignment to governance ambitions.

Throughout 2015, the Scottish Government developed a draft and, later, a final version of the annually updated National Improvement Framework (NIF) policy, which has as its core 'vision' an education system that would aim for 'excellence through raising attainment' and 'achieving equity' (Scottish Government, 2016: 3). The NIF envisages this being achieved through a set of drivers that, until 2020 when they were revised, included teacher professionalism, parental engagement, school improvement, performance information school leadership and assessment of children's progress. The move to focus on QI 1.3 Leadership of Change and QI 3.2 Raising Attainment and Achievement concern themselves with the same areas of practice as the latter two drivers evidence the inspectorate's alignment with the national vision. Indeed, as Education Scotland (2016a: 1-2) made clear in their letter about the changing approach to inspection in June 2016, the evaluated QIs 'have been re-focused to align with the new National Improvement Framework'. More significantly, the letter also highlights how the inspectorate is not just aligning with the NIF but orienting their work to support efforts to pursue the vision, as

evidence from the chosen QIs will 'feed directly into the evidence base for the National Improvement Framework'.

4.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter has drawn attention to the long history of inspectorate involvement in curricular developments in Scotland, focusing on secondary education. The period prior to the 1960s saw the inspectorate occupied with examinations. As mass secondary education demanded mass certification from the mid-1960s, the inspectorate turned its attention to leading and regulating curriculum developments via committees and in concert with the CCC. This work positioned the inspectorate to lead on the Standard Grade, 5-14 and Higher Still developments. Whilst working in partnership with teachers and stakeholders, the inspectorate brought their expertise and connections to craft curricular guidelines and expectations. The inspectorate, through inspection, also continued to maintain a focus on regulating curriculum outputs. It drove the agenda for curriculum through four iterations of their self-evaluation framework, HGIOS, and, from 2011, as part of Education Scotland, took the national lead on shaping the implementation of *CfE*.

Priestley's (2014) model of curriculum regulation has been helpful as a heuristic aid in this chapter in identifying where the inspectorate has and is paying attention to what the curriculum should look like or what it should produce. It has allowed for a more considered comment on the relationship between inspection and curriculum, especially in more recent decades. Previous scholarship has tended to stress that the inspectorate and inspection can be a potential bar to school or teacher-led curriculum developments. In this chapter, there is a longer-term perspective that has found that the inspectorate and inspection have exerted considerable influence on the secondary curriculum in Scotland through both the regulation of input and output.

This chapter has laid down relevant context and background on Scottish education and has demonstrated a significant and constantly evolving dynamic between curriculum and inspection. This chapter highlights that a long-term historical approach is relevant to understanding such relationships, and Chapter 5 will build on this by laying out the approach to the original research on the

inspectorate, inspection and RME. As RME has been a constituent part of secondary school curricula, it is clear that inspection and the work of the inspectorate will have an impact on it, too. Following Chapter 5, this study will take forward this broad outline provided here and consider the unique story of RME.

Chapter 5: Research Approach

5.1 Introduction

The overarching aim of this chapter is to make the research approach of this study explicit, provide sound justification for the choices regarding discipline, methodology and analytical strategies and consider, where appropriate, any limitations. To achieve this, the following key points will be explored. First, the disciplinary orientation of the study will be articulated. Second, the broad methodology of historical research will be explored. Thereafter, a discussion of the research and source analysis methods will be explained. In addition, this chapter will also consider the ethical dimensions of the research and the need for reflexivity on the part of the researcher. In presenting the research approach of this study, I follow Scott (2016: 245) in arguing that I am 'necessarily making a claim' that this study's approach is an effective one to answer the questions posed. Indeed, as the first research question focuses on establishing and understanding the long-term relationship between the inspectorate, inspection and RME, a historical study provides the opportunity to reconstruct this through analysis and interpretation of primary sources. Moreover, the second research question seeks to examine inspection documentation and documentation produced by the inspectorate as a body of primary sources and explore how these inform our understanding of the development of RME in Scottish non-denominational secondary schools. Historical research has ensured this has been carried out systematically in this study.

5.2 Disciplinary Orientation

Fundamental to understanding the approach I have taken in this study is to be clear about the disciplinary orientation of the work. Central to all knowledge claims and the validity of research are the disciplinary boundaries and communities within which it locates itself. By discipline, I follow Burbules *et al.* (2015: 8):

> We use the word "discipline" to describe fields of investigation for a reason: methods and traditions of inquiry, a body of literature, and a scholarly community of peers support and provide structure to the discipline of inquiry for any individual scholar.

This study has been undertaken within the discipline of the History of Education. History of Education as a discipline is understood in this study, following Depaepe (2007), as a branch of historical scholarship. This choice is based principally on the well-articulated possibilities of doing research on educational concerns within the disciplinary norms of history that is rigorous and contributes to discussions that are of concern and interest to the enterprise of educational research, as much as they are to historians more generally (McCulloch & Richardson, 2000; McCulloch, 2004 & 2011b; Martin, 2018). Indeed, the chapters provided by McCulloch (2011) and Martin (2018) for the seventh and eighth editions, respectively, of the foundational *Research Methods in Education* textbook are illustrative of this (Cohen *et al*. 2018 & 2011). In texts that run to 38 (seventh edition) and 45 (eighth edition) chapters, McCulloch is one of only four, and Martin is one of seven to contribute a specialised chapter; the rest are written by Cohen *et al*. Their contributions show how historical research on education is valuable but specialised in nature, respected through the invitation of a specialist commentator.

The research questions of this study further support the choice of discipline. The broad topic areas of research, RME and inspection, are decidedly about aspects of education, its systems, processes, and content. Yet, as per the first research question, the focus on understanding these issues over a near-sixty-year time frame means that my concerns here are about a historic dynamic or about a dynamic as it developed historically. The second research question, which seeks to systematically explore inspectorate documentation and inspection reports as a source for understanding RME in Scotland, also demands that attention be paid to historical, primary source material. Thus, the history of education is an appropriate disciplinary home for this study.

This study has been completed in the context of a PhD programme in Education in the School of Education at the University of Glasgow, and this might suggest that 'education' be a more appropriate discipline for this study. Across those that carry out education research, there are ongoing discussions about what areas of investigation and approaches to such investigations should and should not make up the disciplinary arena. This reflects both the openness and

variety of interests and the flexibility of researchers in terms of their methodological approaches. At the same time, it also reflects concerns regarding the validity of investigative areas and modes of working. This is typically exemplified by contrasting the, perhaps over-dramatised, distinctions between the epistemologies and methodologies of quantitative and qualitative researchers and how even mixed-methods research may not entirely resolve tensions (Cohen et al., 2018: 9; Thomas & Corbett, 2018; Brinkmann et al., 2014).

Qualitative research in education crosses disciplinary boundaries at times as it utilises approaches and norms from across the social sciences and humanities (Spencer et al., 2014). Therein, there is the tradition of documentary research. Documentary, or document, research might be suggested here as a suitable approach to addressing the research questions of this study. Research with documents can certainly be a viable approach to addressing education-related research questions concerning both past and present (McCulloch, 2011b). However, while this study is grounded in the study of documents, the issues of presentism and methodology further support the choice of the history of education as the disciplinary orientation of this study (Cohen et al., 2018; McCulloch, 2011a, 2011b & 2004; Depaepe and Simon, 2009; McCulloch & Richardson, 2000).

First, Depaepe (2004: 336) argues that locating a historical study within educational research risks it succumbing to 'the danger of presentism' and its being used to respond to the needs of the now (Popkewitz, 2011). Further, there is a danger that positioning this research as just a documentary study in the discipline of education limits the historical dimension to mere background (Depaepe & Simon, 2009), where it is instead a fundamental priority of the research project. This, as Depaepe (2007: 39-40) maintains, is valuable as a history of an aspect of education 'offers a counterweight for the sometimes one-sided and short-winded research with an empirical-quantitative signature' found in educational research. Yet, this study does not take up Gasman's (2014) extreme position that qualitative research methods are largely devoid of utility. Rather, in line with McCulloch's more integrative stance, the opportunities they afford for enhancing analysis of the documentary corpus via methods from social research are also utilised here (Richardson, 2019; McCulloch, 2004; McCulloch & Richardson, 2000).

Second, the implicit workings of mainstream historical scholarship are not at once easily aligned with the more explicitly defined and described approaches of educational and social research (Gasman, 2014; Kipping et al., 2013). As St. Pierre (2016: 37) writes, 'history calls into question the necessity… of dominant methodologies.' Indeed, historical research and analysis is centred on an awareness of the dynamics of the past that attends to the principles of the differences between different historical periods, the significance of context and the importance of process with respect to change and continuity to interpret historical events (Tosh, 2015). It does not tend to proceed in sequenced, and codified, models of analysis. Here, McCulloch, whom Richardson (2019) sees as someone who celebrates the interconnectedness of education, history, and social sciences, notes that working models for 'doing' documentary research on historical questions are methodologically loose and based on key principles, not procedures and processes (McCulloch, 2004). Thus, while the term documentary research may be deployed at points in this study, it is firmly within the framing of this study as a history of education based on research with documents.

5.2.1 Curriculum History and Educational Governance

A survey of the approaches that can be taken within the history of education highlights a considerable range of options. Thus, there is a need to make the choice of approach explicit, as different approaches have different priorities (Tosh, 2015; Goodson & Anstead, 1994; Goodson, 1988). For instance, a feminist, postmodern or colonial history of education could be, respectively, and potentially in various combinations, concerned with dimensions of power or aspects of gender in relation to the educational past. Such work would focus on particular groups, communities and their interactions with institutions and processes in ways that histories of education identifying otherwise would not necessarily be focused on, such as institutional histories of individual schools (McCulloch & Richarson, 2000). However, there would be no reason why a gender-focused history of an educational institution could not be written should the choice be made to combine such approaches (Woodin & Wright, 2023).

This study, conducted within the discipline of the history of education, has been undertaken within the broad approach of curriculum history with a

concern for educational governance therein. Curriculum history generally, and this study in particular, focuses on 'the origins and development of particular schools subjects', incorporating consideration of the individuals, organisations and institutions involved in such developments (Goodman & Martin, 2004: 5). The focus on such individuals, organisations and institutions, namely the inspectorate and inspectors, highlights the focus on governance. As highlighted in Chapter 4, the inspectorate has been a central organisation for educational governance and developments in Scotland. Again, instructed by the study's two research questions, curriculum history has been chosen as it attends to the challenge of understanding the factors impacting developments for school subjects as intended and as enacted (Goodson, 1994). As the following chapters of this study demonstrate, this study offers an analysis of how the inspectorate and inspection shaped curricular developments for RME. Then, in step with the intention that curriculum history avoids failing 'to analyse the internal nature of schooling', it explores what was going on in schools with respect to RME based on inspectorate documentation (*ibid*: 51).

5.3 Historiography and the History of Education

Articulating methodological and theoretical considerations on historical research has been a long-contested task, with tensions between historians and philosophers on the precise nature of the endeavour (McCulloch, 2011b; Iggers, 2002). As Dray (1997: 764) writes of the relationship between them, 'fruitful interaction between the two groups has nevertheless been the exception rather than the rule'. However, historians of education must engage in methodological, philosophical and theoretical discussions to enhance their explorations of the past. Here, captured under the broad label of historiography, such discussions are, as McCulloch and Watts (2003: 129) put it, 'not optional extras but are integral to the historian's craft'.

There is no shortage of commentary on such issues and multiple stances can be adopted in undertaking scholarship within the history of education. For the current editors of the UK-based *History of Education* journal, such variety does not need to result in different approaches being considered in opposition to one another but, instead, it invites 'innovative and pathfinding present and

future approaches to the history of education' (Ellis *et al*. 2023). The debates and explorations highlight that a study in the history of education should, at least, attempt to be clear about two points in relation to historiographical concerns. Namely, understandings of the past and the nature of historical evidence.

5.3.1 Understanding the Past

Scholars advocate that a history of education project should offer a clear overview of the researcher's understanding of what the past is and how we come to understand it (Tosh, 2015; Tröhler, 2013; Aldrich, 2003). History of education has been both a victor and a victim of the philosophical debates about knowledge of the past. Such debates have shaped, informed, challenged and changed the perspectives and approaches of historians since the beginning of the twentieth century in various waves (McCulloch, 2011b; Brinkmann *et al*. 2014).

A central concern originated in the challenges of what Evans (2000: 231) called the 'hyper-relativism of the postmodernists'. Here, it is important to understand that postmodernists, such as Hayden White, contested historical research on the basis that knowledge claims are constructed and that there is no one true historical reality. Therefore, any and, potentially, all accounts of the past are, put positively, equally valid and put negatively, equally redundant (Spiegel, 2019; Fendler & Depaepe, 2015; Dray, 1997). While there is not the space here to explore these developments in full, they have, as Spiegel (2019: 8) explains, left historians needing to position their understandings of the past 'somewhere on a "sliding scale" between objectivity and subjectivity'. This is necessary as, despite the debates, and in agreement with Tröhler (2019b: 4), 'Nobody doubts that there is a past and that humans have a past'. Indeed, these debates were important, but the more integrative stance of Ellis *et al*. (2023) has been adopted in the mainstream of history of education research.

Radical alignment to either end of the 'sliding scale' in terms of understanding the past is rightly critiqued as limiting, not empowering, historical research. Thus, as summarised by McCulloch (2011b: 77), the task for the historian of education is to find 'a middle way between the polar opposites of empiricism and relativism'. In step with this claim, the position adopted in this

study concerning how the past can be understood is that labelled by Aldrich (2003: 142) as 'enhanced empiricism' and articulated by Evans (2000: 253) as follows:

> I will look humbly at the past and say despite them all: it really happened, and we really can, if we are very scrupulous and careful and self-critical, find out how it happened and reach some tenable though always less than final conclusions about what it all meant.

As Richardson's (2007) historiography of the history of education in the UK between 1996 and 2006 and Woodin & Wright's (2023) more recent survey further demonstrate, scholarship has generally tended towards this more self-aware empirical approach. It has maintained a focus on recovering as accurate an account of the past as possible but acknowledges the parameters of subjectivity within which such objective intentions must operate. For example, Richardson (ibid: 587) notes, as is also acknowledged in this study, that elements of postmodern critique, such as the significance of the influence of present-day concerns on historical analyses, have now been 'accepted as integral to the condition of writing history'.

5.3.2 Making Sense of Historical Evidence

Adopting the stance that there is a recoverable past, albeit shaped by subjective considerations that need to be acknowledged, also emphasises the importance of understanding the nature of historical evidence. Or, put another way, how we can come to write a history of education. A more detailed discussion of the approach to historical research will be explored below. However, it is necessary to explain the centrality of the research questions and the nature of evidence about the past and outline the central role of interpretation in this study.

The research questions that the historian of education asks are central to how historical evidence is understood. As Tröhler (2013: 87), connecting to foundational debates on the nature of historical facts, explains, 'there is a difference between "facts of the past" and "historical facts," but seemingly, the same "historical facts" turn out to be quite different according to the interests that transfer "facts of the past" to "historical facts"'. Ultimately, these

'interests' are captured in the research questions being asked. In turn, what counts as a source is also determined, at least in part, by the research questions (Trohler, 2019b). Indeed, the research questions ultimately guided the selection of items from the archives, libraries and online repositories and the selection of the 'traces of the past' or evidence within particular items for this study (Popkewitz, 2013: 1).

The research questions and the sources also begin to define the categories and labels that frame historical discussions (Fendler & Depaepe, 2015). Such categories or 'distinctions', as Popkewitz (2019:15) notes, are 'embedded' in historical research. Though open to criticism, such categories come from the sources, the context they refer to, and respond directly to a study's research questions (Kuckartz, 2014). As Rury (2006: 325) puts it, a 'hallmark' of historical research 'is a preoccupation with context… other events and…the general background of a period.' Ultimately, the sources, the context and the categories provide the framework within which interpretation takes place (Trőhler, 2019a; Kipping et al., 2013).

5.3.3 Interpretation

As Rury (2006: 324) states, 'historical inquiry begins and ends with interpretation'. Interpretation is the basis of and process of reaching knowledge claims about the past. Fendler and Depaepe (2015: 868, emphasis in the original) support this when they recognise that it 'is not *whether* interpretation plays a role in history' and develop it further by considering the 'kinds' of interpretation. While such a discussion begins to touch on the methods of historical scholarship, explored more fully below, it is important to highlight the kind of interpretation deployed in this study.

Here, I adopt Fendler and Depaepe's (2015) broad framework for understanding different approaches to interpretation. They identify three broad approaches: objectivist, critical and aesthetic. The interpretation deployed in this study is best described as 'objectivist' with an acknowledgement that an element of 'critical' interpretation is detectable regarding the argument developed around the interplay between the inspectorate and RME. As Fendler and Depaepe (2015) clarify, such labels aid the articulation of different

approaches to interpretation adopted, and they can be combined in various ways (McCulloch, 2015).

Objectivist interpretation, in short, is about understanding things 'as they occurred… as impartial[ly] and as objective[ly] as possible' to provide 'an undistorted picture' that retains 'fidelity to archival materials' and other sources (Kerdeman, 2015: 22; Aldrich, 2002: 1). This, as noted above, is ultimately aspirational and maintains an awareness of the inescapability of subjectivity in historical work. Indeed, scholars openly acknowledge that such a project is still an interpretation, albeit one that is conducted against the preceding points. The 'critical' dimension of the interpretation deployed in this study lies in its 'calling assumptions' about the relationship between the development of RME and the inspectorate 'into question' (Fendler & Depaepe, 2015: 869).

Objectivist interpretation has been adopted for this study as it aims to develop 'the most plausible account of the item researched', demanding rigour in its engagement with evidence (Depaepe, 2012: 454). As Bevir (1994: 336) puts it, this should mean that the account is developed with 'reference to as many clearly defined facts as we can' and is 'intelligible and coherent'. This has been attempted here with consistent and, in places, extensive reference to relevant source material and a clearly expressed account. Gardner (2015: 901) also highlights that an objectivist interpretation engages with 'other competing historical interpretations', and while there is a paucity of extended studies on the precise topic under consideration here, key historical developments are considered in light of existing secondary literature. Such an approach is intended to ground the more critical aspects of the interpretation in the available evidence, where previous interpretations in the scholarship are developed or challenged, guarding against personal bias (Bevir, 1994).

In sum, working in the discipline of the history of education, this study is a curriculum history with a focus on education governance. It deploys an integrative understanding of the past, prioritising an engagement with source material in step with the research questions. To address the questions, interpretation is understood to be the foundation of historical research, and an objectivist interpretation has been undertaken. This approach included the development of an account based on primary evidence from key sources, which

in turn supported a critical questioning of previous scholarship to develop the arguments advanced.

5.3.4 The Researcher

The centrality of interpretation to historical research links to the need to consider too what the researcher brings to the study, a point raised in philosophical and theoretical discussions regarding both qualitative social science and historical research (Cohen *et al.*, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Burbules *et al*. 2015; McCulloch, 2011b). Across the literature, considering the researcher as part of the research approach ultimately highlights the issues of bias, prior experiences, political motivations, and presumptions of or from the researcher (Kipping *et al.*, 2013; Villaverde *et al.*, 2006; Iggers, 2002; Dray, 1997). Space does not permit a discussion of each of the various understandings of these concepts other than to acknowledge that they are all suggested to have an impact on research projects. In this regard, I can accept that as the researcher, I will carry these (or at least some particular manifestation or combination of them) into my work in ways that determine choices about topic, methodology and, chiefly, interpretative approach and the interpretations themselves. Alternatively, I can maintain that such concerns are not warranted and that the research has been completed objectively and in a manner disconnected from the researcher. On this point, having identified epistemologically with interpretivism, it is the former of these two options which must be selected, and a reflexive account offered of any and all conscious considerations regarding my background, biases and intellectual baggage (Iggers, 2002).

The first and perhaps most important point is to make it clear that this study was completed out of pure intellectual curiosity, building on prior academic studies in the field of RME in the Scottish education system. Having completed a small-scale qualitative enquiry for the thesis component of my MEd in Professional Practice, completed at the University of Glasgow in 2017, I noted a lacuna in the scholarship. As discussed in the introduction to this study, the role of school inspection was at once noted as significant but understandings of its role in the development of RME were underdeveloped. With an undergraduate

degree from the University of St Andrews (2014) in Medieval History, the historical dimension was aligned with my intellectual background, too. Indeed, that medieval history research normally sits at something of a remove from the immediate concerns of contemporary events partially explains my favouring of topics out of intellectual curiosity over contemporary utility. Whilst my professional experience at the point of conceiving this study provided a degree of 'insider status', discussed below, this research is not consciously pursuing any critical, political, or action-research oriented at change. This is not a study that seeks to align with what Villaverde *et al.* (2006: 320) call 'a critical educational historiography'.

Second, my previous experience, whilst not providing a motivation for the study, does provide an important orientation for me as a researcher in relation to understanding aspects of the study's focus from a different, experiential perspective. At the beginning of this study, in October 2018, I was a practising RME/RMPS and History teacher and Depute Head Teacher in a Scottish non-denominational secondary school and remained so until autumn 2019. Alerted to the concept by McKinney (2008: 25-26) and following the definition offered by Savvides *et al.* (2014: 414), I can claim here a degree, perhaps residual, of 'insider status', as I was one of 'those who by virtue of status or role are members of the groups or communities researched'. As a result, I experienced how policy could be operationalised and how RME could be taught, and, keeping in mind potential bias, I am aware of both the affective dimension of accountability pressures and the response of school leadership to these (Grek *et al.*, 2015; Perryman, 2009). In November 2019, I moved into higher education as a Lecturer in Education in the School of Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Glasgow and subsequently as Senior Lecturer in Education at Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh, from February 2023. Therefore, I had and continue to have an altered 'insider status' within Scottish education. Although I am very much still engaged with policy and curriculum in RME, my daily practice is now centred on teacher preparation. My scholarship, through this study and other projects, is oriented towards exploring historiographical debates and gaps in my areas of research for their own sake in the first instance (Scholes, 2020, 2022, 2023). My prior studies, ongoing work as an academic, and participation in research methods training have positioned me to complete this study competently.

5.4 Historical Research

The choice to conduct historical research to answer the research questions has been in part justified by the preceding expositions. This section further explores what historical research is, what it has involved in this study, and why it has been chosen. It also clarifies in more detail the centrality and understanding of sources. Thereafter, a record of the sources, the steps taken to gather them, and the analytical framework deployed will be provided.

McCulloch (2011a: 248) suggests that the three key purposes of engaging in historical research are to gain 'insights into', 'the past', 'processes of change and continuity' and the 'origins of the present'. These 'insights' are gained via the 'analysis of documents'. These aims align with this study's research questions. The focus on understanding the past dynamics of RME, the inspectorate and inspection directly correspond with the first and second aims, whilst the education-oriented concerns of RME and inspection also support an engagement with considering 'origins' of 'present' phenomena. Indeed, as McCulloch (*ibid*) further notes, historical research is apt in this case as the timeframe of over five decades demands an approach that 'examines the longer-term development of education'. Moreover, the second research question's aim to explore school inspection reports and inspectorate documentation was conceived of as and led to an 'analysis of documents' as the principal method. In sum, historical and documentary research is precisely the methodology demanded by the research problem.

Research with documents is the mainstay of history, and the social sciences also study documents. Historians engaging in research, as Kipping *et al*. (2013: 306) put it, 'tend to not explicitly discuss their methods for others to follow'. Yet in qualitative social science research, especially in Education, there is an expectation that the choices and processes should be laid bare for all to evaluate (Rury, 2006). As a result of working within the discipline of History of Education, inheriting baggage from both sides of this curious tension, it is important to be clear about *how* I have engaged in historical research. Hybridisation and adaptation of the key principles and detailed processes provided by Kipping *et al*. (2013) and McCulloch (2011a; 2004) have allowed me to articulate a guiding analytical framework, or method, for this historical research. It is composed of three core concepts offered by Kipping *et al*. (2013)

that guide the process of historical interpretation throughout the work. Each stage is enhanced by an engagement with McCulloch's (2011; 2004) general approach to analysing sources. It should be noted here that this is not a novel approach to historical research; rather, it is an explicit discussion of how *source criticism*, *triangulation* and *interpretative tools* were deployed to conduct historical research. As Gasman (2014) supports, this framework should also not be taken to be a sequential process; rather, it is my formulation of how I constantly and iteratively interpreted the documents. I propose that this framework, as method, supports the need to be explicit about method but rightly leaves room for unique interpretations.

5.4.1 Source Criticism

Source criticism, in its modern form, stems from the nineteenth century and Leopold von Ranke, who, having trained in philology, prioritised primary sources in his work and argued that through study of these we could understand the past as 'how it essentially was' (Evans, 2000: 17). For Kipping *et al*. (2013: 312-313) source criticism is 'the critique of each text' and is aimed at establishing a document's validity and credibility. This then ensures that the source is authentic and that as evidence (or data), it is fit for inclusion in a historical study (McCulloch, 2004). In searching to establish the validity of the document, the focus is on determining authorship, its intended audience, and its original context of production (McCulloch, 2015). The concept of a document will be discussed in more detail below. However, the guiding questions in relation to them, then, are whether the documents in this study have been created as we think they have been and whether the document is what we think it is. Kipping *et al*. (2013) then build on this by asking if the document is going to tell us something relevant and, if it is, whether it is reliable. In sum, can we trust it to provide evidence for the research questions? If, regarding these questions, the answer is broadly in the affirmative, then the documents are authentic. Yet, it should be made clear that this does not mean that such sources will be unproblematic, lacking detail, or limited by some or other particular feature. However, these guiding questions have been used at all stages of the research project to ensure that whatever evidence they bring to the study is trustworthy.

To this end, these same questions are continually deployed in relation to the discussion of documents, their collation, and their analysis below.

5.4.2 Triangulation

A second method underpinning the historical research of this study is that of triangulation. Following Kipping *et al*. (2013), this is conceived of here as the use of a range of different documents. Different documents can either provide additional evidence to support the interpretations that develop or, indeed, challenge them when a document provides conflicting or new perspectives. Moreover, the approach is valuable due to the indiscriminate availability and survival of documents (McCulloch, 2004). Indeed, triangulation affords us an opportunity to consider the dominance or absence of sources or groups of documents and what this may mean for our interpretation (Kipping *et al.,* 2013: 317). For this study, which is predicated on official sources, this is a valid point, and there is a need to qualify our analysis in light of the lack of sources from classroom practitioners. In this study, triangulation is used in two distinct ways. First, it is used to allow for the reconstruction of a narrative of the development of RME with regard to the inspectorate and the inspection of schools, with different groups or types of documents contributing to the overall interpretations. This, for example, includes secondary sources being compared and contrasted with primary documents (*ibid:* 319). Second, triangulation within one group of documents is used to help develop an understanding of a particular corpus – in this case, the archival material, national reports, and school inspection reports. Triangulation as a method is deployed in this study as a form of the constant comparative method (CCM). Used in a variety of ways across social science research, the CCM, as Merriam and Tisdell (2016: 32) put it, works by 'comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences.' In this study, the 'segment[s] of data' being compared will range from two or more extracts from the source material.

5.4.3 Interpretive Tools

Source criticism and triangulation are, as originally noted, not devoid of the ability to generate interpretative points. However, another tool, rather broadly defined, of the historical research undertaken in this study is to deploy methods of interpretation that enable the researcher to understand the documents and pull together analyses and conclusions. McCulloch (2004: 46-48) calls this 'theorisation', and Kipping *et al.* (2013: 312) propose a broadly conceived notion of a 'hermeneutic circle' that prioritises readings of the text linked back to the historical context and the context used to inform the reading of the text. In line with the historiographical position of an 'enhanced empiricism', this objectivist approach has operated in this study as the primary guiding method as to how interpretations have been constructed (Aldrich, 2003). However, the method from Kipping *et al.* (2003) leaves open room for incorporating further interpretative tools. To this end, as detailed in the discussions below, the overarching method is supported by further analytical tools. Namely, axial coding and qualitative content analysis have been deployed with a particular focus on understanding the composition of the school inspection reports (Cohen *et al.*, 2018).

5.4.4 Applying the Approach

The above discussion of the research approach has been enacted in this study in the analysis of four distinct groupings of documents. The first element of the study involved using printed primary sources to generate a fresh account of the development of RME with regard to the inspectorate and inspection since 1962. The findings of this are reported in Chapter 6. Next, and detailed in Chapter 7, archival material was explored to provide new evidence on key moments in the history of RME. The study then examined and compared five national reports on RME produced by the inspectorate between 1986 and 2014, with the findings reported in Chapter 8. Underpinning the discussion in Chapter 9 is the documentation produced by the inspectorate following the inspection of individual schools between 2016 and 2020. The material considered across these four elements was subjected to critical scrutiny and triangulation against items

across the corpus. The four-part nature of the study also offered the opportunity to triangulate key findings and points of discussion across the study.

With further specifics offered below, this four-part approach was a change from the original plan for this study due to the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on archival work. The original intention had been to conduct an extended study of individual schools' inspection documentation since the 1980s. This original plan would have involved extended engagements with school inspection documentation held at the NRS, examining individual schools' reports over a near-forty-year timeframe. This approach would have enabled the generation of a geographical and temporal mapping of the inspection of RME. However, access to the archives was impossible during the pandemic, and subsequently, there were ongoing restrictions to access (Ross, 2022). As a result, it was decided to adapt the study by engaging in an extended examination of the five major printed national reports and the available online school inspection documentation in detail. In addition, it was decided to access the NRS archival material related to the development of RME, the SED and the Inspectorate, as this corpus was more manageable within the time available.

It is important to recognise that the shift of approach has shaped the answers it offers to the questions posed. First, the national reports enable coverage of much of the same timeframe. Second, the use of these national reports means accepting that they are syntheses by the inspectorate of their various insights and sources at the various time points concerned. The initial plan would have, perhaps, offered an opportunity to contrast the more granular detail offered by individual batches of inspection documentation with these national reports. Third, the choice to examine the available online school inspection documentation demanded that the study extend its timeframe to 2020, where 2017 had been the original choice. Finally, the choice to maintain some element of archival work has enriched the historical account that this study can offer. More surprisingly, it has highlighted the extensive work that remains to be done on the historical development of RME.

5.5 Documents

Fundamental to historical research, as discussed above, is the analysis of source material, variously called documents, sources, and texts. In addition, source material can also include oral/audio, visual, audio-visual, multimedia, and artefactual materials, as well as buildings, landscapes and an increasingly diversified catalogue of things that can offer some form of insight into the past (Tosh, 2015; Munslow, 2000). As a result, as Richardson (2019) notes, the first problem then is that of having to be specific in navigating what is being referred to when discussing a source. In this study, the sources for the historical research conducted are documents (McCulloch, 2004; Prior, 2003; Scott, 1990).

Documents are neither a homogenous corpus of material nor are they easily defined (Scott, 1990). It is worth considering how the question can be tackled from different perspectives. For example, at the level of describing what things we may label documents, Scott (*ibid:* 13) provides a useful exposition. For him, 'a document in its most general sense is a written text…documents may be regarded as physically embodied texts, where the containment of the text is the primary purpose of the physical medium.'

For the historian, however, it helps to add McCulloch's (2011a: 249) short but effective contribution to this and note that 'a document may be defined briefly as a record of an event or process.' Here, the definition allows for an understanding of the nature of the constituent content of documents that are relevant to historians. In addition, Prior's conception of a document as an active actor alerts us to the need to understand what documents themselves do within the processes and events they relate to or are related to by the historian. As Prior (2003: 2) explains:

> if we are to get to grips with the nature of documents then we have to move away from a consideration of them as stable, static and pre-defined artefacts. Instead we must consider them in terms of fields, frames and networks of action. In fact, the status of things as 'documents' depends precisely on the ways in which such objects are integrated into fields of action, and documents can only be defined in terms of such fields.

From a historian's point of view, McCulloch (2011a: 249) provides a significant note on Prior's dynamic position. The documents that historians are interested

in are those which are 'produced independently of the researcher, for a range of possible purposes outside of the researcher's control' compared to 'those produced by researchers themselves as data for their research'.

So, pulling these various points together, a document in this study is something which contains, both stores and is composed of, written text. Documents refer to things that happened or were done and are themselves things that happened or were done. Documents were (and are) involved in other things that were done or thought but, in this case, are not the creation of a researcher. The last point here is significant as it hints at the bifurcation of documents into primary and secondary documents in historical scholarship.

5.5.1 Primary, Secondary, Both?

To describe a document as a primary source or document is, at its simplest, a consideration of when it was produced and by whom. Primary documents originate as 'a direct record of an event or process by a witness or subject involved in it' not long after the event or process (McCulloch, 2011a: 249). For the historical period under consideration in this study, the timeframe for 'not long after the event' varies from having a source created almost in sync with the event, for example, committee meetings, up to a few years after the events, such as final versions of policy documents. In this study, secondary sources or documents are the results of 'attempts by scholars to make sense of the primary sources' (Burbules *et al.*, 2015:10). These take the form of academic texts and commentaries in, for example, monographs, journal articles, and chapters from edited collections.

The distinction between primary and secondary is, however, a porous one (McCulloch, 2004a; Tosh, 2015; Prior, 2003). Items in this study that can be seen as secondary sources, scholarship, or commentary in one context have also been considered here as primary sources where appropriate (McCulloch and Richardson, 2000). The criteria for when such an approach is appropriate are not fixed, but questions about authorship and dating are significant factors. For example, Humes' *The Leadership Class in Scottish Education,* published in 1986, provides, on the one hand, a still relevant analysis of the Scottish educational establishment between the 1960s and 1980s. On the other, it can be seen as an example of an informed critical perspective on the politics and policy of

education specific to the author and the time it was written. Equally, and as a further example, Rodger's (1999) survey of RE in the first edition of *Scottish Education* is at once a scholarly perspective on RE that charts historical trends whilst also being a potential source for unpacking what mattered to those involved with the RE community in Scotland at the end of the twentieth century. To ensure this approach is transparent and effective, it will be made clear when academic studies, articles and commentaries are being subjected to evaluation as primary documentary material.

5.6 Describing the Sources

Beyond identifying a source as primary or secondary, it is also possible to offer further descriptions of sources to explain the research approach more fully in this study, highlighting how the above methods have been deployed. Across the work of Scott (1990), Prior (2003) and McCulloch (2004; 2011a & 2011b), one division that they propose among groups of documents relevant to those used in this study is that between those which are public and those which are private. This study is chiefly based on primary public documents. The documents are public in that they are the products of various organisations and individuals that have been published. This can include official government documents and reports, parliamentary records, policies, and other published texts from government agencies. In the last case, for example, particular reference can be made to curriculum guidance documents and, as a key focus of this study, inspection related documentation. These published documents are those which are, or at least were, publicly available.

In addition, public documents can be those produced by organisations other than the government or parliament, written collectively or on behalf of the organisation by an individual. It is important to note that some documents have not survived in great numbers due to the vagaries of time, and some of what were once freely available documents are now only accessible via library and archival collections (Tosh, 2015).

Sitting alongside these documents are those which are public in the sense that they are official documents created by official sources, such as government departments or committees, but that are strictly available via archival access

only. Such documents were not published but are public in that they now exist in the public domain, accessible via archives (Scott, 1990). In what follows, a clearer account of the range of primary documents covered in this study is provided, and specific documents are provided as examples and to raise points of consideration regarding source criticism of the corpus.

5.6.1 Primary Sources

In this study, the primary official published documents include government documents such as reports by appointed committees and individuals. The main example of this is SED (1972a), known as the *Millar Report*. In addition, there are documents that are the result of the everyday business of government, namely *Hansard*, for the period before devolution, which covers parliamentary discussions in both Houses of Parliament. The other primary public sources are those representing other stakeholder groups officially or corporately. For example, there are documents from professional organisations and practitioner-organised initiatives, such as C. I. MacKay's (1968) *Curriculum and Examinations in Religious Education*. Equally, there are reports and documents from Churches and other institutions. For example, from the Church of Scotland, there is I. M. Black's (1964) *Memorandum on Religious Education in Scottish Schools*.

There are published official reports, policy and guidance documents by government departments and agencies and national bodies concerned with education. These include, for example, HMIE's (2002) *How Good Is Our School: Self-Evaluation Using Quality Indicators*, a policy/practice document containing school inspection and self-evaluation criteria. Equally, organisations like HMIE, Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS), and Education Scotland have produced a range of curriculum and professional documents, which are included in this study. For example, curriculum frameworks and qualification specification documents, including the SCCORE reports of the 1970s, the *5-14* RME framework or the various documents relating to Curriculum for Excellence. Many of these public sources have already been used by scholars in peer-reviewed and published academic work. Chapter 7 presents a fresh interpretation of these primary sources alongside the existing scholarship. As an aspect of triangulation,

secondary works have been used in this study as an aid for finding relevant primary source material (Kipping *et al.*, 2013: 319).

The primary archival material in this study includes the internal memos and notes between officials in the SED and inspectorate and minutes from the CMRE. This material informs the discussion offered in Chapter 7. The archival material provided an important point of triangulation with the existing printed material and has enabled a fuller illustration of the inspectorate's activities concerning the development of RME since the 1960s.

Organisations, and chiefly the inspectorate itself, have also produced reports on the state of educational matters at various points, for example, SED (1986) *Learning and Teaching in Religious Education: An Interim Report by HM Inspectors of Schools* or Education Scotland's (2014b) *Religious and Moral Education, 3-18*. Such reports are treated in this study as valuable primary sources for addressing the first research question, and five national reports on RME by the inspectorate make up the core corpus for the discussion in Chapter 8 (see Table 1).

Table 1: National Reports

Report Title	Publication Date	Abbreviation
Learning and Teaching in Religious Education: An Interim Report by HM Inspectors of Schools	1986	*LTRE*
Effective Learning and Teaching in Scottish Primary and Secondary Schools: Religious Education. A Report by HM Inspectors of Schools	1994	*ELTRE*
Standards and Quality in Secondary Schools: Religious and Moral Education, 1995 - 2000. A Report by HM Inspectorate of Education	2001	*SQRE*
Religious and Moral Education – A Portrait of Current Practice in Scottish Secondary Schools.	2008	*REP*
Religious and Moral Education 3-18	2014	*IRRME*

Whilst the national reports are corporately authored by the inspectorate, they sit at a remove from inspection activity because they are either based on a synthesis of existing inspection reports or/and they incorporate additional

insights from data-gathering activities distinct from the inspection of individual schools. Both of these points mark these out as significantly different from inspection reports on individual schools. Indeed, as a point of source criticism, it is important to recognise that such reports are also composed to impart particular messages regarding the improvements and developments that a central authority, the inspectorate, wishes to see (McCulloch, 2011).

Also central to this study, as the basis of Chapter 9, is the documentation produced through the inspection of individual schools. The school inspection documentation explored in this study covers the later part of the period under consideration, dating from August 2016 to 2020. This corpus was available online at the time of the study and was accessed via Education Scotland's online database. As I have demonstrated elsewhere, this online repository, and similar ones from inspectorates across the United Kingdom, are a fruitful primary source for research projects (Scholes, 2023).

5.6.2 Secondary Sources

It can be easy to take secondary sources for granted in historical research due to the focus on original work on primary sources. However, it is important here to acknowledge these documents as vital sources of information that, in and of themselves, provide the contours of the topics under investigation. While other secondary works are deployed in this study, it is worthwhile to note some important contributions. In relation to understanding Scottish education, with a particular emphasis on its historical development, the key works are those by Devine (1999), Humes (1986 & 2000), McPherson (1992; 1993), McPherson and Raab (1988), Hamish Paterson (2000) and Lindsey Paterson (1997; 2003), Pickard (1999), and Smout (1990). Scholarship on the inspectorate is provided by Bone (1968), Gallacher (1999), Humes (1986), Hutchison (2018), McIlroy (2013) and Weir (2003; 2008). For understanding RE, and specifically RME, in Scottish education, particularly from a historical perspective, the central works are those by Fairweather and MacDonald (1992), Matemba (2013; 2014a; 2014b; 2015), McKinney (2012; 2018; 2019), McKinney and Conroy (2007) and McKinney and McCluskey (2017); Nixon (2008; 2009; 2012a; 2012b; 2013; 2015; 2018) and Rodger (1999; 2003). All secondary works used in this study are recorded in the

reference list at the end of the study. As noted, the academic monographs, journal articles and chapters from edited collections have also provided direction to additional relevant material and primary documents. Moreover, it is important to flag up again the point that secondary material, depending on its specific origin and content, can also function as valuable primary source material for certain periods (Martin, 2018). For example, Frank Whaling's (1980) article on two reports from SCCORE is an example of a valuable near-contemporary perspective on the work of the organisation, as much as it is a scholarly analysis of the texts of the SCCORE reports.

5.7 Gathering the Documents

In social science research, it is traditional to articulate the methods of data gathering, usually due to the data being something that the researcher creates as part of their study (McCulloch, 2011a: 249). Whilst the historical researcher does not create documents as part of the data-gathering process, the process of gathering sources should be well-documented as it is central to source criticism and allows for robust and reliable triangulation. Due to the nature of archival work, where time and money are finite commodities, decisions have to be made about what sources are excluded and included in the initial encounter. As Reason and García (2007: 309) highlight, in relation to data collection from archival sources, 'it is the data that is examined that very much defines the results obtained'. Therefore, in line with ensuring a rigorous approach towards source criticism in this study, the processes of locating and selecting the documents used have been detailed below for each aspect of the study.

5.7.1 Primary Documents

As detailed, the primary documents cover a broad range of material in this study. In this section, the focus is on the various publications, reports, teacher guides, curriculum documents and other printed primary materials that have been analysed and reported on in Chapters 6 and 8. These documents are listed

in Table 2 below and above in Table 1. The school inspection documentation and archival material will be discussed in more detail below.

Table 2: Primary Sources

Group	Title	Date	Author/Origin
Curriculum Documents and Policy	*Curriculum for Excellence: Religious and Moral Education Principles and Practices*	2009	Education Scotland
	Curriculum for Excellence: Religious and Moral Education Experiences and Outcomes	2009	Education Scotland
	Benchmarks: Religious and Moral Education	2017	Education Scotland
	Bulletin 1: A Curricular Approach to Religious Education	1978	SCCORE
	Bulletin 2: Curriculum Guidelines for Religious Education	1981	SCCORE
	Management Issues in Religious Education in Secondary Schools: Report of the Scottish Central Committee on Religious Education	1987	SCOORE
Inspection Frameworks	*How Good Is Our School: Self-Evaluation Using Performance Indicators*	1996	SOEID/
	How Good is Our School: Self-Evaluation Using Quality Indicators	2002	HMIE
	How Good is Our School (3rd Edition)	2007	HMIE
	How Good is Our School (4th Edition)	2015	Education Scotland
	Changes to Education Scotland Inspections in August 2016	2016	Education Scotland
Inspectorate Reports/Policy Documents	*Improving Scottish Education*	2006	HMIE
Government Reports and Publications (pre- Devolution)	*Moral and Religious Education in Scottish Schools: Report of a Committee Appointed by the Secretary of State*	1972	SED
	The Structure of the Curriculum in the Third and Fourth Years of the Scottish Secondary School.	1977	SED

	Scrutiny of HM Inspectors of Schools in Scotland: Report to Mr Alex Fletcher MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Industry and Education	1981	Scottish Office
Government Reports and Publications (post-Devolution)	*Curriculum for Excellence – Provision of Religious and Moral Education in Non-Denominational Schools and Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools.*	2011	Scottish Government
Hansard	*HC. 18 July 1968. Written Answer – Mr Ross to Mr Adam Hunter.*	1968	UK Parliament
	HC. 21 October 1981. Inspection of Religious Instruction.	1981	
	HL. 28 July 1981. Written Answer – Earl of Mansfield to Viscount Massereene and Ferrard.	1981	
	HL. 8 October 1981. Education (Scotland) Bill.	1981	
	HC. 24 November 1982. Written Answer- Mr Younger to Mr Ancram.	1982	
Other Groups & Organisations	*Memorandum on Religious Education in Scottish Schools.*	1964	I.M. Black

To locate the public printed primary sources, the relevant secondary literature provided an initial orientation as to what was available and what was viewed as central to understanding the historical development of RME and inspection. The chief example of a source that was identified this way is the *Millar Report*, which is central to all accounts of RME in Scotland. Significantly, the secondary literature also highlights relevant organisations, groups and individuals that may have produced additional primary material, including, for example, the Colleges of Teacher Training, SCCORE, SJCRE, Learning and Teaching Scotland, and ATRES(S). A significant amount of the older material was accessible through the University of Glasgow and identified through their library catalogue. More recent reports and curriculum documents were, at the time of the research, available online through Education Scotland's website. Navigating these sources was made more accessible because of my 'insider status' as an educator in the Scottish education system who regularly accessed the Education Scotland website. In all cases of online sources, the documents were downloaded, labelled, and stored

offline to access later. Indeed, as McCulloch (2004) notes, online searching can be complex, and due to the vast number of potential sources, this should be done systematically and in a way that can ensure that any sources are easily recalled for future analysis.

5.7.2 Archival Material

In gathering the material for this study, original archival research was included. Considering archival research, Popkewitz (2019: 11) writes that:

> the archive is the physical site where the historian goes to make the conscious choosing of documentation from the past. The deposits of fragments or traces are indexed and catalogued, waiting to be read and used as the flows that give purpose to events… The archive provides the positivistic facts for people to do things with, to think with, imagine by, and to remember with as a mode of being. The repository of documents ties the past to present and the possibilities of the future as events are charted and made visible.

At a philosophical level, Pokewitz's conception of archival research and the archive itself is deserving of comment. In developing his position, he challenges the idea of archival research as a sound, objective methodology and rather one that is itself already awash with pre-existing categories that shape the 'positivistic facts' in what amounts to a 'chimera of realism' (*ibid*: 15). At first sight, this would seem to challenge the alignment between the philosophical presumptions of this study and archival research as a constituent component of the research approach due to its constructed existence. Yet, precisely, the philosophical position underpinning this study is at work here, too. The archives and the archival material really exist. This we know. However, what it means demands interpretation. It is for the interpretivist, one who understands knowledge claims about that which exists as constructed through interpretation, to navigate the vagaries of archival organisation and material.

On a practical level, archival study demanded physical site visits to the *National Records of Scotland* (NRS) in Edinburgh several times. As recommended by McCulloch (2004), the visits were planned over a number of phases. The initial phase in the spring of 2019 was exploratory to ascertain the nature of the

available material and to assess the viability of the study generally. The first visits were guided by using the online NRS catalogue. Simple search terms were used to identify possible starting points. These included ‘inspection’, ‘inspectorate’, ‘inspector’, ‘HMIE’ and ‘school’, ‘religious education’ and ‘education’. Whilst producing a vast array of irrelevant results, this initial searching highlighted that inspection reports for individual schools in Scotland were available at the NRS, in addition to other potentially relevant documents, as discussed above, from and about the Scottish inspectorate and on RE, and specifically RME, over the period under consideration.

This initial groundwork identified key collections to consult via their references and abstracts, as they had been ‘indexed and catalogued’. For example, ‘ED64’ for the NRS archive was entitled ‘Printed Annual School Inspection Reports’ and covered the dates 1983-2000’. Further online searching highlighted that ‘ED64’ contained several individual school inspection reports. For example, ‘ED64/235’ was entitled ‘School Inspections Reports: Banchory Academy’ and was dated from 1987. Beyond the school inspection reports themselves there were also collections of documents relevant to inspection and RE and, specifically, RME. Again, a collection could be referenced generally, and more specific references referring to specific documents within a collection were then traceable.

The time and access demands of carrying out archival research require data collection to be carefully thought through (Hill, 1993). This was particularly important in this study due to the number of documents that were going to be involved. This was further exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic that led to the closure of the NRS and limited access that continued into mid-2022 (Ross, 2022). This situation meant that the NRS was not visited again until the summer of 2022. As a result of the drastically reduced timeframe for data gathering, the focus of the archival research was re-oriented towards exploring a more manageable selection of documents. With the intention of adding new evidence and original insights to the printed primary material, it was decided to review archived official SED and inspectorate memos, and papers and minutes from the CMRE relevant to key moments in the development of RME. The relevant material was found through initial searching, as detailed above, to find relevant files. Each file contained a range of documents. The individual files from the NRS reviewed are detailed in the table below. In addition, where available, the

year from when onwards the material became available for consultation is also noted. The intention here is to highlight the originality of this study as it engages with archival material that has only relatively recently become available and has not previously been commented on in published scholarship.

Table 3: Archival Material (NRS)

NRS File	File Title	Accessible from Year
NRS-ED48-1337	1968-1990 MRE/Min/1-44, 16-23	2001
NRS-ED48-1338	Committee on Moral and Religious Education Spare Committee Papers	2001
NRS-ED48-1339	Committee on M.R.E – Spare Committee Papers 1	2000
NRS-ED48-1340	Committee on M.R.E – Spare Committee Papers 2	2000
NRS-ED48-1341	Committee on M.R.E – Spare Committee Papers 3	2000
NRS-ED48-1342	Committee on M.R.E Evidence Papers – 1-24	2000
NRS-ED48-1343	Committee on M.R.E Evidence Papers – 25-50	2000
NRS-ED48-1344	Committee on M.R.E Evidence Papers 51-64	2000
NRS-ED48-1345	Committee on M.R.E Evidence Papers 65-70	2000
NRS-ED48-1346	Committee on M.R.E Evidence Papers 71-80	2001
NRS-ED48-1347	Committee on M.R.E	-
NRS-ED48-1348	Committee on M.R.E	2001
NRS-ED48-1780	Curriculum Religious Education - General	1997
NRS-ED48-2461	Curriculum Religious Education – Circular to Education Authorities	2021
NRS-ED48-2543	Denominational Schools. Correspondence Re-Statutory Provisions Relating to Roman Catholic Schools	2015

The archival work required a systematic approach to review relevant documents. To achieve this, the files listed in Table 3 were each examined in turn. The examination of each document was supported through a systematic photographing of each item to allow for detailed reading for relevant extracts after the time-limited visits. In line with the approach to historical research methods outlined above, the analysis concerned itself with key details regarding the documents' provenance and content. Data collection regarding the

provenance or origin of the document involved collecting data regarding NRS's referencing and more detailed information, where available, on the authorship, context of composition, individuals or organisations involved and dates of creation or/and publication. In relation to identifying and collating relevant information from the content of the documents, this was achieved through careful and repeated reading of the available material and transcription of key excerpts.

5.7.3 School Inspection Documentation

In addition to the physical archive, this study also used Education Scotland's electronic database to gather school inspection documentation. The inspection documentation that was used in this study was identified via Education Scotland's online database of inspection reports. The database parameters, as set out by Education Scotland, note that only reports published within the last five years are available (Education Scotland, n.d.(a)). However, it should be noted at the outset that in cases where there has been ongoing engagement with a school beyond this period, older reports can still be available in the online database. The online database was configured to show all state-funded secondary schools run by the thirty-two local education authorities, excluding one that is funded directly by the Scottish Government. The most recent list of schools available from the Scottish Government was used to check the database results and ensure that all currently active schools appeared in the search (Scottish Government, 2021). This document also stated whether a school was non-denominational or not, and this was used to select the relevant schools from the database for this study.

At the time of the initial search in February 2021, 127 of the 305 non-denominational secondary schools in Scotland had inspection documentation available for review. The nature of the inspectorate's work across the sample is diverse and involves not only direct inspection but also follow-up work on-site and from afar. The available documentation included items that had been published as far back as March 2011 and as recently as August 2020. The lack of documentation after August 2020 is the result of the cessation of school inspections from March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, associated

restrictions, and subsequent pressures on schools. Importantly, the publication date of August 2020 also highlights that there is usually a gap of approximately two months between the on-site inspection and publication of the documentation.

Out of the 127 schools that did have a report available at the time of the initial search, sixty-one contained a reference to RME or a qualification linked to RE. To identify these reports, each school's documentation was initially screened using the following keywords and phrases: 'religious', 'religion', 'RME' and 'RMPS'. These search terms picked up various comments regarding qualifications connected to RME provision, and such comments were also included in the initial screening. Seven of the schools with relevant comments had their documentation published before August 2016, and the remaining fifty-four were published after August 2016 (Table 4). This disparity reflects the five-year timeframe for the database. Given that access to a fuller sample before August 2016 is limited by the database's parameters, the documentation published after August 2016 has provided the raw data for analysis here.

Table 4: Inspection Documentation with Comment on RME

Academic Year of Published Comment	No. of Schools with Comment on RME/RE
Aug. 2010 – July 2011	0
Aug. 2011 – July 2012	1
Aug. 2012 – July 2013	0
Aug. 2013 – July 2014	2
Aug. 2014 – July 2015	2
Aug. 2015 – July 2016	2
Aug. 2016 – July 2017	15
Aug. 2017 – July 2018	16
Aug. 2018 – July 2019	9
Aug. 2019 – July 2020	13
Aug. 2020 – July 2021	1

5.7.4 Secondary Literature

Having previously completed postgraduate research relevant to the topic at hand, I was already aware of much of the available secondary literature. However, to ensure that this was accurate and as up-to-date as possible, I used a mix of digital and traditional literature searching to locate secondary material (Cooper, 1998). This included using key databases, including the *British Education Index*, the *Bibliography of British and Irish History*, and the *Education Resources Information Center* (*ERIC*). These sources were regularly searched throughout the duration of this study to ensure that the most recent scholarship has been considered. Based on initial screening for relevance via reading the abstracts of individual items and establishing that sources were peer-reviewed, secondary material was read, and notes were made to allow for quick and ready access to relevant information.

5.8 Analysing the Sources

The historical research conducted in this study has been based on the methods of source criticism, triangulation, and interpretation. These methods have enabled an articulation of the underlying mechanics of historical analysis and interpretation. It is important to recognise that interpretation requires knowledge of the content of the documents, particularly in this study, the primary documentation (Chapter 6), archival material (Chapter 7), national reports by the inspectorate (Chapter 8) and inspection documentation of individual schools (Chapter 8). In what follows, key points with respect to the analysis of each of the source bases are explained.

5.8.1 Printed Primary Sources

The broad approach to historical research outlined above has been consistently applied to the printed primary material, including the five national reports on RME produced by the inspectorate since 1986. Complemented by the secondary literature, as a point for triangulation, the primary printed sources were

thoroughly reviewed and constantly compared to construct a chronological narrative of events and key episodes. Relevant quotations were extracted and have been deployed to support the narrative developed. To achieve this, keywords and phrases were focused on to ensure that the issue of inspection and inspectorate involvement with the development of RME remained central. The five national reports, as discussed at length in Chapter 8, were also considered with respect to recurring patterns and themes, with the view that they offered insights into trends in relation to the interplay between the inspectorate and the development of RME.

5.8.2 Archival Material

The NRS's approach to filing the documents appears to reflect how they were collated and deposited by the Scottish Education Department (SED). The SED seems to have simply kept originals or copies of documents created or gathered by them or sent to them by others in related batches. The range of document types filed together included correspondence between the SED and various individuals, many representing institutions such as the Church of Scotland or the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS). Minutes of meetings and associated papers make up a considerable portion of the material, with associated evidence submissions complementing these. In addition, there are also extracts from newspapers and short memos between SED staff. For clarity, the archival material used in this study from this varied corpus refers specifically to the minutes and papers of the CMRE and the memos and letters of the SED and inspectorate, some of which included correspondence with external parties.

It is important to note, too, that the material gathered from the NRS covers a number of aspects relevant to the development of RME beyond the issue of inspection. The focus of this study has demanded that I select and analyse what is relevant to inspection and the inspectorate in relation to key moments. However, in the noted files, sources that would offer further insights into the history of RME in Scotland remain to be explored. For example, there are extensive responses from various Churches to issues of the day that position RME within wider socio-political and ecclesiastical debates. Moreover, newspapers and communications from members of the public on matters concerning RME

offer opportunities to explore popular opinion and perspectives about the subject area. Such studies would demand careful consideration of the press, politics and personalities at any specific time and are, therefore, beyond the scope of this study. However, much remains to be explored.

5.8.3 School Inspection Documentation

Chapter 9 is based on the analysis of school inspection documentation dating between August 2016 and August 2020. As noted, this selection was a result of the limitations imposed by the pandemic restrictions on archival work and made use of what was available via Education Scotland's online database. Beyond the pragmatic reasons for the selection, the focus on August 2016 and after is also a suitable timeframe for analysis as the inspection documentation has been produced under the same inspection framework throughout the period under consideration. As outlined in Chapter 4, inspection priorities and judgements in schools in Scotland since 2015 have been based on *How Good is Our School* 4th Edition (HGIOS4) and since August 2016, the inspectorate has followed a particular approach to using and reporting on the quality indicators (QIs) from HGIOS4 (Education Scotland, 2015c).

In June 2016 it was announced by the inspectorate, via an e-mailed letter to education authority and individual school leaders, that the inspection of schools would, moving forward, involve either a 'full' model or a 'short' model inspection. Further, some schools would also be inspected as part of the 'thematic' and 'neighbourhood' models, which would have a wider focus than the work of an individual school. Schools who were to be inspected on a 'full', usually week-long, model inspection would be evaluated on the following four quality indicators (QIs) from HGIOS: *QI 1.3 Leadership of Change*; *QI 2.3 Learning, Teaching and Assessment*; *QI 3.2 Raising Attainment and Achievement* and *QI 3.1 Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality, and Inclusion*. In addition, themes from other HGIOS QIs would also be incorporated with the 'Learning Pathways' theme from *QI 2.2 Curriculum* and aspects of *QI 2.7 Partnership* noted in the communication. Schools would also be able to choose an additional QI to receive non-evaluated feedback on (Education Scotland, 2016a). Schools that were to experience the 'short' three-day model would be evaluated on two QIs. It is

within these arrangements that inspections have been conducted since August 2016, with the chosen QIs for the 'short' model being changed from August 2018 to *QI 2.3 Learning, Teaching and Assessment* and *QI 3.2 Raising Attainment and Achievement* being the most substantial change since (Education Scotland, 2018).

The letter from the inspectorate also noted that the outputs from inspections would change from August 2016. Now, an initial inspection of a school, on either the 'full' or 'short' models, normally leads to the publication of three separate but related documents in Education Scotland's (n.d.(a)) online public database. First, there is the *Inspection Report* (*IR)* itself, which takes the form of a two- to three-page letter that provides summary statements of the strengths and areas for improvement for a school and notes what will happen next, depending on the outcome of the inspection. The outcomes are noted in a table within the *IR* with each evaluated QI given an 'evaluation' on a six-point scale going from Excellent, to Very Good, to Good, to Satisfactory, to Weak, to Unsatisfactory. The name of the lead inspector is also noted on the *IR*. Second, there is the *Summarised Inspection Findings* (*SIF*) document that provides a fuller account of inspectors' findings and judgements. This document begins by providing information about the school's situation, including the duration of the headteacher's tenure, socioeconomic information, and comparisons with the national picture. The *SIF* document then reports on each QI in turn, including both the core QIs as noted above and, for 'full' model inspections, the additional focus QIs and the QI chosen by the school. The final document is a quantitative collation of pre-inspection questionnaire responses from staff, pupils, and parents, which is sometimes called an *Evidence Report* (*ER*). In addition to these three standard documents, in cases where inspectors continue to engage with a school and publish follow-up reports due to poor performance in initial inspections, there are also *Continuing Engagement Reports* (CER) or *Follow-Up Reports* (FUR) published to document these. These are similar in form to the *IR* but use the specific next steps detailed in original *IR*s to structure the information reported and to provide a focused update on progress.

In a study of school inspection reports from OFSTED, Clarke and Baxter (2014) highlighted that keywords and phrases appeared regularly and purposively across inspection reports. For their analysis, Clarke and Baxter foregrounded Raymond Williams' (1988) approach to keywords. For Williams (1988: 12),

keywords are words and phrases that have 'different immediate values or different kinds of valuation' and 'we are aware, often intangibly, of different formations and distributions of energy and interest' across these keywords. In reviewing inspection reports from this position, Clarke and Baxter (2014: 493) concluded that researchers can identify 'some significant shifts and continuities in understandings and usage of words that are used by the inspectorate'. Whilst Clarke and Baxter (2014) do not label what they did as a particular method, it is built upon in this study for two reasons. First, it has highlighted the need to be alert to keywords and phrases in school reports as an analytical tool. Secondly, it justifies the use of a more systematic survey of wording in the school inspection reports. As words and phrases are significant, I have conducted a qualitative content analysis of the corpus to allow for the identification of patterns over time to be drawn out and for key thematic areas to be identified for interrogation and interpretation.

The approach to coding and qualitative content analysis has been taken from Cohen *et al.* (2018). Coding, whilst not explicitly articulated in historical research, is a formalised approach to analysing the substance of a text and what could be significant within it. From this micro-level study of the sources, a rich understanding of what the school inspection reports contained has been generated, ensuring robust and well-informed interpretations. As Flick (2007: 100-101) writes, coding is 'a step towards a comprehensive understanding of the issue, the field, and last but not least the data themselves.' The coding conducted on the reports in this study is described as axial coding. This has involved, as per Cohen *et al.* (2018), breaking down the relevant comments on RME in the school inspection documentation into smaller units of meaning. So, for instance, in the examples below, this would involve noting the phrases 'not fulfilling statutory duties' and 'fulfilling its statutory duty'.

> 'The school is not fulfilling its statutory duties with regard to the provision of RME in S5 and S6.'
>
> (Craigie High School, SIF, 2017).

> 'The Area Lead Officer will monitor the school's progress in fulfilling its statutory duty for religious and moral education.'

(Sanquhar Academy, IR, 2016).

Once the smaller units across the sample are identified, the process is to then 'recombine in new ways' (Cohen *et al.*, 2018: 671). In other words, this is about allocating the smaller units into key categories and using these to support analysis and interpretation. For the example above, the overarching category for the two phrases subsequently becomes 'Meeting Requirements', from which more nuanced analysis was possible. As a result of the historical dimension of this study, the coding was conducted on reports on a year-by-year basis before comparing and contrasting across the time period of the available documentation. It should be understood that any patterns, continuities, changes or otherwise have been taken as points for further interpretive work, linking back to the context of the source material and have not been taken as conclusive evidence of any particular phenomenon (*ibid:* 672).

Linking to the coding process and utilising the same raw data linked to smaller units of meaning, a qualitative content analysis was also conducted on the sample. Following Cohen *et al.* (2018: 675), the approach taken here involved identifying and counting keywords and phrases across the sample, as identified through coding. The data generated allowed for subsequent frequency counts by month and year and the generation of graphical representations to illustrate the make-up of the sources (*ibid:* 679). Such analyses have grounded the interpretations in a much more rigorous analysis of the source material at the level of the individual school reports and across the sample.

Out of the fifty-four schools that received comments about RME or an SQA qualification associated with RME, most were found in the *SIF* documents. Nothing relevant was found in the *ER*s; two *IR*s had a relevant comment, but the accompanying *SIF* documents contained further relevant comments, too. One comment was found in a *CER,* which connected to an original inspection dating to November 2013. Therefore, the focus of the analysis has been primarily on the *SIF* documents. The findings of the analyses of these documents are detailed in Chapter 9.

5.9 Ethics and the Documents

Historians of education who work on publicly available documentary sources do not face the obvious ethical considerations posed to education researchers who deploy interviewing, observation, and surveying as their main methods. Work on documents is devoid of direct contact with human beings as participants in the research. However, several key ethical considerations have still applied to this study (McCulloch, 2004 & 2011).

This study's timeframe concerns working with material that refers to schools, organisations, groups and individuals. A vast majority of the schools and organisations are still in operation, and many of the individuals are still living. In addition, institutional memories of or family connections to those that have passed or that which has ceased to be operational may also still endure. Therefore, it is important to recognise the potential for this work to have an impact on individuals, groups, organisations, and schools that may be psychological or emotional or impinge on their reputation in some way. On these points, McCulloch and Richardson (2001: 104) state that:

> where the records identify people who are still alive, it is important for the researcher to be sensitive about their possible use, maintaining anonymity in cases where identification may cause embarrassment or offence for either personal or professional reasons.

In this study, the directive above, to be sensitive to such issues, is observed. Thus, in the discussion, identifiers such as 'School 1' have been used in Chapter 9, but these can be reversed by referring to Appendix 4. This approach is supported by recognising the publicly available nature of the material under discussion and the usually very circumspect nature of the comments in school inspection reports. Moreover, this approach also ensures the integrity of the research by working to maintain what Kipping *et al.* (2013: 315) called 'source transparency'. In historical research, it is the norm to use footnotes that make specific references directly to the sources used. In this study, where the referencing apparatus does not support extensive footnoting, using specific references to sources in-text remains necessary. As this study is based on primary archival sources and inspection documentation, this is particularly important to allow sources to be checked and interpretations assessed.

Hill (1993) also draws attention to the need for ethical conduct during archival research visits. For this study this has included observing NRS

registration and working procedures and observing the need for respectful treatment of both the documents and those who curate them. This includes, for example, minimising any negative impact on the documents through careful handling and ensuring items were requested and returned in line with existing procedures. Moreover, photography and transcription activities were conducted accurately to ensure fidelity to the sources, and pencil and computer were used, rather than ink, to ensure no damage to documents (McCulloch, 2004). All of these points have also been observed in the context of working with items from the University of Glasgow Library, where printed primary and secondary material was also accessed. Moreover, the use of the library's inter-library loaning system demanded timely collection and return of printed primary material from the British Library. In addition to the need to work ethically and respectfully, I have also ensured that key laws regarding accessing, using, and quoting from documents have been observed. This includes legislation regarding copyright, data protection and freedom of information (McCulloch, 2011).

5.10 Limitations

The study has been designed to understand the relationship between school inspection, the inspectorate and RME in Scottish schools and what can be learned from school inspection documentation and inspectorate publications about RME. These two questions are interlinked, and rigorous historical analysis focused on the sources has ensured that sound, though qualified, conclusions have been reached. Nevertheless, the research approach to this study does have a significant limitation.

The main limitation of this research approach is that the primary sources consulted do not extend beyond the official printed sources and communications of and from organisations and official committees. The charge that can be levied here is that this approach could lead to an overemphasis on a top-down perspective or provide an interpretation that potentially repeats rather than challenges the official version of events (McCulloch, 2016 & 2011). Moreover, the problem with such an approach is that it leaves out important but often marginalised voices in historical writing, for example, that of women, children, and other groups. These are important caveats, but the study can be defended

on two points. First, this study looks at two broad areas of education and, as a result, is highly involved with issues of governance, politics, and top-down processes. Whilst that is not to deny agency and alternative practices within these areas, this approach has allowed for an important starting point from which to compare alternative positions going forward (Scholes, 2020). Indeed, as Doney *et al*. (2017) have considered by exploring oral history approaches to RE, there are a range of valid and important perspectives to seek out and integrate into the narrative via a variety of methods. Here, though, it should be recognised that the history RE in England is a much more developed area of study compared to that of Scotland (Freathy & Parker, 2010; 2012; 2013; Parker & Freathy, 2011a; 2011b). Interestingly, in the sense that it relates to a community sometimes understood as marginalised, the situation regarding scholarship on the history of Catholic education and RE, or RERC, in Scotland is certainly richer in historiographical terms than that on non-denominational RME (Conroy, 2001; 2003; McKinney & Conroy, 2015; McKinney 2018; Coll & Davis, 2007; 2009; Franchi, 2013; 2018; McKinney & McCluskey, 2019).

This study seeks not to dominate discussions. Rather, it seeks to enrich an area of discussion that is limited in terms of historical research and offers a point of orientation for future work.

5.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the research approach that underpins this historical study of the interplay between the inspectorate, school inspection and RME since the 1960s. It has explained that the study, adapted because of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions on archival research, is grounded in the analysis of printed primary source material, selected archival material, national reports by HM Inspectorate of Education, and school inspection documentation. It has defended the 'acts and facts' nature of the study on the grounds that this is much needed for understanding the history of RME in Scotland and is content that it provides a starting point, not the final word, for future work.

Chapter 6: The Inspectorate, Inspection and RME, 1962 – 2020

6.1 Introduction

The enactment of the Education (Scotland) Act in August 1980 saw the longstanding legal prohibition on the inspection of Religious Education in schools, in place since the 1872 Act, reiterated in Section 66(2):

> It shall be no part of the duty of a person authorised under this section to make inspection of any educational establishment to inquire into instruction in religious subjects given therein or to examine any pupil in religious knowledge or in any religious subject or book.

Following debates in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords thereafter, it was clear by the autumn of 1981 that this situation was going to change. Following further consultation by George Younger, then Secretary of State for Scotland, with 'educational and religious interests' (Hansard, 1982) and an 'Order in Council' in 1982, the bar was lifted, and inspection of Religious Education began in 1983 (Fairweather & MacDonald, 1992: 17; Matemba, 2014a: 557). Accounts of the development of RME in Scotland have previously outlined the main factors that have impacted the extent and nature of the provision of the subject over the last sixty years, and the absence or presence of inspection has been identified as an important development in such discussions (Rodger, 1999 & 2003; Nixon, 2008 & 2013; McKinney, 2012 & 2019; Matemba, 2014a; Robinson & Franchi, 2018). However, the extant scholarship has largely left this discussion underexplored. This chapter will address this lacuna and directly address the first research question of this study, examining the relationship between the inspectorate, inspection and RME. This chapter will ultimately argue that the inspection of education, specifically the varied remits of HM Inspectors and the inspection of schools, has been central in shaping RME in schools through directing curriculum change, offering advice and, though ineffective, identifying improvement priorities. It will also be suggested that the

inspectorate has been an important and formative factor that has secured RME a central position in national curriculum developments since the 1960s.

In the first section, the focus will be on the period between 1962 and 1974 and will highlight how central authorities in Scottish education extended their attention to RME. Whilst inspection and inspectors are not directly focused on in this section, it provides the necessary context for the rest of the chapter. The second section will demonstrate how, even before inspection, inspectors were active agents in the development of RME and highlight that they were key in aligning subject-level developments to the national agenda. This section will directly connect the *Munn Report* and the foundational SCCORE reports *Bulletin 1* and *Bulletin 2*. In the third section, the existing scholarship will be enhanced by a more nuanced appreciation of the developments that led to the introduction of inspection, arguing that the introduction of examinations was not the only motivating factor, and it will offer an assessment of the initial impact of inspection. The fourth and fifth sections consider the development of *5-14* and *Curriculum for Excellence and* highlight the interplay between Religious and Moral Education and the inspectorate. In particular, the role of the inspectorate in curriculum design and development will be illustrated, and its effectiveness in addressing key issues surrounding the nature and extent of provision will be critiqued.

6.2 RME and the Beginnings of Curriculum Control, 1962-1974

The move towards comprehensive education in the mid-1960s and the raising of the school leaving age in session 1972-73 meant that the needs of an increasing number of secondary-aged students had to be catered for by the education system (McPherson & Raab, 1988; Paterson, 2000). It was within this context of a changing school system and meeting learners' needs that authorities in Scotland, such as the SED and the Secretary of State, had to reconsider the provision of RME in schools. As will be drawn out below, such attention resulted in RME being viewed as an important element of the intended curriculum for Scottish secondary schools following the publication of the *Millar Report* in 1972.

There is little indication at the beginning of the 1960s that the political authorities concerned with Scottish education were paying any particular

attention to RME provision in schools. Matemba (2014a: 542) suggests that in the 1962 Education (Scotland) Act, parliament made 'a desperate attempt to ensure the continuance of RE in Scottish schools'. However, his examples highlight legislative requirements that were already in place before 1962. Namely, the 1929 Local Government (Scotland) Act's introduction of the need for a vote of local electors if RME was to be discontinued in a school or authority. Here, I would suggest that the inclusion in the 1962 Act was a rationalisation of educational legislation rather than a sign of any desperation.

The main source of innovation for and interest in RME by the 1960s was the *Scottish Joint Committee on Religious Education* (SJCRE), established in 1918. The SJCRE was most active in curriculum development, providing its inaugural syllabus in 1929 and publishing its 'Experimental Syllabus for Secondary Schools in 1961 (Stevenson, 2015; Matemba, 2014a; SJCRE, 1951; Wishart, 1941). The SJCRE was also active in supporting teachers through its local group meetings or 'Local Joint Committees'. Through such work, the SJCRE helped to support RME in schools, but it approached its work with a particularly Christian emphasis, aiming to see that 'Religious Education is designed . . . so that ultimately the child may be brought to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.' (SJCRE, quoted in Black, 1964: 18). Moreover, key stakeholders in the SJCRE, including the *Association of Church Representatives on Education Committees,* continued to envisage a future where they maintained significant influence on schools and RME (Black, 1964).

Such ambitions and overtures are an interesting example of a religious impulse active in a society whose relationship with the religious in everyday life and in institutions was changing as the population's adherence to Christianity was in decline (Bruce, 2014; Brown, 2009, 1997). The place of RME in public and, at least notionally, secular schooling can be seen here as a site of how those interested in the subject's provision were positioning it within the curriculum and broader educational enterprise. On the political level, it is also worth noting that overt religious interests in the subject can be seen to be contending with those of the state, at a time when the Secretary of State for Scotland was extending his control over schooling (Humes, 1986; Fairweather & MacDonald, 1992). There is not the space here to consider RME within the debates on secularisation and dechristianisation in Scotland, but it is worth noting that RME has not been fully investigated as a feature or factor in such developments, in

contrast to other aspects of society and culture within this broad field of research (Brown *et al.*, 2023; Brown, 2019, 2009 & 1997; Bruce, 2014).

The introduction of the Ordinary Grade (O Grade) qualification in 1962 highlighted the centrality of authorities such as the Secretary of State for Scotland, the SED, and HM Inspectorate in shaping school curricula. However, a combination of the bar on the examination of RME, the lack of subject specialists and the limited availability of expertise for administrating such a qualification meant that there was no such certificated option for RME. Yet, as Circular 600 established comprehensive secondaries in 1965 and the work of the Scottish Examination Board began, those engaged in teaching RME, in whatever guise it presented itself at the time, engaged with the trend of increased opportunities for certification. Between 1964 and 1968, teachers offered 285 students the English GCE Ordinary and 56 students the Advanced level qualifications in Religious Studies (SEDa, 1972: 11). As J. K. Scobie (1968: 8), rector of Dalziel Academy observed in 1967, 'many… teachers are presenting pupils in increasing numbers.' Whether or not RME teachers agreed with certification, it was clear in the later 1960s that the future of RME was seen as being contingent on state intervention. In 1967, Baillie T. Ruthven, the Rector of the Royal High School in Edinburgh, argued against introducing an examination for RME and highlighted the need for state intervention by noting the proposition of Paragraph 39 of 'Curriculum Paper 2, Organisation of Courses Leading to the Scottish Certificate in Education', namely that the Secretary of State should institute a special enquiry into the whole field of Religious and Moral Education in the hope that realistic courses could be agreed upon by all the interested parties (Ruthven, 1968: 16-17).

Ruthven's view was shared with the *Association of Teachers of Religious Education in Scottish Secondary Schools*, later the *Association for the Teaching of Religious Education in Scotland*, established in 1962 under the leadership of Edwin Towhill. *ATRES(S)* recognised that there was a need for government intervention to improve RME provision (Fairweather & MacDonald, 1992). Motivated by the expansion of secondary schooling and the energies and debates surrounding examination, the government's approach towards RME became one of direct intervention at the close of the 1960s. On 18 July 1968, William Ross, the Secretary of State for Scotland, told parliament that he had appointed a committee composed of teachers, religious representatives, lecturers and other

professionals to examine the work of Scottish non-denominational secondary schools with regard to moral and religious education, 'within the existing framework of the statutory provisions governing the obligation to continue religious instruction, the responsibility for its content and the question of inspection' (Hansard, 1968). This brief, given to and used by the committee chaired by Professor W. Malcolm Millar of the University of Aberdeen, was careful to acknowledge the legal and long-standing position that barred HM Inspectors from inspecting RME but was broad enough to leave room for it to be considered. What emerged from the committee, after a survey of RME provision in Scotland that has yet to be surpassed in terms of the quantity and quality of its coverage and engagement with key stakeholders, was a report entitled *Moral and Religious Education in Scottish Schools: A Report of a Committee Appointed by the Secretary of State* (SED, 1972a) in July 1972. It was this report, known more readily as the *Millar Report*, that began to challenge the legislative status quo for RME in relation to involvement from the inspectorate and saw the subject begin to be considered an important contributor to a contemporary school curriculum.

Most of the comment within the *Millar Report* is concerned with describing and evaluating contemporary practice based on a survey of local authorities, headteachers, teachers and focus groups with pupils. Ultimately, provision based primarily on bible study was challenged in the report for its lack of relevance, and the report advocated for a research-informed approach to ensure that RME was non-confessional, centred on issues of morality and religion and the development of learners (SED, 1972a). The committee, however, recognised that it was not their 'task to work out in detail the methods of teaching, nor to produce materials that will be of direct use to teachers' (*ibid*: 114). Neither, in the committee's view, was the SJCRE to be responsible as it was detached from wider curriculum developments.

Rather, the *Millar Report*, in a departure from tradition for RME but in step with wider curriculum developments, suggested that the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum (CCC) should take the lead role. The committee acknowledged that this clashed with the bar on state interference with RME, with inspectors involved in the CCC, but proposed that an arms-length group under the auspices of the CCC could take curriculum developments forward under the current regulatory framework. In doing so, the *Millar Report*

positioned a pre-existing state-run group that involved inspectors as the principal body to develop RME. Such a conclusion was a conspicuous challenge to the legislative framework, and the report went further. It highlighted the committee's intended long-term destination for RME in suggesting that 'the Department may want to consider whether this total detachment from religious education will remain a sensible policy in the future' (SED, 1972a: 16). Here, the *Millar Report* explicitly suggests that the future of RME should see further intervention from the state. By November 1974, this core recommendation of the *Millar Report* had been implemented with the inauguration of the Scottish Central Committee on Religious Education (SCCORE), a sub-committee of the CCC that did not initially have any HM Inspectors on its core membership (SCCORE, 1978).

Existing scholarship on the governance of schooling in Scotland in the 1960s and 1970s concurs that central authorities were interested in and actively attempting to extend their control over the curriculum (Humes, 1986; McPherson & Raab, 1988; Paterson, 1997). McPherson and Raab (1988) have highlighted that this process was not always one of central agents working in unison, with tensions among the politicians, the bureaucrats of the SED, the inspectors, and the various committees of the CCC. The developments impacting RME across the 1960s and opening years of the 1970s are, however, illustrative of this general trend. More specifically, the CCC was a particularly effective tool for harnessing various interests at the level of the subject and extending central influence over the curriculum (Humes, 1986). Indeed, by 1976, SCCORE was one of nine such committees of the CCC covering various areas.

Between 1962 and 1974, it is evident that central authorities were paying attention to RME. By the end of the period, RME had been thoroughly reviewed and repositioned as a valuable educational enterprise. Despite impeding legislation, it had been provided with the same infrastructure as other subject areas. It was within this broad framing that inspectors would begin to become important influences on the subject.

6.3 Inspectors and RME Guidance, 1974 – 1981

The chairman of *ATRESS*, Jack Laidlaw (1972: 8), after reviewing the *Millar Report*, concluded that it 'could pave the way for real progress in religious education in Scotland'. There were certainly signs that this was the case, with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) establishing a formal teaching qualification for the subject in 1974 to support an increase in specialist teachers (Conroy *et al.,* 2013; Rodger, 1999). As this section will demonstrate, it was the involvement of inspectors in curriculum developments that would be a central mechanism for 'real progress' that would bring about key developments following the *Millar Report* and position RME as a core subject within the intended curriculum of the secondary school.

After two years of work, a CCC committee led by James Munn, Rector of Cathkin High School, published *The Structure of the Curriculum in the Third and Fourth Years of the Scottish Secondary School* in 1977. The *Munn Report* was a national report that, whilst focused on outlining a curriculum for the middle years of secondary (S3 and S4), is more significant in that it ultimately positioned RME as a central or 'core' aspect of the secondary curriculum. It stated religious and moral education was to be two of eight modes of learning and recommended that 'all pupils [in S3 and S4] should undertake study in each of seven areas: English, mathematical studies, physical education, moral and religious education, science and technology, social studies, and the creative arts' (SED, 1977: 36).

The *Millar Report* diagnosed the failures of RME and recommended solutions for its improvement in isolation as an individual subject. It is in the *Munn Report* that RME becomes firmly located within the architecture of an intended curriculum structure for the secondary phrase for the first time.

The recommendations from the *Munn Report* would not be implemented until the early 1980s, with the introduction of Standard Grade qualifications and a revised approach to the middle years of secondary education. However, there was little variation from the original plans. RME remained a core non-certificated area of learning, and the modal framework became fundamental for *5-14,* and its legacy is most certainly detectable within the eight curriculum areas of *CfE*.

The *Munn Report* had a more immediate consequence for RME. The underlying logic of the *Munn Report* was fundamental to the two SCCORE reports that were published to guide teachers in terms of their approach to curriculum planning and pedagogy. Ultimately, the *Munn Report* provided the framing that RME was a distinct aspect of the school curriculum. Bulletin *1: A Curricular Approach to Religious Education* (SCCORE, 1978: 6) offered a vision for the RME curriculum in schools, having declared:

> It has been most heartening for SCCORE to see the recognition of the educational value and importance of religious education contained in the report of the Munn Committee – the first time surely that such recognition has appeared in a document devoted to the general curriculum.

The aim of the publication was to continue the work for RME to have 'a place within the structure for national curriculum development' (*ibid*: iii). *Bulletin 2: Curriculum Guidelines for Religious Education*, published in 1981, made a further reference to the Munn Report, but more significant is the presence of W. R. Ritchie on the published committee list of *Bulletin 2*. Ritchie was HM Chief Inspector of Schools and was on the committee as an 'assessor' (SCCORE, 1981: iv). The presence of a member of the inspectorate is evidence of inspectorate involvement in RME curriculum developments at the national level, and it is important to note that Ritchie also gave oral evidence to the Munn Committee. The direct involvement of a key inspector in both activities illustrates the increased interconnectedness of curriculum developments at the national level and at the level of the subject.

The involvement of inspectors in supporting national changes relating to RME was also evident in relation to examinations. In a short note in the *British Journal of Religious Education* in 1981, John Taylor, the then Head Teacher of Auchenharvie Academy, highlighted that since the summer of 1978, there had been a joint committee of the SEB and the CCC that had submitted its proposals for a certificate examination to the Secretary of State (Taylor, 1982). With the introduction of Ordinary Grade Religious Studies in 1982, approved in September 1981 and first taken by pupils in 1984, the collective efforts of teachers and inspectors sitting on SCCORE, a sub-section of the state's CCC, was clearly an effective approach for driving forward agendas related to RME provision (Rodger, 1983).

The period immediately after the *Millar Report* was one wherein HM Inspectors were still legally barred from inspecting RME but there is clear evidence that not only were inspectors involved in key curriculum developments, but they were also evidently important conduits of key agendas and priorities from the national to the subject level for RME. In particular, inspectors, such as Ritchie, helped to continue efforts to establish RME as a substantive curriculum area by advancing national guidance and introducing examinations.

6.4 The Introduction and Early Impact of Inspection, 1981 – 1987

Having been established as a distinct subject within the intended, if not always the enacted, curriculum of Scottish secondary schools by the opening years of the 1980s, the legal restriction on inspection was removed, and inspections of the subject began in 1983. In this section, the focus is on understanding the move towards inspection and the immediate aftermath of such a discussion. Ultimately, the introduction of inspection can be seen as another move towards RME's incorporation into the educational projects of the central authorities and the impact of inspection being to demand more direct alignment with previous and emerging guidance.

On 28 July 1981, a written answer in a parliamentary debate from William Murray, Earl of Mansfield, to Viscount Massereene and Ferrard noted that, with respect to Scotland, the 'Government have reached the conclusion that the long-standing bar on the inspection of religious subjects is no longer appropriate' (Hansard, 1981b). Subsequent debates in the House of Lords and the House of Commons explored the dynamics of this change before it was fully agreed, and inspections began in January 1983 (Hansard 1981a & 1981c). Matemba (2014a: 557) has argued, much as Fairweather and MacDonald (1992) had, that the statute disallowing inspection had to be removed to allow the introduction of examinations in the subject. Whilst the later part of the statute does explicitly state that inspectors should not 'examine any pupil in religious knowledge or in any religious subject or book', Matemba's argument is made less convincing by the timelines noted above that show that examinations were agreed without any agreement in place for inspection to be removed. Rather, inspection was introduced as it was seen by a range of stakeholders as a key step in continuing

to ensure RME's position within schools, with a focus on maintaining the quality of provision.

A key exchange for understanding the dynamics of the shift to inspection is that between William Murray and William Ross, Lord of Marnock (the same William Ross who had established the Millar Committee in 1968) on 8 October 1981. After outlining the developments relating to RME since the 1960s, Murray explained that:

> Over the years these developments have given a significant emphasis to the place of religious education in the school curriculum and have received a general welcome from the many interests concerned. At the same time there has been a growing sense of disquiet that the prohibition on inspection enshrined in Section 66(2), and the absence of any such prohibition for all other subjects, confers a significant disadvantage on the development of religious education as a curricular subject. Whereas the justification for the provision in the 1872 Act and subsequent legislation was the need to place the matter of religious subjects in school outwith the powers of the state, now the argument is that the curricular development of religious education is unduly inhibited by the barrier which has been created. This is a powerful argument which this Government, after lengthy and careful deliberation, and following consultation with various Church and educational interests who were in full support of the proposal, have accepted... (Hansard, 1981c).

In his exposition, Murray helpfully highlights that tradition and custom in relation to religion and schooling had maintained the bar on inspection. As examined above, it was the transition of RME to an integral component of the school curriculum rather than an activity set apart from it that prompted a reconsideration of the law. Moreover, Mansfield's speech goes on to recognise that seeing inspection as a vital mechanism for the continued improvement of RME was widely seen as a positive development for the subject by a range of stakeholders, including local authority representation, religious groups and Churches (Church of Scotland, Free Church of Scotland, Methodist Church of Scotland; Catholic Church); government agencies (the CCC; the Scottish Examination Board), and teaching unions (Educational Institute of Scotland; Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association) and professional groups (ATRES and the SJCRE). Notably, the one main voice of dissent was Ross himself, who, while not against the move in principle, highlighted the *Millar Report*'s concerns relating to the introduction of examinations and worried that insufficient time

had been given to the debate. Nonetheless, when George Younger, Secretary of State of Scotland, was asked on 24 November 1982 as to the progress he had made on the matter of inspecting RME, he said that 'The framework for inspection proposed by Her Majesty's Inspectorate has been generally welcomed and I am satisfied that there are no practical issues which stand in the way of its introduction' (Hansard, 1982).

By March 1983, Douglas A. Osler had been appointed to the post of HM Inspector with responsibility for RE and through his work, it quickly became evident that inspection would mean a much more direct steer for RME in relation to the priorities for its provision in schools. At a course for RME teachers in Dundee in April 1983, Osler outlined what inspections would focus on and what impact the inspectorate intended to have on RME. Detailed in a second-hand report of his speech written by Alex Rodger (1983: 5-6), Osler stated that the focus on inspections would be on the arrangements made for RME in schools, including the quality of teaching, staffing and resources. He highlighted, too, that the priority for provision should be on RME for the many rather than certificated studies for the few, and he encouraged teachers to ensure key guidance documents were being used. With respect to encouraging teachers to follow national guidance, SCCORE's 1985 document, *Suggestions for Curriculum Material in Religious Education (SCMRE),* again highlights a further attempt by central authorities to align RME practice to national guidance. The introduction to *SCMRE* advised practitioners that 'It is appropriate to recall the work set out in Bulletins 1 and 2' (SCCORE, 1985: 1). It is also worth noting that inspectors were involved in the development of this guidance, first Douglas Osler and then HMI Alan Hawke from March 1984 onwards.

Beyond the expectations for inspection, Osler also indicated that the inspectorate would be looking for teachers of RME to 'establish their subject by demonstrating the educational validity of its contributions… and not by relying solely on its statutory position (Rodger, 1983: 6), particularly in the secondary school as Osler referred primarily to departments. More tellingly, and in line with seeing RME as a pillar of the common curriculum in secondary schools, Osler's input into the conference continued:

> Teachers of RE had long had an ambition to see their subject in the main blood stream of Scottish educational development and much of that

> injection had been achieved but they must reciprocate by allowing recent educational developments to enter the blood stream of RE *(ibid*: 6*)*.

From such statements it is evident that the inspectorate also saw an important aspect of its work to be situating RME unequivocally within the wider developments and trends of education. There is too, in the statement, clear encouragement of practitioners to embrace the opportunities of joining the 'main blood stream of Scottish educational development', with a hint that there may be some pockets of less positive engagement.

Between August 1983 and August 1985, a mix of sixty-three non-denominational and denominational secondary schools were inspected. Based on this sample, the inspectorate published *Learning and Teaching in Religious Education: An Interim Report by HM Inspectors of Schools* in 1986. This report highlighted that the inspectorate had followed through on scrutinising RME with due regard to the priorities laid out by Osler, focusing on the quality of provision, the focus on RME over Religious Studies qualifications, and the use of resources. In reporting on these areas, inspectors offered broad directions for improvement. Notably, the concluding section of the 1986 report noted that there was a 'need for religious education to be as carefully planned, co-ordinated and monitored as work in any other part of the curriculum' (SED, 1986: 24). What arose because of this was a direct reply from SCCORE (1987) in the form of *Management Issues in Religious Education in Secondary Schools,* published in 1987. This report focused on the issues of subject leadership, curriculum planning and resources. Such areas of focus demonstrated that by highlighting areas of concern, inspection had also begun to determine development priorities in relation to national guidance.

6.5 Embedding RME in the Curriculum, 1987 – 2002

The 1987 report from SCCORE should be seen as an important milestone for curricular guidance concerned specifically with RME, as it was the last subject-specific report that was independent of a national curricular project. From late 1987 onwards, all subsequent guidance would be issued within the parameters of and by those involved with national curriculum reform. In this section, the focus

is on demonstrating that the integration of RME within such developments, principally the *5-14* curriculum, Standard Grade and certificated short courses, was driven forward by inspectorate involvement and advice.

By 1988, Review and Development Groups (RDGs), consisting of teachers, national curriculum development specialists and HM Inspectors, were working to develop the guidelines for a curriculum that would cater to the whole primary phase and the first two years of secondary education, known as *5-14* (Adams, 1999 & 1994; Boyd, 1994). RME was always intended to become a constituent part of the new curriculum, motivated by two main factors (SED, 1987; Clark, 1997). First, with the subject already established as one of Munn's eight modes, including RME in the lower secondary and primary would provide for a coherent and progressive curriculum architecture up to and including S4 (Howieson *et al.*, 2017*;* Murphy, 2015). Second, RME was considered an important aspect of *5-14's* aim of offering a well-rounded educational experience, 'focused on some degree of meaningful interconnection between different forms or aspects of human experience and knowledge' (Carr *et al.,* 2006: 16).

Initially, RME was to be considered by *RDG 5: Religious, Moral and Social Education*, but as it 'was not practical' to examine RME and Personal and Social Education together, this remit was altered, and RME was considered separately (SOED, 1992: 1). Noted on RDG 5's membership list is HMI Alan Hawke, illustrating that, in the context of a national reform programme, the inspectorate can be seen taking an active role in RME's development. Adams' (1994: 12) general contention that there was 'tension between the over consultative style and the covert centralist style of the *5-14* Programme' could be illustrated specifically for RME through Hawke's involvement on the committee. Indeed, Conroy *et al.* (2013: 79) note that Hawke was 'effectively the convenor' of the RDG, suggestive of a more directive role. However, for RME, such involvement may also be understood as a sign of the significance the subject now held in curriculum policy, and inspectorate engagement can be understood as an attempt to demonstrate and maintain this in practice. This was further demonstrated by the Scottish Office Education Department (SOED) issuing Circular 6/91 in 1991, which mandated that RME should make up no less than five per cent of a pupil's curriculum over S1 and S2, no less than eighty hours over S3 and S4 and continue to be included in the timetables of those in S5

and S6. Ultimately, it reiterates the message that RME ought to play a central role in the curriculum.

The 'national guidelines' *Religious and Moral Education 5-14* were published in November 1992, prefaced by Circular 9/92, which explained that they were to be used as 'the basis' for guiding schools'' planning for RME provision (SEOD, 1992). In 1994, the inspectorate laid out its expectations for schools regarding the priorities for implementing *5-14* guidance in *5-14: A Practical Guide for Teachers in Primary and Secondary Schools* (SOED, 1994a). This guidance laid out a broad timeline of the curriculum areas that schools should focus their energies on in relation to developing *5-14.* Where schools had made progress with English and Mathematics and had identified RME as needing attention, the guidance specifically expected schools to prioritise RME by 1995.

Not only did the inspectorate prioritise RME in the *5-14* implementation programme, but it was also clear that practitioners were keen to see continued support and oversight of such developments. Patricia Lockhart, a Lecturer in Religious Education at St Andrew's College and a member of RDG 5, along with Anne MacKintosh of Bearsden Academy, organised an SOED-supported subject conference for practitioners focused on *5-14* RME in November and December 1994. The report of this conference highlighted that, specifically for secondary schools, 'HMIs should continue to monitor the allocation of time to Religious Education' (Lockhart & Mackintosh, 1995: 8). A positive predisposition from practitioners towards and consistent engagement from the inspectorate for RME worked to ensure that what was expected to be taught and assessed in RME in S1 and S2 going forward would be *Religious and Moral Education 5-14*, in line with expectations for its time allocations.

5-14 addressed the lower secondary phase, but from 1986 the recommendations of the *Munn* and *Dunning* reports had been trialled and implemented as Standard Grade qualifications. Within this phase (S3 and S4), secondary pupils were still expected to experience provision in RME, which in some contexts could be overtaken by undertaking a Standard Grade Religious Studies qualification. However, in most cases, this was not something students opted to study or something schools could offer universally. In such circumstances, schools were directed by the SCCC's 1989 *Curriculum Design for the Secondary Stages* guidance to offer 'appropriate activities from Standard Grade courses, SCE short courses, suitable NC modules or courses from the

school's own programme' to ensure learning within the RME mode was provided (SCCC, 1989: 32). For S5/6 there was less specific direction offered for RME, and it is noted by the SCCC that 'it is not expected that each mode will be represented in the curriculum of each pupil' (*ibid*: 9). The introduction of Higher Still in 1999 did little to change this setup, with S3/4 short courses borrowing units from the new Access 3, Intermediate 1 and Intermediate 2 courses for those not undertaking a full subject qualification in RMPS. At S5/6, units from Higher RMPS also became available for RME. The development of Standard Grade and Higher Still qualifications were centrally directed endeavours, and, in both cases, the inspectorate was key in co-ordinating and leading efforts to design the qualifications (Murphy, 2015). However, in contrast to their involvement with *5-14*, the inspectorate's concern with the middle and end phases of secondary education and RME does appear to be more limited. Even the 2nd edition of the SCCC's guidance in 1999 highlighted that RME beyond S3 should take its lead from the aims of the subject detailed in *Religious and Moral Education 5-14*. The SCCC's guidance noted that the aims outlined for RME in *5-14* were 'applicable beyond the S1 and S2 stages' (SCCC, 1999: 52).

From the end of the 1980s, the inspectorate had been a driving influence in establishing RME within the intended curriculum, had driven implementation energies towards RME in the early 1990s for S1/S2, and had worked to develop certificated learning options in the subject. This work implemented the intentions of the *Munn Report* to see RME as a core aspect of the secondary curriculum.

6.6 Curriculum for Excellence, RME and the Inspectorate, 2002 – 2020

The early political conversations about the need for a new curriculum in Scotland in 2002 led to the development of a new curriculum framework between 2004 and 2009 that included RME as one of eight core curriculum areas (McKinney, 2012). In this section, the ongoing interplay between the inspectorate and RME will be considered throughout the planning and implementation phases of *Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)*. It will be demonstrated that whilst the inspectorate has been central to such developments, the effectiveness of their activities is less evident for RME.

Despite the Scottish Government's decision to distance the inspectorate from curriculum innovations following issues with the examination system in 2000, it is clear that the inspectorate was heavily involved in the early formation and ongoing developments of *CfE*. Two high-level examples highlight this for the design phase between 2004 and 2009/10. First, from the beginning, Chris McIlroy, then HM Chief Inspector, was a core member of the Curriculum Review Programme Board (CRPB). The CRPB (2006) had made it clear in the *Progress and Proposals* document that RME would be included in the curriculum structure from the beginning. Second, all core guidance documents clearly identified the inspectorate as one of the key agencies leading *CfE* initiatives. At the subject level, the inspectorate was also attempting to establish the core principles and ideas of *CfE* across the education system through their reporting. In their 2008 report, *Religious and Moral Education: A Portrait of Current Practice in Scottish Secondary Schools,* it is evident that they were actively seeking to ensure that existing and emerging approaches in RME aligned to the four capacities of *CfE* (HMIE, 2008b).

The 2008 HMIE report draws attention to what aspects of RME provision the inspectorate was interested in and a key area of concern was the extent of RME provision. Here, there are three points of note. First, the issue is with the extent of RME provision in schools. Second, this problem becomes more pronounced in the last two years of secondary, and finally, the report contends that local education authorities and teachers 'now need to further improve the provision' (*ibid*: 3). Such a specific direction provides evidence of the inspectorate's concern with RME's place in the enacted curricula of schools and highlights that it identifies a degree of nuance around the issue and directs relevant stakeholders to act. However, it quickly becomes clear that the inspectorate's effectiveness is limited here despite their central position with respect to *CfE* developments. First, it is worth noting that their 2001 report, prior to *CfE,* raised similar concerns. It noted that a key 'area for improvement' was 'ensuring adequate time, staff and resources to allow good RME courses to operate' (HMIE, 2001: 8). Here, as in 2008, there is a diagnosis and some direction, but there is no evidence from the report or any other national document of any strategic engagement from the inspectorate to address this in the intervening seven years.

There were concerns about how RME was being implemented across schools. In February 2011, the Scottish Government's learning directorate issued an advice letter to directors of education and all headteachers entitled *Curriculum for Excellence – Provision of Religious and Moral Education in Non-Denominational Schools and Religious Education in Roman Catholic Schools*. This document does not contain any evidence that there was involvement from inspectors in its composition. However, it did engage with the challenges that earlier HMIE reports had noted and connected its advice back to relevant *CfE* documents, including *Building the Curriculum 3*. Still a key source of advice for schools and practitioners, the advice note made three significant points for the secondary sector. First, it emphasised the mandatory place of RME in the curriculum and that this applied to senior phase learners in S5 and S6 too. Second, it should be delivered by subject-specialists. And, finally, the subject should delivered as 'a specific subject discipline and one which contributes to high quality interdisciplinary learning' (Scottish Government, 2011: 3. Emphasis in the original).

In 2014, with the inspectorate incorporated into Education Scotland, the *Impact Report* for RME (IRRME) was published. Inspectors found that provision continued to be problematic for S5/6 but also and 'increasingly' at S4 (Education Scotland, 2014b: 4). Therefore, over a period of thirteen years, the inspectorate repeatedly identified a core area of concern, but their reporting and limited direction seems to have had little impact on the extent of provision. Indeed, as IRRME notes, the situation may even be understood as deteriorating, with S4 learners increasingly unlikely to experience RME. Reading across the 2001, 2008 and 2014 HMIE reports on RME, there is a general trend of the inspectorate identifying evidently persistent challenges. However, such reports appear to have had little in the way of substantial influence, as will be explored more fully in Chapter 8.

In August 2016, *A Statement for Practitioners from HM Chief Inspector of Education* was distributed to all teachers in Scotland via e-mail. It detailed a 'definitive statement' on *CfE* and its implementation, with a focus on the introduction of assessment criteria for all curriculum areas at all levels known as Benchmarks (Education Scotland, 2016b: 2). Robinson and Franchi (2018: 495) note that such a development 'should offer solid curricular signposts to teachers' of RME. However, there is an emphasis on prioritising literacy and

numeracy from the Chief Inspector in the statement, and the inspectorate did not detail specific subject expectations, unlike the arrangements for phasing in *5-14* guidelines. Again, there is a pronouncement from the inspectorate but a distinct absence of directives for *CfE* RME. Indeed, in the developments that followed that saw the inspectorate involved with the curriculum, there are no further publications or documents specifically concerned with RME.

6.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter the focus has been on offering a fresh account of the interplay between the inspectorate and RME in Scotland since the beginning of the 1960s. There are four significant points that emerge from this discussion.

First, before 1981, central authorities concerned with school curricula became demonstrably more interested in and concerned with RME. In the *Millar Report* and *SCCORE* bulletins, those interested in RME envision and position inspectors as key agents in the future development of the subject.

Second, the *Munn Report* is fundamental in moving RME into the formal intended curriculum for secondary education in Scotland, and it is, at least partially, the involvement of inspectors on key committees that brings this development forward.

Third, with the introduction of the inspection of RME in 1983, the inspectorate took on a directive and influential role for the subject, and national guidance increasingly reflected their priorities. This is particularly evident in the development of *5-14*.

Finally, *Curriculum for Excellence* continues to see RME as a central component of contemporary secondary education, and the inspectorate continues to shape key elements of the reform and implementation programme. However, the effectiveness of the inspectorate's efforts in this period is less evident, with key issues persisting in terms of provision and published guidance lacking a subject-specific focus.

These four points also allow for a more nuanced consideration of the wider debate around inspectorate influence on curriculum and educational developments in the Scottish context over time. In line with Humes (1986) and with due regard to the specificities of epochs, the inspectorate can and has

often been considered to be extending its reach to secure more control, greater influence, or to serve political ends. This is understood in hierarchical terms, and schools and teachers are positioned as those in need of being influenced, controlled, or manipulated to achieve a particular ambition. Alternatively, and in step with Goodson and Marsh (1996), such interactions can be viewed more favourably for schools and teachers. Indeed, from the account offered above, the history of inspectorate involvement with RME is perhaps best understood as one that sees RME integrated into the Scottish curriculum because of the activities of the inspectorate, including direct inspection of the subject in schools.

Chapter 7: The Archival Evidence

7.1 The Archival Evidence

To further address the first research question of this study and develop the narrative presented in Chapter 6, this chapter presents the analysis of archival material from the National Records of Scotland (NRS) that specifically relates to the inspectorate, inspection, and the development of Religious and Moral Education (RME) in Scotland since the 1960s. As will be demonstrated in this chapter, the archival evidence highlights the ongoing centrality of the inspectorate in providing advice on RME provision in the context of navigating and balancing the interests of a range of stakeholders since the 1960s.

In the first section of this chapter, the significance of the legislation relating to the bar on the inspection of RME is highlighted as a flashpoint for the interests of professional and Church groups concerned with RME in the 1960s. Section two explores the significance of inspection for the Committee on Moral and Religious Education (CMRE) and their recommendations for RME in their 1972 report. The third section considers a key source that offers insights into the abolition of the bar on inspection in the early 1980s that further highlights that the move towards inspection was prompted by a concern to improve the quality of RME provision, distinct from the issue of examinations in Religious Studies (RS). The fourth section pays close attention to the development of Circular 6/91 and highlights the central role of the inspectorate in developing national guidance for RME provision. Before concluding, the penultimate section offers overarching points that can be made about the changes and continuities in relation to the ways in which inspection, the inspectorate and RME have interacted over time.

In each of the main sections, extracts from the archival material will be presented, sometimes at length, to fully demonstrate the points noted above. As explored extensively in Chapter 5, the sources engaged with in this chapter have not been previously reported on and can only be accessed at the NRS. As already noted, the materials explored below are the minutes of the CMRE and memos and correspondence of members of the SED and HM Inspectorate. Deploying relevant extended excerpts ensures the evidence base is accessible for this study.

7.2 Legislation and the Development of RME in the 1960s

The archival evidence pertaining to the first half of the 1960s is a mix of direct communication between various members of the Scottish Education Department (SED) internally and with representatives from a range of external bodies, primarily the Church of Scotland and the Educational Institute for Scotland (EIS). A primary concern in much of the early correspondence is the introduction of an examination for the subject area of RME and how the prohibition on state involvement in RME was to be understood and navigated.

At their General Assembly held in May 1962, the Committee on Education of the Church of Scotland had agreed on a 'Deliverance' that led Rev. G. B. Hewitt to write to Sir William Arbuckle of the SED on 20 July to ask for a discussion on whether:

> the subject variously known as Biblical Studies, Divinity, Principles of Religion, or otherwise, should be recognised as qualifying for the award of the Scottish Certificate in Education, provided that the introduction of such a subject leading to Certificate presentation does not prejudice the present statutory provisions for religious education in schools (NRS, ED48/1780).

Arbuckle's reply, ten days later, notes that with the 'present statutory provisions bearing on religious education in schools, it would not be practicable for us [the SED] to include the subject' (*ibid*). However, Arbuckle continued,

> We are, however, expecting within the next year or two to be able to hand over to an independent Examination Board, broadly representative of the various educational interests, the responsibility for conducting the Certificate examination; and I think that I can fairly say that a new situation will then arise *(ibid)*.

In this exchange between a key stakeholder in RME's fortunes and the secretary of the SED, there is evidence of the law debarring inspectorate involvement with RME influencing developments related to the subject. Not only does it appear to shape the SED's response to the Church of Scotland's query, but the query itself is framed in light of the statutory parameters. Indeed, it appears that the

Church of Scotland was being quite careful in navigating the distinction between mandated RME and certificated provision in the subject area, with the fuller list of deliverances for that year noting a separate concern for religious instruction in schools but this not being highlighted to the SED (Church of Scotland, 1962). The concern from the SED was not with inspection directly, but about being mindful of the statutory prohibition on state involvement.

The legal position of the new board was investigated as a result of the Church of Scotland's enquiry prior to its establishment in 1965. Internal minutes from SED officials highlight the ways in which the statutory position of RME was complicated not only by the prevailing Education (Scotland) Acts, principally that of 1962 at this point, but also by the longer-standing Schools (Scotland) Code of 1956. On 27 November 1963, Joseph Kidd of the SED wrote to Mr Greig of the Solicitor's Office in St Andrew's House Edinburgh, seeking advice on the issue of an examination in the subject area of 'Religious Knowledge' as the SED has been 'under pressure for some time from the Church of Scotland and the Association of Teachers of Religious Education in Scotland' with regards to the matter (NRS, ED48/1780). Kidd identified that as far as the SED understood the issue, it was the Education (Scotland) Act 1962 and its continued inclusion of Section 67, subsection 2, that precluded any development of an examination course in the subject area. From Kidd's letter, it seems that there was a view that the transfer of examination administration to a new board would be a solution to the issue, as he asked Greig to clarify that:

> Before the regulations are made therefore we should like to write to the Church of Scotland assuring them that we are legally advised that the Board, though set up under section 1 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1963, which is to be read together with the 1962 Act, will not be precluded from conducting an examination in Religious Knowledge by anything in the 1962 Act (*ibid)*.

Two days later, Grieg's reply to Kidd challenged the view that a new board would be legally empowered to develop a certificated course in a subject concerned with RME, with the regulations of the Code determining what was possible. As Greig wrote,

> For your information, however, it occurs to me to direct your attention to the provisions of the Regulations and in particular Regulation 5 which

> refers specifically to examinations for pupils receiving "secondary education". The power to make the regulations is derived from section 1 of the 1963 Act. Section 6 of that Act attracts the definitions in the 1962 Act where "secondary education" is defined in section 3(2) and, so far as I am aware, that definition does not include Religious Instruction as one of the subjects approved under the Regulations referred to in that subsection. Accordingly it would appear that standing the present legal position the Board would have some difficulty in awarding certificates within the S.C.E in respect of examinations in Religious study (*ibid)*.

The result of these deliberations was for the SED to tactfully delay the issue in light of the wider developments concerning the establishment of a new examination board. H. H. Donnelly of the SED wrote to G. B. Hewitt of the Church of Scotland on 10 January 1964 to explain and suggest that,

> work on the regulations has led us to the view that the legal obstacles in the way of including an examination in biblical studies in the Scottish Certificate of Education are likely to persist even after the Board takes over the conduct of the examination from the Department… The best course of action might be for your Committee, if they are so minded, to take the whole problem up with the Board after it has got into full running order. It will be for the Board in the light of the legal advice available to it to decide whether, and under what conditions, it would be open to it to make any arrangements for conducting an examination of the kind which your Committee would like to see.

The issue of examinations, explored through the archival material from the NRS, is significant for this study as it highlights how the statutory bar on state involvement with matters concerning RME was a point of orientation for discussions about possible developments for the subject area. There are, in the above extracts, clear indications that the SED and its officials were conscious of the legal bar, that external stakeholders were too and that this was a central point of discussion for the potential development of the subject area in the early 1960s. More significantly, for this study, the discussions around examination are important as they are the background against which the broader issue of the place and provision of RME in the curriculum emerged.

On 12 February 1964, R. P. Fraser of the SED sent a note entitled 'Religious Education in Secondary Schools' to his colleague Mr McClellan. Fraser's note records his participation 'in the "consultation" which was held in the Scottish Churches' House at Dunblane on 6th-8th February' (*ibid*). The note

makes it clear that this event was a meeting of SED officials, the 'Association of Specialist Teachers of Religious Education' and presumably representatives from the Churches, although it is not clear which denominations were present (*ibid)*. Fraser's note is significant for three reasons.

First, it notes that Senior Chief Inspector J. S. Brunton was present at a meeting focused specifically on RME and its development. The note evidences a specific instance where an inspector, while not explicitly engaged in assessing or inspecting, was involved in discussions around the subject's development. It is also notable, as illustrated in the extracts below, that there is a shift in Fraser's account from 'we' to 'I' with respect to the official's advice and opinions. Where the advice concerns a factual discussion of legal barriers, the collective 'we' refers to Fraser and Brunton. Where, in the second extract, there is a more particular opinion offered, the advice is reported to have been only offered by Fraser. This distinction highlights that inspectors may have been mindful of what they did and did not say in such meetings concerning RME, or at least what was officially documented in this regard.

Second, the note highlights tensions surrounding the place of RME within the curriculum of secondary schools in light of the prevailing legislation. As Fraser notes,

> there was a good deal of discussion at various times about the effect of the existing statutory provisions. Some of those taking part in the "consultation" seemed to look forward to a time when religious education might be made a "subject" in the technical sense in secondary departments, but we made it clear that, so far as could be foreseen, there was little prospect of this outcome since it could be done only by fundamental alteration of the settlement reflected in the statutory provisions ever since last century *(ibid)*.

It would be tempting here to posit that the concerns noted in the above extract were linked to the lack of certificated learning in the subject area. However, as Fraser goes on to make clear, the issue of examinations was a distinct aspect of the discussion. This element of the discussion, as recorded in Fraser's note, can be more firmly considered as highlighting a concern with the place of RME more broadly in secondary education. Something that Fraser reports as a significant point of consideration for the SED in the discussions. He writes,

> there was also reference to the scope for including an examination in religious education or biblical studies within the ambit of the Scottish Certificate of Education… I added that, so far as I could see, the scope for establishing an examination was perhaps not a question of major moment since it would affect only a relatively small minority of pupils: the main concern ought presumably to be with the large mass of pupils who could scarcely in any circumstances expect to be examination candidates in this particular subject (*ibid)*.

The third significant insight from the note of the Dunblane "consultation" is that the SED is seen pushing attention away from the issue of examination towards the broader provision of the subject. Set against the backdrop of the prospect of universal secondary education, which was mandated from 1965 onwards, the above point is a significant one for RME's development. Principally, it highlights a distinction between a focus on developing the subject area through certification for the few; contrasted with provision for the many.

With the parameters of the legislation framing what was and was not possible with respect to examinations, it was the distinction between certificated and core RME that came to occupy the discussions that SED officials and other groups and individuals concerned with the subject had in the mid-1960s. A key point of departure for the issue was a short essay produced by Rev. Dr J. W. D. Smith of Jordanhill College of Education and shared with R. P. Fraser at the SED in early August 1964. The core proposition put forward by Smith was that there should be a move 'towards a type of religious education which can be justified on educational grounds alone' that 'would claim recognition as an integral part of the educational curriculum' (*ibid*).

On 20 October 1964, Smith's paper was the focus of a discussion held in St Andrews House. The SED was represented by H. H. Donnelly, R. P. Fraser, J. Kidd and W. A. M. Good, Rev G. B. Hewitt represented the Church of Scotland's Education Committee, and along with Smith, John Gray of Moray House College of Education represented the colleges of education. The focus of the meeting was recorded as 'the central issue of the place of the subject in the curriculum' (*ibid*).

The note of the meeting highlights that Smith's ideas had been understood as meaning there was 'the possibility of an approach to the subject of religious education on broadly the same basis as that to regular subjects of

the curriculum' as the way forward *(ibid)*. However, while Smith's proposal that 'a subject entitled "biblical studies" or "religious studies" might be introduced on the same footing as a secular subject such as English', it was recognised that this would need to be done at the same time as making it clear that the new subject would be distinct from the legally mandated religious observance or instruction in religion *(ibid)*. In sum, the conclusion of the meeting was that a core strand of instruction in religion would remain a central part of the secondary curriculum, and a distinct subject would be offered for advanced, certificated study.

In the file containing the minutes of the October 1964 meeting, there is no further evidence that speaks to any next steps based on the broad agreement reached other than a discussion of sharing the minutes and encouraging ongoing discussion. However, for the purposes of this study, this evidence demonstrates how there was a move by the SED, the Church of Scotland and the Colleges of Education towards gaining a clear understanding of the educational purpose of the subject, recognising the historical place of instruction in religion and the issue of education about religion in a secular curriculum. The available evidence further highlights how it was the SED and its officials who were engaged in and even co-ordinating such explorations whilst consciously navigating the legislative bar on inspectorate and full state involvement with RME.

The SED officials' positive dispositions towards exploring developments for RME meant that they had engendered positive lines of communication with key stakeholder groups, including the Church of Scotland. As a result, developments in RME could be explored responsively by a community of interested parties. This is particularly noticeable with respect to the reaction that the 1965 report *Primary Education in Scotland,* known now as the *Primary Memorandum,* garnered amongst those concerned with RME in schools (SED, 1965).

An opening section of the *Primary Memorandum* noted that 'there is no chapter on religious education' and explained that although the committee 'did not feel debarred' from exploring the subject's place in the curriculum despite its statutory position, they did not believe they could 'deal adequately with the principles and issues involved'. As a result, they concluded that 'the consideration of religious education should be undertaken by an ad hoc body on which both teachers and denominational interests are represented' (*ibid,* emphasis in the original*)*. The call to establish a committee prompted immediate

interest from the Church of Scotland and, soon after, interest from the Scottish Joint Committee on Religious Education (SJCRE), with both groups writing to the SED to explore the issue more fully. The main focus, and legacy, of the *Primary Memorandum* was on the need to reinvigorate the curriculum and prioritise learner-centred pedagogy in the primary context (Cassidy, 2018; Hartley, 1987). The archival evidence, highlights, that it would have implications for RME.

In short, what occurred between mid-1965 and early 1966 was a realisation that the whole subject area of RME across primary and secondary education needed investigation and review. Second, it was recognised that this was something that would most likely have to be centrally directed. Indeed, in a letter to the SED on 16 March 1966, the SJCRE noted that it did 'not think that by itself it is the appropriate body to deal with the matter' (*ibid*). In response, the SED officials exchanged views on what would be an appropriate way forward. Again, the possibilities were guided by the need to balance external interests with the statutory situation for RME, as noted in an internal memo from 24 March 1966 between J. J. Farrell and Kidd, with HMCI Shanks copied in,

> if it is argued that the Secretary of State should not allow the existing statutory provisions to tie his hands forever our reply would be, I presume, that the Secretary of State should acquiesce in his exclusion from oversight of religious instruction in schools unless and until it became clear that there was a wide measure of agreement among the educational and religious bodies and the general public that the statutory provisions should be reviewed and perhaps amended. In that event it would no doubt be appropriate for the Secretary of State to initiate and even direct action towards amending the provisions in question. But if the purpose in mind is one which does not involve amendment of the statutory provisions relating to religious instruction in schools – and there is no suggestion at this stage that it does – the Secretary of State should refuse to become involved, as he would be if he agreed to set up the kind of committee request… (*ibid)*

Ultimately, these internal deliberations led to external consultation that supported the institution of a committee to review RME. Indeed, as a note on the 'Background to the [Millar] Committee's Appointment' records,

> 'this proposal, extended to cover all schools, received the support of the Church of Scotland, the Joint Committee on Religious Education and, among other groups, a number of lecturers in Religious education in

colleges of education who met Departmental officials in January 1967' (ED48-1339/5).

The evidence available for the 1960s highlights that SED officials were key in having concerns regarding RME's place in the curriculum heard and shows the pivotal role they played in managing the various positions of the relevant stakeholders with respect to the legal position. As the early concerns over examinable courses in the subject area evolved into broader concerns with the subject's place in the curriculum during the 1960s, the archival evidence highlights that the interplay between the law surrounding inspectorate involvement and the development of RME was at the forefront of the SEDs' and stakeholders' deliberations on the future of the subject. Ultimately, by adopting a balanced, consultative, and engaged stance, SED officials led the way for a variety of stakeholder activities and opinions to coalesce into a clear need and then direct action for a national review for the place of and prospects of RME in the curriculum.

7.3 The Committee on Moral and Religious Education and Inspection

The archival material concerning the committee established to examine RME in 1968, normally referred to as the Millar Committee, after its chairman, includes a range of papers, minutes and communications with internal SED officials, inspectors, the media, stakeholder groups and members of the public. Importantly, and as adopted here, the documents highlight that the committee was known at the time of its operation as the Committee on Moral and Religious Education (CMRE). CMRE's subsequent report of 1972, *Moral and Religious Education in Scottish Schools: The Report of a Committee Appointed by the Secretary of State for Scotland*, has already been examined in Chapter 6. In this section, relevant findings from the archives are explored, looking explicitly at the significance of the inspectorate and the issue of inspection in relation to the work of the CMRE. In short, it is demonstrable from the available evidence that the issue of inspection and the legal bar on inspectorate involvement with the subject did indeed shape the CMRE's work in terms of the parameters it gave the committee and its deliberations. The significance of this discussion is that it

supports findings from the analysis of the published report with insights from the archival material.

That the CMRE was expected to work within the existing legal framing of the day for RME is made clear in the remit provided to the Committee by the Secretary of State; the work was to be conducted 'within the existing framework of the statutory provisions governing the obligation to continue religious instruction, the responsibility for its content and the question of inspection' (SED, 1972a: 5). The archival material highlights that the 'question of inspection' was itself a key factor in deciding to establish the Committee as a distinct group, separate from the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum (CCC). In an internal SED note from 20 November 1969, W. A. P. Weatherson wrote to McClellan and copied in Mr David Stevenson, the secretary of the CMRE, explaining that 'a decision was very deliberately taken to set up an ad hoc Committee on Moral and Religious Education and that the Committee should stand outside the normal arrangements for committees dealing with aspects of the curriculum' (NRS, ED48/1348). And while Weatherson acknowledges that he had 'not yet been able to trace any papers to substantiate this view', he explained that 'to link it with the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum would have been to associate it too closely with the Secretary of State, Inspectorate and Department officials' (*ibid*). The significance of this decision for the work of the CMRE is hard to assess, and comparative work on other contemporaneous reports on the curriculum would have to be undertaken to offer any informed comment. However, for the purposes of this study, not only did the legal bar on state involvement with RME determine the nature of the CMRE's work but also its very existence.

The legal position of RME and the bar on official involvement further shaped the work of the CMRE in one other regard: the issue of examinations. Ultimately, the Millar Report did not advocate for an examination, though it did note that that 'argument is a difficult one to decide' (SED, 1972a: 97). It is clear from the archival material that the committee was keen to ensure that any decisions taken were in line with the legal parameters. This issue had been explored in outline in an early memo between Weatherston and Stevenson in September 1969 (NRS-ED48/1347) and in an early committee paper entitled 'Note by the Secretary on Statutory Provisions' the situation regarding examinations was made clear,

> The relevant Regulations (The Schools (Scotland) Code 1956) required authorities to submit for the approval of the District Inspector a scheme of work for the secondary department of each school, and since Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools are debarred by from inspecting any educational establishment to enquire into instruction in religious subjects, it was not possible for schemes of work which included religious education to be approved in terms of regulations. (This did not, of course, affect the giving of education in secondary schools). However, Section 3 of the 1962 Act has been amended by the Education (Scotland) Act 1969, and secondary education is no longer defined in terms of courses and subjects approved in terms of the regulations. This means that the legal restriction on an examination in religious studies has been removed. If the Committee were to recommend the setting-up of a SCE examination in religious studies, it would be for the Examination Board in the first instance to consider this recommendation (NRS-ED48/1340).

The above extract is significant here for two reasons. First, as indicated, the note on statutory provisions demonstrates that the CMRE was concerned with ensuring that the legislative framework was well understood and highlights that legislation in relation to RME and inspection was being carefully considered in relation to defining the possibilities of the committee's work. Second, it demonstrates, as will be highlighted again below, that the removal of the bar on inspection of RME was not prompted or necessitated by the issue of examinations. As the *Millar Report* summarised, following the Education (Act) of 1969, 'there would appear to be no legal obstacle in the way' of an examination in the subject area (SED, 1972a: 97).

The minutes of the CMRE's meetings, though only in places and never in any extended way, also highlight that the issue of inspection and central involvement was considered to be a practical issue that would determine both the CMRE's recommendations and the impact of its work. The minutes of a committee meeting held at St Andrew's House on 29 August 1969 best captured the nature of the committee's concerns,

> Some disquiet was expressed that the Committee might be constricted by its terms of reference, and that its report might be ineffective because of the lack of any powers for the Secretary of State to back it up. But it seemed clear that the Committee should put forward whatever conclusions the evidence and its discussions led to; and that the report, like most other reports on the curriculum, would depend for its effectiveness on how convincing its argumentation could be. The point was, however, made that other reports tended to be followed up by

> advisers and inspectors, and the Committee might have to make some suggestions for this in its own area (NRS-ED48/1337).

The issue of any report lacking central backing and follow-up by the inspectorate demonstrates the Committee's awareness of the necessary infrastructure to affect change for RME, and the minutes highlight how this was not a mere matter of fact but something that needed to be addressed. From the material under consideration here, there is no doubt that the CMRE saw the CCC as the best way forward under the circumstances. Indeed, in Chapter 6, I argued that a radical aspect of the *Millar Report* was its advocacy for future curriculum development in RME to be undertaken in some way in connection with the CCC. The archival material demonstrates that this position was taken despite advice to the contrary from SED officials. From Weatherson's note of 20 November 1969 to McClellan and Stevenson, discussed above, it is clear that the CCC was quickly being considered by the CMRE to be a possible solution to the absence of central and inspectorate enforcement of their work. Equally, though, this was not seen as the most desirable way forward from the SED's perspective. As Weatherson wrote,

> I do not suppose that we can stop the Moral and Religious Education Committee from making a recommendation about the replacement of the Joint Committee but it might be advisable for Mr Stevenson to do what he can to make any recommendation as vague as possible, preferably without reference to the Consultative Committee… Perhaps we could have word together with Mr Stevenson (NRS-ED48/1348).

Regardless of this advice, the CMRE continued to press ahead with the idea and as they were beginning to clarify their ideas and work towards the outline of their final recommendations at a meeting on 14 April 1970,

> it was agreed that the Secretary should discover whether a recommendation that the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum should set up a Working Party to deal with the continuing development of moral and religious education would be regarded as impossible to implement. If this turned out to be so, the Committee would have to consider some other way to ensure continuing development (NRS-ED48//1337).

While the final *Millar Report* advocates for the CCC as the body to take forward curriculum development, the archival evidence highlights that this was linked to a conscious concern by the CMRE to ensure the impact of its work and that it did so despite contrary advice.

The *Millar Report* itself is clear that the 'question of inspection' had contributed to the poor provision of RME in Scottish schools (SED, 1972a). The archival evidence explored in this section demonstrates that the same question both contributed to the institution of the CMRE in the manner in which it was, distinct from the CCC, and that it set the parameters for its work in relation to examinations. More significantly, the evidence explored above highlights how the issue of a lack of inspection led to the core recommendation to have the CCC connected to RME's development.

7.4 Removing the Bar on Inspection, 1979 – 1983

The removal of the bar on the inspection of RME that was instituted in an amendment to the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 in 1981, with a delay to implementation until 1983, is not covered extensively in the archival material consulted for this study. However, what becomes clear is that the impetus for the change in the law was more wide-ranging than just the issue of examinations, further supporting the analysis offered in Chapter 6. A brief comment will be made on the CMRE and the issue of examinations before the core point that curriculum development for RME, not certificated examinations in the subject area, was the key motivator for the removal of the bar on inspection, supported with reference to a key source.

As illustrated above in detail, the CMRE had taken time to ascertain the legal situation regarding the possibility of examinations connected to the subject area. And, whilst the bar on inspection was in place until 1981, the issue of examinations had been legally permitted because of the removal of any role for the inspectorate in the examination process through changes to legislation and the introduction of a separate examination board. This historical background needs to be understood to ensure that, in turn, any interpretation of the reasons for the removal of the bar on inspection is as accurate as possible. In Chapter 6,

I have already argued that there was a broader concern to ensure quality provision in RME that prompted the change, and the archival evidence further supports this position.

In a SED document of 12 November 1982 summarising the findings of the consultation that the department undertook with a range of groups interested in RME, namely Churches and professional associations, on the removal of the bar on inspection, the intention of the Inspectorate for inspecting the subject was outlined. They stated that inspections 'would simply enable them to report upon religious education as part of the curriculum and broader life of schools' (NRS-ED48/2543). A draft press release, included as an appendix to the report, made clear that the overarching reason for this step-change was to secure better provision for RME than had previously been the case. As it stated,

> Prohibition on inspection is associated with the tradition that the Secretary of State does not concern himself with religious education in schools. In recent years, however, successive Secretaries of State have become more closely involved following representations from the Churches and others that this tradition worked to the disadvantage of religious education (*ibid*).

That the focus was on RME, as much as on examinations, is made clear in a later section of the press release where it is noted that 'against the background of the development of general religious education and the introduction of the new examination course, the anomaly of the prohibition upon inspection of religious education in schools became more significant'(*ibid*). Here, the significant point for this study is to highlight that the introduction of examinations in the subject was already well underway and was, itself, not the sole factor behind the bar on inspection being removed. Rather, the quality of 'general religious education' was an important consideration too.

7.5 The Inspectorate and National Guidance for RME, 1990 – 1992

The focus of the archival material that has most recently become available is the development of Circular 6/91. Circular 6/91, published on 15 March 1991, was a key policy document for RME under the *5-14* curriculum and laid out the core expectations around provision (SED, 1991). The archival material provides

clear evidence of inspectorate involvement in the ongoing development of policy relating to RME through their work around Circular 6/91. In the following section, the place of the inspectorate in providing official advice and managing the various stakeholders' viewpoints in the formation of a key policy document is explored as a case study of some of the ways the inspectorate impacted the development of RME in Scotland.

On 16 June 1989, Michael Forsyth, the Minister of State for Scotland who had oversight of the development of *5-14*, met individuals from the Church of Scotland, the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Union, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, the Free Presbyterian Church, the Free Church of Scotland and the Congregational Union of Scotland. The focus of the meeting was to consider 'how the delivery of religious education and religious observance might be strengthened' at a time of curricular change (NRS-ED48/2461). The outcome of the meeting was an agreement that a circular from the SED would be 'a way forward' and that the Churches would be consulted on the contents of what would be developed.

The evidence from the archives highlights that the Churches were, of course, consulted but that the inspectorate was involved very early in the process. By early July, HMCI Douglas Osler and HMI Hawke, who were well-versed in matters concerning RME, had already drafted an outline of the circular prior to the comments from Churches and the Educational Institute for Scotland (EIS). Significantly, though, the inspectors had 'reconsidered its content in the light of the responses' and 'made no changes' by 1 November 1989 (*ibid*). Further, by 10 January 1990, Hawke was able to write to Osler to confirm that 'the RE Panel had sight of the draft circular at the recent panel meeting and was generally happy with it' (*ibid*). The Panel did raise one substantial issue, noting that 'it would be possible for pupils to do short courses in RS'. This led Hawke to suggest that it should be made clear in the circular that such courses could be offered, a point that is included in the published circular of 1991. By 1 February 1990, J. W. L. Lonie of the SED was able to write to Forsyth's private secretary, Senior Chief Inspector T. N. Gallacher and other colleagues to inform them that the draft circular had been prepared, following consultation with the Churches. In his note, Lonie highlights that the inspectorate was central in the development of the circular, having given 'specialist advice' on the Churches' representations (*ibid*).

The archival evidence relating to the development of circular 6/91 offers further insights into the priorities of the Churches and professional groups with respect to RME, but for this study, it is sufficient to highlight the evidently central role that inspectors had in its development. The focused discussion of the evidence above is complemented by acknowledging that inspectors, namely Gallagher, Osler, and Hawke, are copied into communications across the near-two-year project of developing the circular. The specific nature of the inspectors' work can be described as providing expert advice on key developments to colleagues within the SED. In addition, the inspectors are mediators of a range of views on issues of national importance. They navigate the comments from stakeholders and the RE Panel, which is frustratingly vague in terms of composition or purpose from the documentation.

7.6 Continuities and Changes

The archival evidence from the NRS covering the period from the early 1960s through to the early 1990s is a collection of material that offers a number of fruitful avenues for further investigation into a range of aspects and issues connecting to RME and other topics. In the preceding sections of this chapter, I have provided an account of the sources that engage directly with this study's focus on the interplay between the inspectorate, inspection and RME in chronological order. The above sections contribute a richer evidence base for commenting on that interplay, which has been evident since the 1960s onwards. It is important to recognise, though, that the time period under consideration means that the inspectorate itself and individual inspectors involved with RME have changed over time. To this end, this section steps back from the individual episodes explored above and draws out the continuities and changes over time that the evidence considered in this chapter speaks to.

The most significant point to draw out on continuities centres on the significance that the legislative situation regarding the inspectorate, inspectors and, by extension, official state involvement had prior to the removal of the bar on inspection in law in 1981 and in practice in 1983. Throughout the 1960s, with either a focus on the introduction of examinations or the nature of what RME in schools was and its purpose in the curriculum, any innovations for the subject

were checked by SED officials and even considered by stakeholders in relation to the law. This, too, shaped the major step forward for RME, the establishment of the CMRE out with the well-positioned structures of the CCC and the CMRE's subsequent findings. Recognising that a lack of inspection would hold back any positive impact of its report and future development work, the CMRE had to find a solution that had the potential to breach the legal situation. In the end, the law itself came to be viewed as a barrier to progress for RME that had to be reckoned with.

The end of the legal prohibition on inspection marks an important change in the dynamics between inspection, inspectorate and RME. Ultimately, the shift in legal position enabled the inspectorate to play a full and unabashed role in shaping national policy and guidance by the end of the 1980s. The fact that inspectors drafted the guidance, shaped it, offered advice, and tested it out with stakeholders illustrates the new role they could play in shaping RME.

In looking across the three decades covered by the evidence from the NRS, there is though one point of continuity that cuts across the 1981/3 rupture. Inspectors can be found actively mediating the various demands of those with an interest in RME. In the early part of the period, inspectors can be found working with SED officials and visiting meetings of professional groups and Churches. And in the later period, they again navigate the demanding landscape of multiple interest groups to generate policy.

7.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has offered a chronological survey of archival evidence from the NRS that pertains to the issue of inspection, the inspectorate and RME in Scotland since the 1960s. It has presented extended extracts to ensure this fresh evidence is accessible and fully considered. The sections have covered four key episodes in the development of RME and contribute evidence that demonstrates a continued but dynamic relationship between the issue of inspection, the work of the inspectorate and the development of RME. Inspectorate mediation of various interests in relation to RME before and after the removal of the legal prohibition on inspectors' involvement with the subject has been identified as a key feature of the development of RME since the 1960s. This chapter has also

shown how the question of inspection in relation to RME was driven to the fore by the *Primary Memorandum* and that the absence of inspection shaped the CMRE's work and final recommendations. Moreover, further evidence has been presented to demonstrate that the legislative change for inspectorate involvement stemmed from a primary concern with the quality of RME, not just the provision of examinations in the subject area.

Chapter 8: Reporting on Religious and Moral Education, 1986 – 2014

8.1 Introduction

The focus of the second research question for this study is on what we can learn from inspectorate reports into RME over the course of the period under consideration. This chapter seeks to address this priority by providing an analysis of the five national reports on RME published by the inspectorate between 1986 and 2014. The chapter will begin by providing an overview of the reports and their construction. This discussion will emphasise the inspectorate's continued oversight of RME. Moreover, it will highlight that there has been a gradual evolution from the inspectorate being interested in RME as a distinct subject within the curriculum to one that evaluates RME developments in line with national policy priorities. Thereafter, this chapter will provide a comparative analysis of the five reports across the core themes of: leadership and management issues, classroom content and practice, and certification. These core themes are illustrative of two key points. First, the inspection of RME has helped to focus attention on areas of provision and practice that have enabled or hindered the provision of RME in secondary schools. Second, the recurrence of the same themes since the 1980s highlights that the inspection of RME has had a variable impact on the nature and quality of provision over the period under consideration.

8.2 The Inspectorate and Reporting on RME

The source material under consideration in this chapter is the five reports produced by the inspectorate, each with a core focus on RME in Scottish secondary schools. The reports, their publication date, and the abbreviations used to refer to them in this chapter are detailed in Table 1 above.

All five reports detail the inspectorate's evaluations of key aspects of RME provision, offering national periodic snapshots of school practice. It is important to note that the reports are published by the inspectorate, and each

acknowledges the institutional setup that the inspectorate was operating within at the point of publication. Namely, it is noted as the Scottish Education Department for *LTRE*, distinctly as HMIE for *SQRE* and *REP*, and as an integral constituent of Education Scotland for *IRRME*.

The evidence basis of all the reports includes the use of inspectors' findings from school inspections and other sources. For *LTRE*, this included the findings from sixty-three secondary schools between 1983 and 1985 (SED, 1986). *ELTRE*, incorporating the same sample as *LTRE*, expanded its sample to include the inspection findings relating to '200 religious education departments in secondary schools' up until 1993 (SOED, 1994b: iii). *SQRE* was produced based on the inspection findings of seventy-six secondary schools between 1995 and 2000, fifty-three of which were non-denominational. *SQRE* also drew 'on general evaluations of RME provision which HMI have included in all published secondary school reports during this period.' (HMIE, 2001: 7). The evidence basis for *REP* is less clear, and it is only noted in the report that it was 'based on evidence obtained from HIME visits to secondary schools during the period 2002 to 2007. These visits included both general inspections and other visits to examine effective practice.' (HMIE, 2008b: 2). *IRRME* has the most diverse evidence base. There were 'focused evidence gathering visits' to thirty-four primary schools, ten Roman Catholic secondary schools and sixteen non-denominational secondaries in the academic year 2012-2013. These were combined with insights from an 'analysis of relevant evidence from general inspections and other professional engagement visits carried out over the past three years', and use was also made of Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) data on qualifications in RMPS and other relevant awards (Education Scotland, 2014b: 1). *IRRME* also utilised the insights of practitioners and academics as part of a 'Review Reference Group' and took account of previously published material on RME, including *SQRE* and *REP*. The reporting in *IRRME* distinguishes between areas of strength and development for non-denominational and denominational schools. The corpus of reports and their reported sources of intelligence are evidence of a persistent and longstanding engagement with RME developments. This is perhaps an obvious point, but it is important as further evidence of a long-standing and evolving interaction between the inspectorate and RME.

The contents of the five national synopses draw attention to the motivations for the inspectorate's reporting on RME. From 1986 through to 2014,

the priorities of national curriculum change replaced a concern with the subject on its own terms. In *LTRE*, the first of the national reports, it is clear that inspection was focused on understanding schools' approaches to provision within the context of the school and as the report noted:

> HM Inspectors intended to approach the inspection of religious education within each school without preconceived ideas of the form of provision which was most appropriate to it. It was essential to allow schools freedom to respond to the context in which they found themselves. The appropriate provision for religious education in any school depended on the community which it served, on the resources available and the extent to which its educational philosophy necessitated a separate or an integrated programme. This did not mean that provision which made little impact on a pupil's experience would be acceptable.
> (SED, 1986: 6).

For inspectors reviewing RME between 1983 and 1985, the guiding principles that they did expect schools to engage with were those from the SCCORE (1978 & 1981) bulletins, which, the inspectorate noted, 'were intended to be acceptable to all schools irrespective of their context…' (SED, 1986: 6). The other aspects of provision that were considered by inspectors in this early phase of their involvement with RME were the curriculum design and structure and 'all other influences on the experience of pupils such as methodology, classroom organisation, resources, timetabling and assessment… even if taught by non-specialists' (*ibid*: 7). Ultimately, in their initial engagements, inspectors were focused on understanding existing practice and the quality of the learning experience for pupils.

By 1994 and the publication of *ELTRE,* there is an evident step-change in the inspectorate's engagement with RME. The three stated aims of *ELTRE* are that it would provide an update on *LTRE*, identify elements of 'effective learning and teaching in religious education' and provide direction 'for further debate and development' (SOED, 1994b: iii). The directive nature of *ELTRE* is intimated in the latter of these aims. However, it is even more evident in how readers are directed to *5-14* guidance, the SCCC's *Curriculum Design for the Secondary Stages* document and SOED Circular 6/91 with respect to RME. These documents, according to the Inspectorate, 'have offered explicit advice on the nature and place of religious education in the curriculum.' (*ibid*). Indeed, with the introduction of *5-14* and the embedding of Standard Grade qualifications, much

had changed with respect to the envisioned curriculum in Scotland since *LTRE*. The inspectorate's inclusion of this information can be seen as entirely pragmatic or even supportive of RME, reflecting the envisaged 'fundamental place of religious education in Scottish schools.' (*ibid*). However, through *ELTRE*, the inspectorate is evidently interested in seeing RME align with national priorities, as it states:

> The report should prove useful to headteachers and their staff as they make plans to bring their curriculum and assessment arrangements for religious education into line with the national guidelines in such a way as to meet the expectations of the timetable for the implementation of the 5-14 Programme announced by the Minster for Education in January 1994. (*ibid:* 1).

Three points are important to stress here. First, the inspectorate sees the direction of travel for curriculum development at the school level coming from the *5-14* guidelines. Second, curriculum development should be done in a timely manner that meets specific policy directions. Finally, a reference to the political authority overseeing the *5-14* programme is included. Inspectorate interest in RME is, at this point, no longer solely about the experience of learners. The inspectorate's report shows that RME was a core element of *5-14* and was viewed as such by the inspectorate. Consequently, RME was significant because it was an embedded element of national curriculum policy developments. Here, the inspectorate's activities can be understood as a central source of support for securing a firm place for RME in schools. Moreover, in their discussion on leadership and management in relation to secondary departments, the inspectorate is explicit in demanding that teachers and schools took the development of RME seriously. For secondary departments, *ELTRE* recommends 'that departments produce an annually up-dated plan with precisely defined targets' that would 'enable departments to concentrate on conflicting demands', 'serve as a benchmark against which progress can be recognised' and be a 'valuable tool in negotiation with senior promoted staff' (*ibid*: 35-37).

The reports by the inspectorate are frustratingly inconsistent in terms of how they detail the extent of provision in RME across Scotland over time. For example, *LTRE* details qualitative statements such as "Most of" for S1/S2 in 1986 and *SQRE* only discusses the extent of provision with respect to its own sample

when discussing provision in 2001. Such variations impede any attempt to ascertain the impact of the inspectorate's activities (Appendix 2). On the surface, *ELTRE* provides the most secure comparative data by contrasting 1983 and 1991 school census data, but this combines non-denominational and denominational provision. The 1983 school census data from *LTRE* is more relevant for this study as it reports directly on non-denominational provision, though the disaggregation from the original data has resulted in approximations. Moreover, there is only data available for S1-S5 and not S6 (Table 5).

Table 5: National RME Provision in the School Census for 1983 and 1991

Year Groups	**National Provision of RME as Reported in *LTRE***	**National Provision of RME as Reported in *ELTRE***	
	1983 School Census	1983 School Census	1991 School Census
S1-S2	About 60%	82%	93%
S3-S4	About 50%	73%	88%
S5-S6	About 30% *Only S5 Reported*	56%	53%

Overall, the data demonstrate a positive trend towards increased provision nationally between 1983 and 1991, but it is not clear if the growth is particular to either the non-denominational or denominational sectors. The improved extent of provision could indicate some engagement with and response to the inspectorate's expectations detailed in *LTRE* surrounding RME, prior to *5-14* directives.

In a stark departure from *LTRE*, *SQRE* looks to the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 and Circular 6/91, not the curriculum rationales of SCCORE, to find a mandate for RME in schools. The more instrumentalist nature of *SQRE* provides further evidence of the inspectorate's engagement with RME focusing increasingly on alignment with national policy objectives. Most notably, *SQRE* is one of a series of subject-focused reports that 'makes evaluations based on the published performance indicators used by HMI' and a report that should be 'read in conjunction with the more general survey of Standards and Quality in Scottish

Schools' (HMIE, 2001: 3). Here, the inspectorate has engaged with RME within the broader policy changes concerning quality assurance in schools and the implications for schools to improve their work because of the *Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000*. *SQRE* does not provide national statistics relating to provision, and it reports on denominational and non-denominational schools together. Therefore, any assessment of the inspectorate's impact on the extent of provision via *ELTRE* is not possible from *SQRE*. In making this point, again, it is worth noting that the inspectorate's national reporting activities were consistently unclear in terms of demonstrating national progress in terms of gauging the extent of RME provision.

As national preparations for *Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)* progressed in the mid-2000s, *REP* explicitly aimed 'to relate existing pedagogy and curricular provision to the aspirations' of the incoming curriculum (HMIE, 2008b: 2). *CfE's* aim of being a curriculum that covered all stages of schooling from ages three to eighteen, underscored a call in *REP* to ensure that schools would 'provide a continuing element of' RME in the final two years of secondary school. The intended shift away from strictly demarked subject boundaries saw the inspectorate emphasise the possibility of connecting RME 'to other areas of the curriculum… for example through the study of ethical, social, and moral issues' (*ibid*: 3). Moreover, it was noted that RME 'traditionally made a strong contribution to wider aspects of school life' (*ibid*). The inspectorate then detailed how aspects of existing practice responded positively to or required attention 'to help teachers consider how they can help pupils develop the four capacities' *(ibid)*. *REP*, therefore, provides further illustration of the motivations for inspectorate consideration of RME. RME was important to the inspectorate because it was featured in the national curriculum project. Consequently, *REP* continued to draw stakeholders' attention to the need to ensure suitable provision, especially in S5/S6. It stated that 'Education authorities and teachers now need to further improve the provision…in many of our secondary schools' (HMIE, 2008b: 3).

The inspectorate's intention in producing *REP* was to prepare RME practitioners for the possibilities of *CfE,* and six years later, *IRRME* provided insights on how schools had responded to the major curriculum overhaul. *IRRME* 'evaluates current practice' and 'sets out to encourage professional learning... It identifies good practice and highlights important areas for discussion and

further development' (*ibid*: 1). Again, as with previous reports, *IRRME* is demonstrably oriented towards aligning current practice to policy and curricular objectives. *IRRME* asserts that it 'builds on the messages' in *REP* and the *Principle and Practice* (2009) papers for RME and RERC. In this context, *IRRME* states that it 'outlines an ambitious agenda for staff and the entitlements of all children and young people in Religious and moral Education'. Moreover, *IRRME* directs readers to engage with its contents in light of 'those other national reports and relevant publications as listed in Appendix 4' (*ibid*: 1). Such publications are primarily the national policy and curriculum guidance documents surrounding *CfE*.

That there was a clear agenda on the part of the inspectorate in *IRRME* to align RME practice with national objectives can be illustrated with a further example. In *IRRME,* there is a discussion about the challenges of staffing visits for learning in RME due to the poor staff-to-pupil ratio and how 'interdisciplinary approaches' could involve more staff. However, there is a note of caution that such approaches 'should be developed and implemented to complement subject specific learning and not as a replacement to it'. There is then a comment that 'Further advice on ensuring national entitlements for RME can be found in the Curriculum for Excellence Briefing papers' (*ibid*: 17). RME's challenges and opportunities mattered to the inspectorate, as they were key to seeing the curriculum implemented as intended. External evidence confirms this impression. The *CfE* Implementation Plan for session 2013-2014, produced under the auspices of HM Chief Inspector as Chair of the *CfE* Implementation Group, states that "All education establishments and authorities should be aware of the outcomes of the reports as it will set the future agenda for improvement across RME… leading to better outcomes for learners' (CIG, 2013: 3).

The five national reports on RME draw out that the inspectorate has maintained an interest in RME since the 1980s and that the overriding purpose for such work has been to align practice with core policy developments. Such developments were ultimately frameworks that demanded a place for RME within the intended curriculum for Scottish schools, and the inspectorate can be understood to be attempting to secure this through these reports. The nature of the evidence gathered in these reports limits any discussion around the extent of provision, as the samples of schools are neither consistent nor differentiated in ways that enable us to ascertain whether there was increased growth in the non-

denominational sector or not. Nonetheless, more can be gained from the reports with regard to the nature and quality of RME in Scottish non-denominational secondary schools since the 1980s.

8.3 Leadership and Management

Across the five national reports, a key theme that highlights the inspectorate identifying an important aspect of quality RME provision is that of leading RME within schools (Appendix 3). *LTRE*, based on the School Census, records that across the non-denominational and denominational sectors, there were only eighty-four Principal Teachers (PTs) and thirty-four Assistant Principal Teachers (APTs) leading Religious Education (not necessarily RME) provision in Scottish secondary schools in 1984.

From the sixty-three schools covered in *LTRE*'s sample, it is clear, too, that there were considerable variations in how departmental leadership was configured. Over half the sample had at least a PT or APT, with eighteen schools having both. However, eleven schools had unpromoted specialist teachers who co-ordinated others. Sixteen schools had provision through non-specialists only, who were not necessarily enthusiastic about their responsibility for the subject (SED, 1986: 20). The variations in leadership arrangements for RME, highlighted by these statistics, were identified by the inspectorate as leading to various consequences for RME provision.

According to the inspectorate, departments with at least 'a teacher of religious education with a promoted post ensured accountability in teaching the subject and provided access to the policy-making bodies of the school', and they could 'co-ordinate the overall provision', especially where non-specialists were deployed (*ibid*). Where there was no promoted teacher and non-specialists were deployed, it was often the case that such teachers took on the responsibility well. However, in some cases, there was an 'insensitivity in management' at a whole-school level that led to poor oversight of RME and careless allocations of classes to disinterested teachers (*ibid*). In response to these dynamics, the inspectorate found that a department led by a promoted subject specialist offered 'the most satisfactory provision', and in other cases, school leadership had to pay much more careful attention to both who was deployed and how well

they were supported in their attempts to provide RME with non-specialists (*ibid*, 20). In particular, the inspectorate noted that it was important for schools to prioritise non-specialist's confidence in their own subject, consider their prior experience of delivering RME, aim at developing non-specialists' competency by enabling them to deliver RME within the same stage over multiple sessions and to facilitate access to in-service training (*ibid*: 21). In their review of leadership, the inspectorate recognised both the significant role that promoted subject specialists played but were also supporting schools to enhance the quality of provision where non-specialists were deployed.

The inspectorate's focus on leadership is illustrative of its alignment with the prevailing national guidance that RME should be suitably staffed and that there should be considerable oversight from school management, too. However, the inspectorate appears to adopt a much more forgiving stance on the use of non-specialists than SCCORE's first bulletin from 1978, wherein SCCORE (1978: 24) states that such non-specialists are to be 'no more than a stop-gap measure which must cease as suitably qualified RE staff become available' as 'it is abundantly clear that curriculum development in RE depends on adequately trained and experienced teachers of the subject'. Despite a similar point regarding the benefits of promoted staff, the inspectorate appears to have given the green light for the use of non-specialists in *LTRE*.

The follow-up report by SCCORE (1987: 4) that focused on the issues raised by *LTRE* noted that 'Whatever staffing resource a school has available, management issues arise' and did not challenge the inspectorate's key points in relation to the use of non-specialists. Rather, the report repeated the same support strategies for non-specialists, acknowledged the challenge of RME 'being a growth area at a time of contraction in education' and urged schools to consider at least appointing 'someone with a teaching qualification in two subjects, one of which is RE'. Such advice came at a time when school rolls were on the decline, and it was difficult for Headteachers to 'see their way to' hiring only an RME specialist (*ibid:* 5). The comments by SCCORE in their report do suggest that the inspectorate may have been taking a pragmatic approach to ensuring school leadership directed non-specialists effectively considering the prevailing demographic and staffing challenges.

ELTRE, published in 1994, continued calls for departments to be led effectively and supported appropriately by school management. *ELTRE* repeated

the view that the subject was 'most successful in schools where there is a clearly accountable management responsibility for the subject at principal or assistant principal teacher level' (SOED, 1994b: 30). Noting, too, that such leaders were often 'enthusiastic exponents' with 'a high degree of personal commitment to the subject' (*ibid:* 31). Moreover, school leaders were directed to 'take an active interest in the position of the department by engaging with staff in discussion…helping to set realistic priorities… and by creating a network of support and encouragement' (*ibid:* 30). With respect to leadership, the key development priority for RME introduced by the inspectorate in *ELTRE* is a new emphasis on departmental planning.

In *ELTRE,* the inspectorate draws stakeholders' attention to the need for RME departments to orientate their ongoing work through 'a management checklist'. The guidance for such a document stemmed, as the inspectorate signal in the report, from *Management of Educational Resources: Effective Secondary Schools* published in 1988. Based on this, the inspectorate encouraged leaders of RME in schools to plan around 'the headings of leadership and staff development, aims, policies and priorities, communication and consultation, monitoring and evaluation' (*ibid*: 36). In this call to enhance existing leadership practice via strategic forward planning, linking directly to a pre-existing framework, the inspectorate looks to be encouraging further professionalisation of RME leadership via alignment to national guidance.

ELTRE evidences the ongoing use of non-specialists in schools to deliver RME. The report notes that non-specialists 'contribute in a number of schools, usually to a limited extent in order to supplement the coverage of classes provided by religious education specialists' (*ibid*: 10). The inspectorate recognises the use of non-specialists as a significant issue for those leading RME and expects that they are suitably supported 'through the clear identification of management accountability and support structures' (*ibid*: 40). Notably, this position maintains that found in *LTRE*. However, it pays little attention to Circular 6/91, a key guidance document for RME provision from 1991 onwards. Circular 6/91 states that 'Religious education should receive the attention and facilities merited by its fundamental place in the curriculum' (SOED, 1991: 2) and the required increase of RME teachers should be met by 'adjustment in the specialist balance of the teaching establishment within schools' (*ibid*: 3). In short, RME should be delivered by specialists, on a par with other curriculum

areas. Despite including a copy of Circular 6/91 within *ELTRE*, the inspectorate again deviates from national guidance on insisting on the provision of RME specialists and, instead, accepts the use of non-specialists provided that they were suitably supported. This may have been a necessary stance, reflecting schools' needs and the limitations with respect to staffing. However, there is no clarification from the inspectorate that it was nonetheless undesirable.

Significantly, this stance seems to have been generally adopted by practitioners. In a report on a series of three conferences for practitioners, local authority advisers, development officers and lecturers in Religious Education that discussed *ELTRE*, it was clear that the issue of non-specialists was recognised as important. However, and in step with inspectorate advice, it was clear from the report that supporting non-specialists, rather than working to end their use, was the key strategy to be adopted in schools. Moreover, school leaders had a role in carefully selecting non-specialists based on their oversight of RME. As the report notes, 'Senior Management Teams, and in particular those responsible for timetabling, need to be fully informed of problems related to the selection and the use of non-specialist teachers' (Lockhart & Mackintosh, 1995: 8). In addition to this record of three conferences focused on *ELTRE* illustrating that inspectorate reports were important sources of insights for practitioners, it demonstrates the influence of those insights. As the report on the conference notes, it 'conveys something of the current concerns of those involved in Religious Education' (*ibid*: 1).

Now in the role of HM Senior Chief Inspector, and previously the first specialist inspector with responsibility for RME, Douglas Osler signed off an introduction to *SQRE* in 2001. The introduction explained that the report was to 'be of interest to a broad range of readers, including education decision-makers at national level, education authority directorates, senior promoted staff in schools, school boards and parents' and 'it should help teachers of RME as they seek to improve the quality of the educational experiences and attainment of their pupils' (HMIE, 2001: 3). With respect to the leadership and management of RME, *SQRE* highlighted the 'effective leadership by principal teachers' as an area of strength nationally, whilst there remained a need to improve 'quality assurance by subject leaders and senior managers' generally and, specifically, to 'better support' non-specialists who delivered RME (*ibid*: 8). Whilst there is significantly more use made of descriptive statistics based on *SQRE*'s sample of

seventy-six schools, the reporting on each of these core matters highlights continuity rather than change.

Thirty-nine out of the seventy-six secondary schools making up the sample for *SQRE* were led by a PT. The remaining thirty-seven had either an APT or no promoted member of staff, overseen by a senior school leader. Here, as with the issue of comparing provision over time, we see that the reports are limited in terms of direct comparisons with respect to leadership arrangements from previous reports. What continues to be clear is that a PT offered a much more positive position for RME, as judged by the inspectorate, as "65% of the departments without a principal teacher, showed important weaknesses, often associated with lack of experience or lack of subject qualification", compared to 20% with a PT. *SQRE* suggests that *ELTRE*'s call for departmental planning had been heeded by some professionals, with the majority of departments being identified as either having 'more strengths than weaknesses' or 'very good' with respect to development planning. However, RME departments were found to be less effective at self-evaluating their own work. On this last point, the inspectorate specifically points to limitations with respect to the use of 'published performance indicators in self-evaluation' by RME departments (HMIE, 2001: 18). In particular, the inspectorate identified that 'very few departments used them systematically to audit their work, monitor the impact of learning and teaching on attainment and plan for improvement' (*ibid*). The explicit reference to the first edition of HGIOS (1996) and its quality indicators is another example of how, throughout the last few decades, the inspectorate has aimed for improvements in RME by aligning ongoing developments to national priorities.

Whilst *HGIOS* quality indicators may not have directly cemented RME within schools, it is clear from *SQRE* that school leaders were paying increased attention to RME as part of wider concerns about school quality and improvement. As noted in *SQRE*, 'There was also growing evidence that senior managers were playing a greater role both in monitoring the work of departments and supporting staff in taking forward priorities' (HMIE, 2001: 18). Thus, it is possible to suggest that the inspectorate's quality evaluation work was securing a stronger place for RME in some schools. As RME was considered by the inspectorate to be integral to the work of schools, it had to matter to schools, too.

The centrality of senior school leaders to the leadership and management of RME provision is further evident in *SQRE* in relation to the issue of non-specialists. The inspectorate noted that where weaknesses in relation to staffing happened, it was because of 'insufficient specialist staff', with some non-specialists described as 'very effective but others needed support' (*ibid*: 17). As a feature of good practice, the inspectorate noted that, 'In the best RME departments, senior managers took care to deploy non-specialist staff to make the most of experience and strengths' (*ibid*: 17). Historically, this issue has been one related to the nature of RME provision under broad headings. In *SQRE*, linked directly to HGIOS quality indicators, the issue of non-specialists was considered as a matter of resourcing that impacted the quality of learning, teaching and attainment outcomes.

The leadership and management of RME, which was to become one of eight curriculum areas under *CfE*, curiously received little consideration by the inspectorate during the design and development of *CfE*. *REP* is a decidedly vague document that makes broad statements about approaches in RME that could continue to be or could be introduced to align practice with the curricular aims and pedagogical orientation of *CfE*. Such endeavours are aimed at the teacher of RME and are not specific to the leadership and management of RME. With respect to those schools wherein 'the curriculum does not include sufficient provision for religious and moral education', *REP* directs 'Education authorities and teachers' to improve the situation (HMIE, 2008b: 3). The lack of comment around the role of school leaders is notable, and the inclusion of education authorities would seem to be at odds with the school-led nature of the intended curriculum innovation being developed in 2008. The lack of specification at this early stage may partially explain why issues with leadership and management arose again in *IRRME* in 2014. Moreover, this further highlights the variability of the inspectorate's oversight with respect to developments relating to RME.

The inspectorate had consistently linked strong RME provision in schools to the presence of a promoted subject specialist, but by 2014, the leadership and management arrangements in secondary schools had changed dramatically and had begun to negatively impact RME. In short, the McCrone agreement of 2001 had ushered in moves to remove single-subject PTs and replace them with PT-level posts that covered several, usually cognate, subjects. These posts were variously called faculty heads, faculty principal teachers, and curriculum

leaders. RME was no exception, and, as *IRRME* records, ‘there has been a growth in the number of curriculum leader posts with responsibility for RME in non-denominational schools’ by 2014 (Education Scotland, 2014b: 37).

Anderson and Nixon (2010) identified that it was less likely to be the case that a curriculum leader or faculty head would be an RME specialist. In turn, and as the inspectorate identified in *IRRME*, ‘it is more the norm that curriculum leaders do not sufficiently engage with subject-specific professional learning… often they find the day-to-day business of leading a team of subject specialists representing different curriculum areas very challenging’ (Education Scotland, 2014b: 37). Consequently, RME ‘subject specialist class teachers feel isolated and not well led’ (*ibid*).

However, the recommendation from the inspectorate is to see curriculum leaders supported via professional learning and for class teachers to 'take responsibility for leadership of learning within religious and moral education’ (*ibid*). This is a position that is, ultimately, contrary to their long-standing advice on securing promoted subject specialists to secure quality RME provision.

Since the late 1980s, as evidenced by national reports, the inspectorate has maintained a focus on the leadership and management of RME in Scottish schools. Across their reports, the guidance offered by the inspectorate in relation to key aspects of leadership was linked to national guidance and developing policy priorities. Moreover, for the inspectorate, it was clear that following such direction was the right way to secure the provision of RME in schools. The lack of consistency across the reports in terms of how leadership arrangements were detailed limits any assessment of the direct impact of the reports. However, there is clear evidence that the profession did engage with some reports. Some changes in practice, such as improved departmental planning, suggest some influence of the inspectorate on leadership and management in relation to RME provision. The specific impact on RME is that inspection drove aspects of the professionalisation of RME over time. However, the perennial issue of non-specialist teachers of RME and the issue of faculty management arrangements challenge the effectiveness of the inspectorate in securing strong leadership and management for RME over time.

Considerations of leadership and management were not, however, only constrained to work within schools by the inspectorate. Across the national reports, the inspectorate also draws attention to the role of local education

authorities in relation to the provision of RME. Notably, there is no explicit recognition in the reports that the local authorities are ultimately responsible for schools and that it is the local authority that is charged with ensuring the continued provision of RME, as required by legislation. However, it is clear that the inspectorate recognised that local education authorities do play a role in relation to ensuring RME is well-supported in schools' curricula.

The inspectorate attempted to engage with local authorities in different ways over time, as illustrated by the reports. Up until the implementation of *CfE*, the trend was a shift away from the inspectorate reporting to local authorities towards encouraging schools and local authorities to work together. In *LTRE,* but in no other report, the inspectorate reported that they had drawn the local authorities' attention to situations wherein their schools had failed to provide core provision in RME in S1/S2. Here, the criticism was very much communicated as a failure on the part of individual schools. By 1994, the inspectorate's tack had shifted to directing "Education authorities and headteachers" to work together (SOED, 1994b: 39). Specifically, in *LTRE*, the focus of this joint work was to be on staffing RME and ensuring staff development opportunities. SQRE contains no explicit directive involving local authorities but does note that the report would 'be of interest' to them (HMIE, 2001: 3) and, as noted above, *REP* asks that 'Education authorities and teachers' improve the extent of RME provision in schools (HMIE, 2008b: 3).

Discussion of local authorities' efforts connected to RME is decidedly more critical in *IRRME*, indicating a change of tone from earlier reports. An opening comment in *IRRME* illustrates that the inspectorate acknowledged local authorities as being an important source of support for RME. However, they did directly call them out for problems regarding RME provision. The inspectorate notes that:

> There is much scope for local authorities to improve arrangements for quality assuring RME and RERC to bring about sustained improvements. The current variation in levels of support for the subject area are leading to inequity within the quality of delivery and in the amount of time given to the subject across Scotland (Education Scotland, 2014b: 4).

Detailing the particular issues further, the inspectorate notes that across local authorities, there is a lack of professional learning opportunities for teaching

staff, central officers dealing with remits that deprioritise RME, a lack of funds and a shortage of supply to offer cover for staff to engage with development opportunities (*ibid*: 33-34). In the course of gathering evidence for *IRRME*, inspectors noted that local authority officers explained that the limitations with respect to RME were a consequence of 'arrangements for prioritising curriculum developments' and that local authorities were focusing on literacy, numeracy and, health and wellbeing and had 'not got round to Religious and Moral Education' (*ibid:* 34). As a result, and as the inspectorate noted, the way forward for RME was to ensure that local authorities had clear plans as to how they would advance RME in schools.

At one level, the 2014 national report offers further insight into the challenges impacting RME provision and shows the inspectorate diagnosing this and prescribing steps to improve the health of the subject. However, on another level, it is important to note that the inspectorate, through their role in key national bodies, namely the *CfE* Implementation Group, was aware of, monitoring and shaping the national landscape within which local authorities had to navigate a way forward. Therefore, in adopting a more critical stance towards local authorities, the inspectorate also looks to be distancing itself from any potential areas of weakness with respect to the implementation of curriculum change and RME in particular.

8.4 Content and Approaches in the Classroom

Curriculum frameworks have been, as illustrated throughout this chapter, a central point of orientation for the inspectorate in guiding their assessments of RME in schools. This is evident at the level of strategic implementation timelines and priorities. The five national reports suggest a similar dynamic in relation to curriculum content too.

Prior to *5-14*, SCCORE bulletins had positioned the study of Christianity as central to the content of schools' RME curricula. The inspectorate found that in the mid-1980s, 'Christianity predominated in the schemes of work of the schools' (SED, 1986: 16). On reporting this observation, the inspectorate then stated that:

> In a country which has been influenced by Christianity more than by any other religion and where its denominations are readily available for study, it is difficult to conceive of a satisfactory religious education syllabus which does not include Christianity. The extent to which it is included will be influenced, as will the whole religious education programme, by the context of the school's community and its pupil population. (*ibid*).

Here, the inspectorate indirectly endorses SCCORE's core propositions for curriculum content in RME, namely a focus on a responsive RME programme that includes Christianity as a primary concern. However, this comment is more than an endorsement; it is an idiosyncratic articulation of the inspectorate's view on what should be taught in RME. Here, it is tempting to suggest that this served to temper any concerns about how inspectors would influence curriculum in schools from wider stakeholders, including Churches and religious organisations, as inspection of RME began. A point made all the more substantial given that it is noted in *LTRE* that the inspectorate 'have engaged in discussion and informal liaison with individuals and committees representative of the many groups who take an interest in the state of religious education in schools in Scotland.' (*ibid,* 5). By 1994, however, it was certainly clear that curricular priorities were key. *5-14* guidelines expected Christianity to be a core feature of RME, and the inspectorate made this clear in *ELTRE,* stating that 'Christianity as the major religious tradition of this country' should be prioritised in terms of what was to be taught (SOED, 1994b: 16).

It is outcomes, rather than content, that SQRE is concerned with, and there is no discussion in that report that focuses on the content of the curriculum. However, this silence is illustrative of the subtle variations across the reports and the inspectorate's priorities. The focus shifts back again to the curriculum in *REP* but only briefly to content, with proposed approaches to delivery taking centre stage. Where content does arise, it is as brief mentions of the broad areas of Christianity and other world religions that would come to make up core focus areas within *CfE* RME. The much more detailed *IRRME* is equally limited in its discussions around content, dealing far more with approaches and the subsequent outcomes of those approaches. One example is particularly illustrative here. Where the report discusses engaging with Christianity and world religions, the inspectorate notes that:

> The Curriculum for Excellence framework for RME states clearly that learning experiences should offer children and young people opportunities to develop their own beliefs and values as an integral aspect of learning about Christianity and world religions… Teachers could do more to make the links between learning about religion and learning from religion more meaningful (Education Scotland, 2014b: 16).

Here, unlike the inspectorate's view in *LTRE*, the focus is on the approach to the study of religion, not the rationale or particulars of the specific content within Christianity or another religion. This, ultimately, is reflective of the underlying priorities of *CfE*, which are not bounded by specific content expectations. Again, the inspectorate is prioritising those features of RME that speak most directly to national priorities. Curriculum content is not one of these, but teaching approaches most certainly are.

Whilst almost thirty years separate the publication of *LTRE* and *IRRME*, the content of all of the reports in terms of what they reveal about approaches to teaching and learning is remarkably consistent. For the inspectorate, effective teaching in RME has chiefly been identified as practitioners engaging learners through a variety of approaches, using a range of resources, linking learning beyond the classroom via visits and integrating relevant technologies. It is clear from the reports that the general standard of teaching, as evaluated by the inspectorate, has improved since the mid-1980s. Shifting from a situation where the norm was a session that 'started within an exposition by the teacher…followed by completion of a structured pupils' worksheet…[or] copying of a paragraph' (SED, 1986: 17) to one wherein 'young people often experience teaching and learning approaches which ensure they enjoy RME' (Education Scotland, 2014b: 12). Equally, there have been persistent areas of concern for the inspectorate. In their drawing these areas out consistently, there is again evidence that the inspectorate has a limited impact on the quality of RME provision through their reporting. However, looking at the presentation of these perennial issues is instructive as to the priorities of the inspectorate over time.

Across the reports, one element of teaching in RME that consistently arises is the use of debate and discussion in the classroom. In this broad area, which is notably not broken down by the inspectorate into specific pedagogical strategies, there are consistent drawbacks or opportunities for developing classroom practice. Indeed, the similarities between *LTRE* and *IRRME* are

particularly notable. In *LTRE*, the concern is that discussions, in this case in S3 and S4, lack grounding in requisite subject knowledge, as:

> Pupils did not benefit from discussing topics from a basis of insufficient, uneven or inaccurate information gained from a random variety of sources. Nor did they benefit from the discussion of topics which were either outwith their experience or better handled by the media. (SED, 1986: 18)

In the mid-2010s, the same issue persists, as identified in *IRRME*:

> the majority of young people demonstrate knowledge and understanding of contemporary debates… They are not always well enough informed about how religious and other viewpoints might influence such debates within the public domain (Education Scotland, 2014b: 13)

Significantly, the inspectorate had commented consistently on the need to ensure sound knowledge and understanding were at the core of discussions and work in the RME classroom. In *SQRE,* it was noted that 'weak' teaching demanded 'a clear enough framework within which to understand the facts' (HMIE, 2001: 13). And, in prompting teachers to consider how best to develop successful learners, *REP* asked teachers to think about whether or not they 'set tasks which require challenging research or methods of inquiry' (*ibid*, 2008c: 4-5). The interesting contrast between these two extracts is in the positioning of learners with respect to how they ought to or, in the case of the latter, ought not to engage with contemporary issues. Here, the comment from IRRME aligns with the wider priorities of *CfE*. However, given the repeated calls for improvement over the three-decade period covered by the reports, the inspectorate's commentaries on the quality of practice seem to have been of limited impact.

A similar point can be identified in relation to the role of written work in RME across the period covered by the reports. Since *LTRE*, the inspectorate has noted that written work is an area of concern within classroom practice, with some learners in the mid-1980s doing 'very little writing' and only a limited number of departments giving learners opportunities to write in the early 1990s (SED, 1986: 17; SOED, 1994b). Under *CfE*, inspectors claimed that 'the quality of

young people's written work in Religious and Moral Education from S1 to S3 is not consistently of a high enough quality across Scotland', with some learners never writing anything in RME (Education Scotland, 2014b: 20). Whether or not the inspectorate is correct in insisting on written work, given the parameters within which RME has been historically delivered, is not the issue here. The point to note is that repeated instances of drawing it to the attention of professionals appear to have done little to change or improve practice.

The motivations behind the inspectorate's concerns for written work are, though, partially recoverable from the reports. Again, they speak to how inspectors prioritised national agendas in their evaluations of RME practice and provision. It is noted in *LTRE*, with respect to written work, that 'a lower standard of work was accepted than was usual in other subjects', sitting alongside the inspectorate's wider efforts to ensure parity for RME within the curriculum and the quality this demanded (SED, 1986: 17). In *ELTRE*, the lack of written work is explained as a result of a lack of professional 'confidence' in developing literacy skills due to limited knowledge of pupils' prior attainment from primary school, indicating a concern with the joined-up nature of the *5-14* curriculum and the need for teachers to be onboard with the demands of this new venture (SED, 1994: 25). And, finally and very explicitly, the inspectorate note in *IRRME* that, Religious and Moral Education is rich in opportunities for developing literacy skills to the highest level and all young people should be expected to apply their literacy skills appropriately to demonstrate their learning' (Education Scotland, 2014b: 20). Thus, the motivation for focusing on the written tasks in RME is evidently to ensure that the broader aims of *CfE* can be achieved.

8.5 Certification in RME

A theme common to four of the major reports on RME since 1986 is the certification of learning within RME. This refers to the use of a range of standalone accredited courses or full qualifications that do not require an external examination as a feature of learning within RME. Such an arrangement is distinct from undertaking a full national qualification focused on an external examination. Rather, use was made of short courses, units, or awards that were

assessed internally by schools and verified externally by the Scottish Examination Board (SEB), SCOTVEC, or, more recently, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

The first instance of this being mentioned in the reports comes from *LTRE* and concerns learners in S5 and S6. It is proposed in this report that 'it may be worth considering whether the modules available within the 16+ Action Plan provide an appropriate framework within which to plan a suitably structured experience for pupils in this age group', given the poor quality of learning and teaching found to be occurring at this stage (SED, 1986: 19). By 1994, such practice had been widely adopted and not only for S5 and S6 but also for S3 and S4. *ELTRE* recorded that 'a significant number of religious education departments have adopted the SEB short courses as a means of offering certification to pupils in S3/S4' (SOED, 1994b: 9) and in S5/6 the uptake of SCOTVEC modules 'in recent years has been around 10,000' (*ibid*: 10). For S3 to S6, it was recorded that school-designed courses in RME were less effectively planned and delivered than those which had deployed certificated options, such as those offered by SEB and SCOTVEC (*ibid*: 17-19). By 2001, *SQRE* documented that 'HMI saw better teaching in certificate courses than in school programmes' and gauged assessment to be much more effective (HMIE, 2001: 13-14). Thus, throughout the 1990s, certificated learning from S3-S6 was considered by the inspectorate to have improved the quality of learning, teaching and assessment in RME. Moreover, it was consistently seen as a positive development. Ultimately, teachers were better prepared, and learners were more motivated (*ibid*).

The case of certification and RME highlights the inspectorate's attempts to engage RME with wider developments, with a view to securing quality provision. Inspectors identified and reported that good practice in secondary departments was often connected to certificated provision, and they recommended this to schools, and schools responded. As *ELTRE* highlights, there was a 285% increase in the number of Scottish Examination Board (SEB) short courses in Religious Studies completed from 1992 (3607) to 1993 (10295), with departments also embracing new Higher Still NQ units by 2001 (SOED, 1994b: 9; HMIE, 2001:10). The inspectorate's identification and sharing of what they considered good practice, at least, contributed to certificated learning in RME becoming a prominent feature of RME from the mid-1980s onwards.

Under *CfE*, the inspectorate's positive focus on certificated learning was modified. A core section of *IRRME* focuses specifically on the 'Senior Phase' and makes it clear that 'two particular aspects of Religious and Moral Education are important to get right for young people'. At the first bullet point, there is the 'effective provision for RME and RERC' and, as a second separate bullet point in the document, there is 'appropriate opportunities for achievement through national qualification' (Education Scotland, 2014b: 26). Here, again, the inspectorate can be seen following the policy line on this issue. Not only do they align with the Scottish Government's (2011) specific guidance on RME provision and how this is distinct from certificated learning, but also make specific reference to it by including a hyperlink to it and an extract from it in *IRRME*. The tension, ultimately, is that RME and accredited learning are identified now as distinct enterprises, with the former not to be driven by the latter. Scottish Government (*ibid*: 3-4) guidance on RME makes this clear in stating that the curriculum guidelines for *CfE* RME should be followed by all schools and 'this approach should be built on within the core element of religious and moral education in the senior phase'. In *IRRME*, the inspectorate, in line with this, is still largely concerned with the quality of the learning experience in the senior phase (S4-S6) but does not direct schools to utilise certification. Rather, 'a progressive element of RME from S4 to S6 and… the principles of curriculum design' are the main priorities (Education Scotland, 2014b: 28).

The topic of certification in RME illustrates here the inspectorate's attempts to ensure alignment between RME provision and national developments. However, the variation in the nature of the advice offered by the inspectorate over time is notable. This is explained by the inspectorate's attempts to align their own work with national policy and, as detailed in Chapter 4, is demonstrative of the entwined nature of their endeavours with wider curriculum developments nationally more recently. The step-change in advice presents challenges for schools, which the inspectorate does recognise in *IRRME*. Namely, they found that there was a 'lack of clarity and guidance' on what a '"meaningful and progressive" programme might look like' (*ibid*). Here, this would seem to be something that has been compounded by the inspectorate's direction to move away from certification, despite its role in helping to establish RME in the upper secondary phase prior to *CfE*.

8.6 Chapter Summary

The inspectorate's five national reports relating to RME are a rich source of insights into what mattered to the inspectorate, and they can offer some insights into how their inspections and reviews of RME might have influenced practice. Exploring the background of each report highlighted that the inspectorate's approach towards RME shifted over time. Initially, the inspectorate saw RME as an individual subject that was establishing itself within the framework of the intended curriculum at the national level and in schools. However, the inspectorate quickly recast RME as a subject that was a central feature of the core curriculum and viewed it as an area of practice that schools and local authorities should be ensuring is enacted in line with associated curriculum guidance, be that *5-14* or *CfE*.

Focusing on leadership and management, content and teaching approaches and certification has allowed for a thematic review of the national reports and has drawn out areas where provision has been developed as a result of inspectorate activities. Ultimately, there is only limited evidence of a tangible impact on practice from the inspectorate's report on RME provision and practice. Rather, issues that are observed in the report of one generation appear in those of the next. Leadership and Management issues, particularly around the issue of non-specialists, are identified as problematic early on and remain so, and classroom practices are stalled in key areas despite repeated warnings. Certification is one area in which the reports appear to have fostered some change in practice. However, the enduring pull to align subject-specific developments to national priorities led to this element of provision being less fully supported as *CfE* relegated certification in S1-S3 RME to a less desirable position in the inspectorate's view.

Comparisons across a three-decade-long chronology, grounded on five core sources that offer snapshots of contemporary practice filtered through the lens of a particular organisation, are open to challenge and debate. However, given that the general findings triangulate well with the wider documentary evidence explored in Chapter 6, the above discussion is significant. It provides the first comparative analysis of all the major inspectorate reports on RME published since the bar on inspection was lifted, with *SQRE* having been ignored

in Matemba's (2011) doctoral work. Moreover, this study has considered these sources as evidence of practices and developments in and of themselves and not simply as proxies for insights to be cherrypicked for practices in school.

Chapter 9: School Inspection Documentation

9.1 Introduction

Between August 2016 and August 2020, eighty-five secondary schools in Scotland were formally inspected by HM Inspectors of Education from Education Scotland. Fifty-four schools received at least one specific mention of Religious and Moral Education (RME) or a qualification linked to RE in the secondary sector in the documentation produced by these inspections. The purpose of this chapter is to present an analysis of the comments relating to RME in the documentation of these fifty-four schools to address the two research questions of this study. First, the extent to which and in what ways inspection has been a factor in the development of RME. Second, to examine what school inspection reports can tell us about the development of RME. The analysis below provides three main points that address these areas of focus.

First, the analysis of the data indicates something of the extent to which inspection engages with RME. The inspectorate clearly pays attention to RME provision in some schools, prioritising the degree of schools' compliance with statutory requirements and the nature of curriculum provision. However, the reasons for a lack of commentary on RME for other schools inspected during the timeframe highlight the limited nature of the inspectorate's engagement with RME across schools. Second, where the inspectorate does pay attention to RME their approach and reporting are inconsistent, evidenced by variations in relation to how legal and curricular requirements are discussed, how evidence appears to be gathered, and the targeting of directive feedback given to schools. Third, the reports do provide insights into school practice regarding RME, but it is important to acknowledge the influence of the inspectorate's priorities on what is reported.

9.2 Commenting on RME

The presence of comments relating to RME in the inspection documentation for over sixty per cent of the eighty-five non-denominational schools between

August 2016 and August 2020 shows that the inspectorate does focus on RME during inspections. Furthermore, it is instructive to note where comments appear in the inspection documentation, as this highlights that the inspectorate engages with RME in relation to the dual priorities of ensuring legislation is fulfilled, and curriculum pathways are progressive.

Table 6: The Location of RME Comments in Inspection Documentation

Document Type(s)	QI/Section Combination	No. of Schools
SIF	Under QI 2.2 Only	15
	Under QI 3.1 Only	20
	Under QI 3.2 Only	1 (Short Model - School 54)
	Both QI 2.2 and QI 3.1	13
	QI 2.2, QI 3.1 and QI 2.7	1
	QI 2.2 and QI 3.2	1
SIF and IR	IR, QI 2.2 and QI 3.2	1
	IR and QI 2.2	1
CER	N/A	1

From this sample, it appears that inspectors are most likely to focus on RME with respect to *QI 3.1 Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality, and Inclusion*. This is a significant point in that it highlights that a particular concern of the inspectors' is whether statutory requirements regarding RME are being met. As detailed in *HGIOS4*, an important part of *QI 3.1* is that it 'highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation' (Education Scotland, 2015c: 48). Comments on RME are also found under *QI 2.2 Curriculum*, and specially Theme 3: Learning Pathways. The focus on *QI 2.2* suggests a wider focus on regulating the output of schools' work regarding curriculum during the ongoing implementation of *CfE,* and the comments relating to RME reflect this thematic focus on assessing whether RME in 'the curriculum provides flexible pathways which lead to raising attainment… [and] ensure appropriate progression for all learners' (*ibid*: 34).

The allocation of the comments to a particular quality indicator does not necessarily mean that subsequent comments focus only on legislation for *QI 3.1* or strictly on progressive learning opportunities for *QI 2.2*. For example, comments under *QI 3.1* for Schools 35 and 7 show a concern with both. For

School 35, inspectors noted that entitlements were not being met and that the school should ensure 'a high-quality continuing element of RME'. In School 7, legal requirements were being met 'and appropriate options are available for those wanting to choose the subject from S3 and for National Qualification'. Across the sample, there is variation in the content of the comments linked to *QI 2.2* and *QI 3.1*, ranging from reserved observations tied directly to respective quality indicators to comments that range across the broad areas of focus under either quality indicator or both. The inspectorate is certainly concerned with schools' provision of RME in terms of the degree of legal compliance and curriculum design, but inspectors vary in how they report on this.

9.3 Meeting Legal Requirements

Of the fifty-four reports that contain direct commentary on RME, only six reports over the four-year period make it clear that the legal requirements were being met; in thirty-nine, it was explicitly stated that they were not being met in some way and in nine reports it was unclear (Table 7). Out of the reports where it was unclear, only four reports did not contain an explicit comment around the provision and the limitation of the other five was that the comments pertained only to elements of the provision that were present but did not categorically identify any gaps in provision.

Table 7: Breakdown of Sample by School Session and Provision in RME

Academic Year	Yes. Provision Meets Legal Requirements	No. Provision Does Not Meet Legal Requirements.	Unclear. The extent of compliance is unclear.	Total No. Reports per Year
Aug. 2016 – July 2017	0	15	0	15
Aug. 2017 – July 2018	6	9	1	16
Aug. 2018 – July 2019	0	7	2	9
Aug. 2019 – July 2020	0	7	6	13
Aug. 2020 – July 2021	0	1	0	1
Sample Totals	6	39	9	54

Across the six reports that make it clear that the schools were meeting the statutory requirements, phases such as 'the school is meeting its statutory duties' (School 32) and 'in line with national expectations, the school meets its responsibility to provide continuous, progressive and meaningful high-quality religious and moral education (RME) for all young people in S1-S6' (School 25) were used. In three of the six reports, further comment was offered as to what was positive about the full provision, namely clear progression from BGE RME to senior qualifications (School 7), the use of SQA units, internally assessed parts of qualifications, to accredit learning in S4 (School 5) and the general quality of the provision (School 25). In schools where the legal requirements were being met, the inspectors drew attention to other issues, including pupils' views that the quality of provision was not good enough in School 22.

There is much more variety in the reports that note that the statutory requirements for provision are not being met. The report for School 31 is illustrative of some of the language used across such reports:

> The statutory requirements for religious and moral education (RME) are not being met. The school should review its provision for RME to ensure it fulfils its statutory requirement and provides all young people with meaningful learning throughout the senior phase.

The most significant observation across the reports from those schools that were found not to be meeting the legislative requirements was that the issue with provision was to be found in the senior phase. From the inspectorate's perspective the senior phase appears to refer to S4, S5 and S6, in step with official curriculum guidance that identifies this with the beginning of certificated learning (Scottish Government, 2008). However, it should be noted that some schools do begin such courses in S3, the final year of the Broad General Education (BGE) phase (Shapira *et al.*, 2023). From the data available provision in the senior phase was not only found to be limited but that this is more pronounced the further up the stages one looks. In this sample, when broken down by stage, fifteen schools had no provision in S4, thirty-one had no provision in S5 and thirty-three had no provision in S6. Sixteen schools had no senior-phase provision at all.

Beyond the headline points noted above, the close reading of the inspection documentation has also allowed for insights into the inspectorate's

approach to reporting on compliance. A noticeable aspect of the comments relating to the provision of RME is the variability of the language used in the reports to communicate key messages relating to the extent to which schools have or have not met the legislative requirements. The following ten key phrases appear across the sample: 'government advice'; 'government guidance'; 'entitlements'; 'legislation'; 'legislative requirement(s)'; 'national expectations'; 'national guidance'; 'statutory duty/duties'; 'statutory guidance'; and 'statutory requirements'. This range of terms is itself noteworthy as it draws attention to the variability of the inspectorate's messaging around meeting legislative requirements with respect to RME. Moreover, as illustrated by Table 8, by mapping these terms over time, it is possible to suggest that there are shifting emphases in the messages given out by inspectors.

Table 8: Terminology Choice Around Legislative Requirements for RME

Key Term referring to RME Legislation	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
(Scottish) Government Advice	1	0	0	0	0
(Scottish) Government Guidance	0	1	0	0	0
Entitlement(s)	1	0	2	2	0
Legislation	3	1	0	0	0
Legislative Requirement (s)	3	0	0	0	0
National Expectations	2	3	0	1	0
National Guidance	0	0	0	1	0
Statutory Duty / Duties	4	2	0	0	0
Statutory Guidance	0	0	1	2	1
Statutory Requirement (s)	7	7	4	0	1

Most significantly, the term 'statutory requirement(s)', which features in comments relating to RME more than any other of the above terms in academic years 2016-17, 2017-18 and 2018-19, disappears in session 2019-20. Whilst it is not possible to determine if a particular communication strategy had been mandated, the subtle shift towards other terms in the same year could be considered less directive. For example, 'requirements' appears to make way for 'guidance'. However, it is worth noting too that seven lead inspectors who had previously led on reports containing comments on RME ceased to be active in session 2019-20 and after. This includes one inspector who led on five reports

that included a relevant comment. Moreover, three first-time commentators made their first comments in session 2019-20, with a further inspector joining the sample in 2020-21. So, the changes in terminology may equally reflect the changes in personnel. The implications of this are hard to evidence but suggest that inexperience on the part of newer inspectors or a lack of knowledge about RME may be possible points of note here.

The comments concerned with whether a school has or has not met the legal expectations surrounding the provision of RME are also made in the context of broader discussions that concern other curriculum areas. For example, under the reporting for QI3.1 for School 17, it was noted that:

> the school does not currently meet the national recommendation for physical activity in S4 and the legislative requirements for Religious and Moral Education in S5 and S6. The school has plans to address this in session 2017/18.

Here, there is a clear distinction between the nature of the prescription given by the inspectorate, with RME discussed with explicit reference to the 'legislative' demands and not the non-statutory requirements of Physical Education. However, as illustrated by School 2's report, this is not always the case:

> Staff need to review their approaches to the provision of religious and moral education (RME), religious observance (RO) and PE to ensure that children and young people across all stages receive their full learning entitlement.

Here, there is the problem of conflating the demands on schools regarding RME, RO and PE under the broad heading of 'learning entitlement' and missing the nuance regarding the nature of the legislation surrounding RME and RO.

9.4 Curriculum, Content and Quality

RME is also explicitly mentioned in comments that provide insights into a school's curriculum offering. These comments can be found embedded within descriptive accounts of curriculum areas covered at each stage, usually under the QI 2.2 *Curriculum*. For example, School 42 received the following comment,

'In S1 and S2, young people undertake study in eight curriculum areas. Physical education (PE), RME and PSE are studied.'

Often such comments are also accompanied by a judgement from the inspectors as to the quality of the delivery of RME. In School 22's report, we get an example of this but also note that the on-site inspectors were clearly asking young people about their experiences in RME:

> Senior young people consider that the quality of the curricular experience in core RME at S4 to S6 needs to improve in terms of both content and approach…' and to provide a greater element of choice within what is offered.

In schools where the provision of RME was found to be problematic, the comments in the inspection documentation show inspectors attempting to diagnose the main concerns and direct schools to how the situation can be improved. School 16 is a particularly illustrative, though unusually detailed, example of this:

> The school's provision for religious and moral education (RME) requires significant improvement to ensure progression and meaningful experiences for all young people. In the absence of specialist teachers of RME in the school there is an urgent need for senior leaders to provide strategic support and resources to improve the current delivery. This includes the development and implementation of an appropriate professional learning plan for staff delivering the subject. There is a need for stronger partnership with a specialist who can provide ongoing mentoring in this curricular area.

Here, the issue of quality is linked to an issue with the staffing of RME, and indeed, as outlined in the Government's guidance from 2011, this is considered an important aspect of the delivery of secondary RME in current guidance (Scottish Government, 2011). As is also the case for School 26, School 16 is also directed to ensure that staff are supported by professional learning opportunities to develop practice here.

Those comments that report that learning in and through RME is of a good quality are also in places clearly aligned to a description of 'highly effective practice' detailed for *QI 3.1* in HGIOS4. In the only explicit mention of religion in HGIOS4 in relation to learning, and not discrimination or equalities legislation, it

is stated that good practice would see schools have a curriculum that 'provides children and young people with well-planned and progressive opportunities to explore diversity and multi-faith issues, and to challenge racism and religious intolerance' (Education Scotland, 2015c: 49). The connection with the sample can be seen, for example, in comments such as those from the SIF document of School 24 that note:

> Young people have a better understanding of issues of equality such as ageism, gender and homophobia through learning in religious and moral education. This is supporting them to celebrate difference and recognise the importance of equality and respect.

Or School 12's *SIF* that notes:

> The approach to Religious and Moral Education (RME) for young people from S1 to S4 supports the development of equality and positive relationships through learning and opportunities for discussion. Young people can express their views in a supportive environment and demonstrate respect for the views of others which are different from their own.

The provision of RME within the curriculum is also noted as being part of interdisciplinary or cross-curricular activities within schools. The important point to note here is that this is not noted as a categorically positive or negative development for RME as far as the inspectorate is concerned. Indeed, as is the case for School 53, 'An enquiry based approach to interdisciplinary learning… a joint approach by science and social subjects and RME' can even be a feature of 'practice worth sharing more widely'. The primary concern of the inspectorate in such cases appears to reflect the directive, as articulated in the Government's advice, that RME is offered as a discrete subject even where interdisciplinary learning opportunities exist (Scottish Government, 2011). School 30's comment highlights this particularly well:

> The school is developing plans to integrate Religious and Moral Education (RME) in S3 and S4 with other social subjects in order to provide relevant and meaningful learning for young people. In doing this it must be ensured that all third level experiences and outcomes are delivered in line with BGE entitlements. It should also be ensured that there is appropriate breadth and progression in learning.

The comment in School 37's *SIF* document highlighted the need for the curriculum leader to ensure that such joined-up, cross-curricular approaches, or proxies, did not limit the learning in the subject:

> The school has recently introduced a new approach to delivering RME across S2 and S3 through a rota aligned to the school's Mental, Emotional, Social and Physical Wellbeing (MESP) programme. As this arrangement rolls out, the Faculty Head should ensure robust evaluation of its impact on young people's progress and attainment. This also applies to the integration of RME into the Humanities programme in S1.

The note concerning attainment is also of interest as another aspect of the comments on RME in non-denominational secondaries is the role of qualifications and certificated learning.

9.5 RME and Certificated Learning

A review of the comments draws attention to the range of certificated qualifications available in or connected to RME. These qualifications are offered by the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) and, in most cases, are taught by teachers to senior phase pupils. Aligned to the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) levels 3-6, there are National 3, 4 and 5 (SCQF levels 3, 4 and 5), Higher (SCQF level 6) and Advanced Higher (SCQF level 7) qualifications in Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies (RMPS). In the sample the inspectors most often capture this by referring to the 'National Qualifications' that young people can continue on to after the BGE phase. The comments from inspectors also note other SQA courses linked to RME, including the Religion, Beliefs and Values (RBV) award in School 38 and a National 4 People and Society qualification in School 11. In addition, Philosophy is also noted in the comments connected with RME (School 12). In one case, Sociology also accompanies this suggestion (School 37).

Inspectors' comments in relation to these qualifications fall into two broad camps. One group of comments acknowledge the qualifications as suitable routes and pathways for learners to build on their learning in RME. For example,

in School 37, 'young people have very good opportunities to progress their study of religion and morality from the BGE into National Qualifications (NQs) in RMPS, philosophy and sociology.' The other comments are focused on highlighting that the provision of certificated learning that may be within the same subject area of RME is not a replacement for provision in RME in the senior phase. School 10's *SIF* document, for example, notes this, 'As a priority, the school should address statutory requirements for RME in S4, S5 and S6. The school currently has no continuing experience of RME in the senior phase. However young people can progress to National Qualifications.' Here, the option to progress to NQs is not considered an appropriate substitute for RME, as it falls short of satisfying legal expectations for RME provision in the senior phase. However, it is understandable that such a situation may arise in schools, and the inspectorate may have had an influence on schools' approaches to using certificated learning in RME and in place of RME.

There is another set of comments in the sample that could suggest that the practice of prioritising certificated learning in the broad area of RME has been encouraged by the inspectorate. In three comments there is evidence of the inspectorate considering the use of SQA qualification within the context of RME a positive development. In School 29, though perhaps the most subtle of the comments, the use of an 'appropriate unit award' for S4 is noted and in School 48, 'Commendably', according to the inspectorate, 'all young people at S4 have the opportunity to achieve an SCQF level 4 or 5 or better in Morality and Belief'. In School 11, 'Commendably, all young people in S4 achieved a SCQF Level 4 People and Society Award providing the opportunity to support effectively an understanding of aspects of health and wellbeing and religious and moral education.' The approving language of 'commendably' in the last two excepts, and the idea that the use of certification can 'support effectively' learning in RME would appear to suggest a positive disposition to the use of such opportunities in a blended approach for learning in RME. However, as suggested, there is the possibility that this creates some confusion for schools and their use of qualifications with respect to RME provision in the senior phrase. One comment from the sample adds a further dimension to this discussion about how schools use certification within RME. Teachers in School 49 are asked to 'review their use of SQA units in RME in S3 to ensure that all young people receive their entitlement to all third level Experiences and Outcomes'. This comment draws

attention to central curricular directives that consider S3 part of the BGE phase of *CfE*, which should not be focused on completing certificated learning (Education Scotland, n.d.(b)). Therefore, the inspectorates' position would seem to be that RME can be enhanced, but not replaced, by certification in the senior phrase. However, their reporting of practice leaves this to be inferred.

9.6 Feedback and the Leadership of RME

A close reading of the comments concerned with RME in the documentation highlights that the inspectorate is discussing RME provision with schools. Further, such comments can also be considered as providing schools with 'directive' feedback, that is specific direction on what the schools' next steps should be (Ehren & Visscher, 2006: 211-212).

As detailed in Table 9, school leaders are the category of staff within the schools that are most consistently and clearly addressed in the reports with respect to RME. This category is not clearly defined in the inspection documentation, but the glossary of terms provided in HGIOS4 notes that it:

> refers to all staff in formal leadership roles, for example, head teachers, depute head teachers, principal teachers, curriculum faculty heads etc. This can also be used to refer to those aspiring to be in senior leadership posts and those working towards the standards for leadership and management (Education Scotland, 2015c: 60).

This keeps open the possibility of the term 'senior leader' being applied broadly by the inspectorate and, significantly, prevents a simple division among Headteachers, Depute Headteachers and the rest of the teaching staff. In the reports, the phrase 'senior leader' appears regularly, but there is some slippage in the terms used in the reporting to 'Senior Managers' (School 43) and 'senior leadership team' (School 40). Moreover, in the *SIF* document for School 16, there is a hint of the potential for a distinction between senior leaders and principal teachers, those who are normally considered to be middle leaders.

Table 9: Directive Comments by Addressee in Inspection Documentation

Addressee	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
School Leaders	37; 17; 40; 43; 16	42	49; 53; 23	50; 21; 1; 29	
School	17; 46	48; 28; 30; 9; 11; 19; 44	31		36
Staff (Non-Specific)	37		33	2	
Teachers		9	49		
Specific Individual(s)	37 (Faculty Head) 16 (Principal Teacher)				

School 42's report notes that 'HM Inspectors have discussed with senior leaders the need for young people to have a continuing element of PSE and RME across the senior phase', highlighting that inspectors do speak with senior school staff about RME whilst in schools. Where provision is limited in some way, the documentation suggests that the inspectorate responds to school leaders in at least three ways.

First, inspectors check on school leaders' understanding of the requirements surrounding RME. For example, School 17's senior leaders were found to be 'aware that the school does not currently meet… the legislative requirements for Religious and Moral Education in S5 and S6' and School 50's senior leaders were 'aware of the need to ensure young people in S4-S6 receive planned opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills through RME'. However, it should be noted that there is only limited evidence of inspectors doing this across the sample analysed here.

Second, inspectors include directive feedback in the reports for schools. In the reports, the most common directive given to senior leaders is that they 'should ensure' that RME provision meets legal and curricular expectations. This is written into reports for Schools 43, 49, 23, and 21 with different lead inspectors for each school and with some comments concerned with the quality and others only focused on the extent of provision. In some reports, again from inspections led by different inspectors, the comments are even more directive, with leaders in schools 46, 53 and 29 being instructed to 'review' provision. For these schools, the review is about the extent of provision or compliance with

legal requirements for RME and the suggested reviews are not directed towards issues of quality or content. In the more detailed report of School 16's situation, where RME was reported as not being delivered well, the direction was more strongly worded. The school's leadership was instructed to 'take responsibility to ensure the new PT Social Studies is given the support and adequate resourcing necessary to secure sustainable improvements in RME', including providing learning opportunities and developing partnerships to support teaching staff. While these examples highlight that inspectors do include directive feedback to school leadership, they are found in only eight reports out of fifty-four overall. The limited extent of such comments does not prove inspectors are not exploring RME with school leaders during site visits, but the lack of reporting across the sample may limit the extent to which the process of inspection supports the development of RME.

Third, and finally, the inspectorate directs school leaders to ensure that RME provision addresses the priority detailed in HGIOS4 and outlined above to ensure that 'equalities and diversity' is the focus of planned learning (School 23). For example, inspectors instructed school leaders in School 1 to 'continue to support all children to understand, value and celebrate diversity in 21st century Scotland, and to challenge discrimination'. Here, the inspectorate explicitly selects a particular aspect of learning in RME that school leaders should be directing their provision towards. In the relevant curriculum documentation, the *Principles and Practice* document and the *Experiences and Outcomes* document, there is a reference to learning with respect to diversity, but it is one aspect of many others (Education Scotland, 2009b & 2009a).

In these limited directive comments, there is a clear focus on the school leadership as being those individuals responsible for the provision of RME, and the inspectors appear to direct school leaders to this responsibility and, in some situations, are using the inspection reports to communicate this. The emphasis on school leaders is, however, not a consistent focus in relation to directive feedback in the reports. Rather, comments refer holistically to 'the school' or 'staff'. Much like the comments directed to school leaders, most of the comments directed to the non-specific categories of the school or staff focus on instructing schools to 'review' (Schools 2, 11, 31, 46), 'ensure' (School 28, 36), 'maintain an overview' (School 48), 'consider' (Schools 19, 30, 44), or 'continue

to monitor' (School 31) the provision of RME with respect to the degree of compliance with legal and curricular requirements.

In the documentation relating to the schools noted above, there is a lack of clarity as to who in the schools should be taking on the tasks outlined in the directive comments. This is made more obvious when comparing these comments to the few that make much clearer distinctions regarding the allocation of tasks in schools to particular staff. In School 37, for example, it is asked that 'the Faculty Head…ensure robust evaluation' of a new integrated model of provision for BGE RME within Humanities and a 'Mental, Emotional, Social and Physical Wellbeing (MESP) programme'. In the same school 'staff and senior leaders should implement robust evaluation' for developments relating to senior phase RME. 'Teachers' in School 9 are specifically addressed to 'ensure learning in RME takes good account of experiences and outcomes', and in School 49 'teachers' are directed to 'review their use of SQA units in RME in S3'. The focus of these three comments demonstrates that in some cases the inspectorate considers different staff responsible for particular aspects of RME provision, with teachers being considered by the inspectorate to be responsible for the specifics of planned learning. However, the vagueness of phrases identifying the addressee, such as 'the school' and 'staff', fail to ensure that this is a consistently and clearly communicated expectation. Indeed, School 19's *SIF* document refers to 'the school' being directed to 'ensure that the study of Christianity, World Religions and Developing Beliefs and Values remain a part of learning in S5 and S6'.

The inspection documentation of four schools' records that schools also plan around RME provision to better meet the legal and curricular guidelines, with School 17 having 'plans to address this in session 2017/18' and School 37 'developing' plans. In the reports of the other two schools, plans were noted, and the inspectors included the implementation of such plans as an aspect of their directive feedback. School 9 was to 'continue with plans to review its provision for RME', and School 33 was to 'continue with their plan to ensure all young people in the senior phase access appropriate provision'. Here, again, there is a vagueness around who was to take the key aspects of these plans relating to RME forward. However, the presence of plans suggests that schools, at least for the purposes of inspection, recognise that RME should be developed in schools.

9.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have provided an analysis of the inspection documentation that contains comments relating to RME in fifty-four schools, published between August 2016 and August 2020. Before drawing the main themes together into a summary, it is important to recognise the limitations of the data explored here. First, the main themes explored are discussed based on data covering a four-year period, and there is uneven coverage of RME in the documentation year by year and by theme. Second, the reserved nature of the comments in the documentation provides only a limited picture of practice at a particular time and one that may or may not have changed subsequently. However, the persistence of themes across the sample encourages the conclusion that the inspection reports do evidence commonalities across schools in relation to RME and the role of inspection. Such commonalities allow me to offer three broad conclusions on the interplay between inspection and RME from this sample. First, an obvious but important point that this analysis has established is that the inspectorate does pay attention to RME provision; with a particular focus on the extent to which schools comply with statutory obligations and curriculum provision. The available sample, being selected from eighty-five possible reports, demonstrates that the inspectorate does not make RME a priority in all reports and possibly in all on-site inspections. Second, in cases where inspectors do report on RME, there is evidently no consistent priority or approach to such reporting. Legal requirements are discussed with a degree of slippage across the sample, curriculum priorities vary, the relationship of certificated learning connected to RME is contested, and the directive feedback lacks the focus to drive forward improvement actions. Third, we see that diversity is considered an important theme for planned learning in RME by the inspectorate, but must be mindful that this emphasis links back to HGIOS4, the inspection framework.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

This final chapter will provide a conclusion to this study. This study has been centred on examining the relationship between HM Inspectorate of Education, the inspection of schools and the development of RME in Scotland since 1962. To do this, the focus has been on addressing two core research questions. In the following two sections, these questions will be addressed directly in extended discussions that make connections between the previous chapter. Thereafter, the conclusion acknowledges the limitations of the answers offered to address the questions. The chapter then goes on to suggest priorities for future research and justifies these proposals.

10.2 The Inspectorate, Inspection and RME

The first research question that this study sought to address was to understand the extent to which and in what ways the work of HM Inspectorate of Education has been a factor in the development of RME in Scottish secondary education between 1962 and 2020. It is clear from the preceding chapters that the work of HM Inspectorate of Education has been a significant factor in the development of RME in Scottish secondary education. However, the significance of this work for RME has evidently varied over time.

Somewhat paradoxically, the period prior to the lifting of the legal bar on inspection and inspectorate involvement with RME in 1981 has been shown here to be a significant period for the development of RME with respect to the inspectorate and inspection. Inspectors and other officials within the SED in the 1960s were in regular discussion with stakeholders, including the Church of Scotland and the Educational Institute of Scotland, about the position of RME in school and the specific issue of an examination in the subject. From their communications, it becomes clear that the legal bar on involvement with RME was an important line for the authorities that could not be crossed. However, as the documentary and archival material highlight, the growing oversight of the

SED over curriculum caused the authorities to have to consider RME directly. Specifically, in 1965, the *Primary Memorandum's* call for a review into RME contributed to the establishment of the Committee on Moral and Religious Education (CMRE) in July 1968 and a seminal report in 1972 that strongly advocated for the increased state involvement with RME that came in the form of SCCORE in 1974. It must be recognised that such developments did not specifically involve the inspectorate but that the ground had been cleared for state involvement with RME. This was a situation that the legal prohibition on inspection had previously not allowed. Here, the key point is that it is the question of inspectorate involvement, how to develop the subject within the legal parameters, that shaped the workaround of SCCORE, in step with the *Millar Report's* proposals.

The *Millar Report* proposed a new rationale and approach for RME as a subject, but this study has identified that it was the *Munn Report* (SED, 1977) that first positioned RME as a core element of the intended secondary curriculum in Scotland. Moreover, there is evidence of inspectorate influence in developing a view within SCCORE that engaging with these national developments was important for RME. W. R. Ritchie, then HM Chief Inspector of Schools, who also gave evidence to the Munn Committee, sat on the committee involved with developing SCCORE's (1981) second national bulletin, and, in both bulletins, reference is made to the *Munn Report*. Against this background and motivated by the need to secure a strong place for RME in schools and positive developments with respect to the quality of provision, not solely to enable examinations as previous scholarship has suggested, the legal bar on inspection was lifted in 1981, and the first formal inspections of RME in schools took place in 1983.

The period immediately after 1983 has been recognised in this study as one where the involvement of the inspectorate is not only evident but central to national discussions and developments concerning RME. The lead came from the inspectorate, with Douglas Osler as the inspector responsible for the subject working to align subject developments with national priorities. Indeed, through national summaries of inspection findings (SED, 1986) and on to the developments of *5-14,* the inspectorate can be understood to be focusing on ensuring that RME was in step with the increasingly centralised curriculum. This focus can be assessed here as significant in that RME became one of the subject

areas of *5-14*, subsequently framed in the same curricular language and structure as other major areas, including mathematics, languages, expressive arts, and environmental studies.

Considering the involvement of the inspectorate with RME through the inspection of the subject in schools, however, contrasts with the more impactful developments outlined above. This study's comparative analysis of five national reports between 1986 and 2014 and an analysis of school inspection documentation from 2016 to 2020 highlights the persistence of specific issues in relation to the provision of RME and suggests that inspection of the subject had a limited impact on its development. Concerns about the use of non-specialists, the place of certificated learning, the leadership of the subject, and specific classroom approaches can be found across the national reports and in the more recent school inspection documentation. As the latter highlights, this may be a result of inconsistent engagement with schools by the inspectorate on the issues impacting RME, specifically the extent of provision, but this is open to further research, as discussed below. Indeed, as the research on inspection effectiveness highlights, what schools do with inspection feedback is a developing area of scholarship with varying levels of uptake.

On the question of the extent of inspectorate involvement with RME, the conclusion must be that it has been historically significant in positioning the subject within the national secondary curriculum but more limited in relation to how it has supported the development of RME through inspection itself. This position challenges the prevailing narrative that the removal of the bar on inspection was significant in improving the provision of the subject.

Here, it is worth attempting to conclude on the impact of the interplay between the inspectorate, inspection and RME as a feature of schooling in Scotland. In sum, the inspectorate's and individual inspectors' attention to and work on RME has ultimately been positive in that without their efforts, and perhaps even without negotiations around the legal bar on inspection, RME would not have been secured within the curriculum and associated thinking and policy developments, since the Millar and Munn reports. As to the post-1981 period and the impact of direct inspection on the subject itself, however, the outcome has been less positive for ensuring the extent and quality of the subject's provision in schools. Or, to borrow from Douglas Osler, 'allowing recent educational developments to enter the blood stream of RE' has not secured the

improvements envisaged when inspection was introduced (Rodger, 1983: 6). Notwithstanding what other trajectories might or might not have been available for the subject had other developments taken place, the inspection of RME has been less salvific than hoped, with the subject remaining in curricular purgatory.

10.3 Inspection Documentation and RME

The second question that this study sought to address was focused on what inspectorate documentation can tell us about the development of RME in Scottish non-denominational secondary schools between 1962 and 2020. As outlined in Chapter 5, the focus on 'inspectorate documentation' became broader during this study due to a need to refocus the study as a result of the limitations on research posed by the pandemic. The term, now, encompasses both national reports on RME produced by the subject and the documentation that is produced by the inspectorate following the inspection of an individual school. Overall, these sources do provide valuable and important insights into the development of RME. For example, insights into aspects of curriculum provision, the content, teaching approaches, and staffing and resourcing can be constructed. However, important limitations must be factored into any discussion on the extent and usefulness of the insights they afford.

The five national reports, read carefully, can help to provide a national overview of practice in RME at a particular moment in time. However, two key points should be remembered. First, the reports will have been produced for a particular purpose. In the sample for RME, for example, *SQRE* (2001) and *REP* (2008) are performing decidedly different jobs. The former is a national summary of inspection findings, and the latter is a set of provocations in preparation for the introduction of *CfE*. Recognising this helps the researcher better interpret the contents of each report. Indeed, it raises the important point that what inspectorate documentation might tell us about RME is precisely what the inspectorate wants us to know about, given its wider priorities at any given time. Here, the lack of prioritisation of RME is exposed. Second, the reports are underpinned by a range of different data sources. As detailed in full in Chapter 8, each of the national reports is underpinned by sources of data, usually a synthesis of existing inspection findings from individual schools, but

also other sources such as focus groups. Here, the researcher needs to be mindful of the sources used to be able to understand the influences on and significance of the comments they offer.

A systematic analysis of the documentation produced as a result of the inspection of individual schools is also useful in attempting to understand the development of RME. Where comment on RME exists, evidence of classroom practice and school provision can be identified. Admittedly, this evidence comes to us filtered through the inspectors who carried out the inspection, the processes of constructing the documents themselves and the inspection frameworks found in HGIOS. Yet, where a large sample of relevant comments exist, as outlined in Chapter 9, much can be made of these documents to develop an understanding of RME practices and issues surrounding the subject nationally. Moreover, and perhaps an obvious point by the stage, the documentation also demonstrates an interest in RME from the inspectorate, even if its impact is less clear.

In sum, inspectorate documentation as it pertains to RME, in the form of national reports and the comments available in the documentation produced from the inspection of individual schools, are valuable sources for the study of RME in Scotland.

10.4 Acknowledging Limitations

This study set out to understand the nature of the relationship between the inspectorate, inspection, and the development of RME in Scotland between 1962 and 2020. It has generated evidence that supports a refreshed narrative of that relationship and deepened our understanding of major national reports and school inspection documentation. However, as with all studies of this scale and scope, there are important limitations that need to be acknowledged. These, in turn, provide ideas for future research but it is important at this point to recognise them.

First, the documentary evidence base provides different types of source material produced by different authors and for different purposes across the broad chronological timeframe explored in this study. This means that the triangulation of these sources with one and another is complex and underpinned

by interpretation. The original research plan of using inspection reports from 1983 onwards, accessed via the NRS, would have provided a more consistent evidence base across the period under consideration. Instead, national summary reports, archival evidence and a sample of school inspection documentation had to be deployed. While these sources did provide coverage of the chronological period under consideration, there was no consistent source type across the underpinning research. Moreover, the amount and chronological scope of the school inspection documentation that could be accessed was limited by what was electronically available.

Second, and in connection with the above, the natural variability of the documentary evidence limits a more systematic reconstruction of inspectorate agendas and ways of working with respect to RME over time. It might be expected that a model of how the inspectorate engaged with RME could be developed, but the evidence base supports a narrative reconstruction rather than the generation of a model of engagement. However, it is argued here that this is more reflective of the nature of the inspectorate's engagement with RME and avoids any suggestion of systematic long-term planning and more of a changing and context-dependent interplay between the inspectorate and the subject.

The final limitation to be noted here is perhaps the most significant in relation to addressing both research questions. In short, this research project has not been able to consider the response of individual schools to the inspectorate’s involvement with RME. This is the case for considering national developments and major reports but also on a school-by-school basis in response to focused inspections and inspectorate comments on the provision of RME. This level of analysis exists at a granular level that is not captured from the collections of public or archival documents explored in this study and requires further research.

10.5 Future Research

This study has acknowledged its role in reconstructing the history and basic narrative of the topic under consideration as an important contribution to existing knowledge apart from any particular arguments advanced within. As

acknowledged in the introduction, this study does not offer a complete history but rather a foundation on which more specific research on the interplay between the inspectorate, inspection, and RME can take place. Four key areas of research now demand attention.

First, there is extensive archival material that demands a thorough and exhaustive review. The material referred to here is that which sits in the National Records of Scotland, but other local archives no doubt contain important sources. The material in the NRS is extensive, uncatalogued, and not yet digitised. As explored for this study, the evidence available includes internal and external communication with inspectors, SED officials and other stakeholders interested in RME. Generally, this material can no doubt provide further depth to the historical account provided in this study. As noted for NRS-ED48-2543, some files have only very recently been open to the public, and an ongoing engagement with new archival material, as it becomes available, will enable the accounts of curriculum change, inspectorate involvement and the development of RME to cover more recent periods with fresh and important evidence.

From the material reviewed for this study, and in step with research already conducted for England, there is sufficient material to begin to explore the role of the Churches in relation to the development of RME in Scotland and, more broadly, link this to wider debates about secularisation and socio-religious change (Doney, 2021 & 2019; Freathy & Parker, 2012 & 2013; Parker & Freathy, 2011a & 2011b; Brown, 2009). In the Scottish context, this would, importantly, involve consideration of the interplay between those interested in non-denominational RME and the development of and views from those concerned with RE in Roman Catholic schools too (Coll & Davis, 2007 & 2009).

A significant source base that was evident in the archived material but that would also be supplemented from other, including digital, repositories were items from the print media concerning RME. These have not been engaged with here due to specific methodological demands of working with this material, including understanding authorship, political leanings, readership, and circulation issues (Tosh, 2015; Bingham, 2012; McCulloch, 2004). However, cursory reviews highlight the potential to explore popular opinion on RME, a not insignificant topic given Nixon's (2018) contention that the peculiar legal position of RME has given the subject a negative public image. Also, in step with

the study's focus, coverage of the results of school inspection is a potentially fruitful avenue too, with a particular research question focused on whether RME ever features in news reports concerned school inspection outcomes.

As noted as a key limitation of this study, there is a significant and pressing need to better understand how schools and teachers in Scotland have responded to national inspectorate reports and individual inspection feedback, specifically on RME. The broader literature on curriculum and inspection, as explored in Chapters 3 and 4, suggests some possible findings connected with the wider landscape of curriculum making, but these are not subject-specific (Priestley, 2015). A focus on national reports could consider the engagement with such documents. While they contain material of value to the researcher, are practitioners and school leaders paying any attention to these important documents? Given the continued presence of similar issues across the reports considered in this study, the assumption might be that they are not. Or, perhaps, as other work has recognised, other priorities dominate decision-making (Matemba, 2015; Nixon, 2015; Scholes, 2020). A focus on the responses to specific feedback on RME would demand engaging with schools that had been inspected and consideration of the various individuals who would, possibly, be concerned with such feedback. A research project of this sort would demand data-gathering from schools and the use of methods that generate data for analysis over the short and, ideally, the longer term following an inspection. However, as scholars such as Perryman (2009 & 2010) have observed with respect to inspections more generally, the opportunity to consider pre-inspection views on the interaction between RME and the inspection process could be valuable and significant.

Finally, research that adopted a comparative stance would be very welcome to add nuance to the comments made specifically about RME in Scotland. While the point about requiring a subject-specific focus above has been made, a comparison with other subjects in the curriculum would both refine the discussion of the impact of inspection from RME by enabling researchers to locate that which may be unique and that which is shared with other curriculum areas, something that Matemba (2023: 185) has recently argued is an important consideration for the subject to avoid 'the erroneous belief that this subject is no different from any other in the curriculum' or, to balance this, equally that it is completely different.

In step with this consideration of the extent of the subject's uniqueness, comparisons across countries could prove to be insightful too. Bråten (2013) reminds us that context remains important in comparative work but insists that comparative approaches can consider key elements of the development of RME, namely the interaction with the inspectorate and inspection and the similarities and differences in terms of experiences and responses. Given concerns regarding the 'marginalisation' of religious education internationally and calls for more knowledge exchange across borders, such work would be timely and responsive to the research agenda and to the local context (Schreiner & Schweitzer, 2021; Schreiner, 2023). Scotland has not yet had a national debate about the place, purpose and future of RME within the secondary curriculum that has been a feature of educational reform in the neighbouring territories of England with 'Religion and Worldviews Education' and Wales with 'Religion, Values and Ethics' and in other territories around the globe (*ibid*; Barnes *et al*. 2013). Comparative studies of how religious education has interacted with inspectorates and inspection in these contexts could be indispensable to future discussions.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Extracts from Legislation Relevant to Religious Education in Scotland

Legislation	Contents
1872 Education (Scotland) Act	**Preamble** And whereas it has been the custom in the public schools of Scotland to give instruction in religion to children whose parents did not object to the instruction so given, but with liberty to parents, without forfeiting any of the other advantages of the schools, to elect that their children should not receive such instruction, and it is expedient that the managers of public schools shall be at liberty to continue the said custom: **Section 66 - Inspection** Every public school, and every school which is subject to inspection, shall be open at all times to the inspection of any of Her Majesty's inspectors, but it shall be no part of the duties of such inspector to inquire into any instruction in religious subjects, or to examine any scholar in religious knowledge or in any religious subject or book. **Section 67 - Parliamentary grant** Provided also that parliamentary grants shall not be made for or in respect of - (a) Instruction in religious subjects: **Section 68 Conscience clause** Every public school, and every school subject to inspection and in receipt of any public money as herein-before provided, shall be open to children of all denominations, and any child may be withdrawn by his parents from any instruction in religious subjects and from any religious observance in any such school; and no child shall in any such school be placed at any disadvantage with respect to the secular instruction given therein by reason of the denomination to which such child or his parents belong, or by reason of his being withdrawn from any instruction in religious subjects. The time or times during which any religious observance is practised or instruction in religions subjects is given at any meeting of the school for elementary instruction shall be either at the beginning or at the end, or at the beginning and at the end of such meeting, and shall be specified in a table approved of by the Scotch Education Department.
1918 Education (Scotland) Act	**Section 7** Whereas it has been the custom in the public schools of Scotland to give instruction in religion to children whose parents did not object to the instruction so, given, but with liberty to parents, without forfeiting any of the other advantages of the schools, to elect that their children should not receive such instruction, be it enacted that education authorities shall be at liberty to continue the said custom, subject to the provisions of section sixty-eight (Conscience Clause) of the Education (Scotland) Act, 1872.

	Section 18 **(3)** Any school so transferred shall be held, maintained, and managed as a public school by the education authority, who shall be entitled to receive grants therefor as a public school, and shall have in respect thereto the sole power of regulating the curriculum and of appointing teachers: **(iii)** Subject to the provisions of section sixty-eight (Conscience Clause) of the Education (Scotland) Act, 1872, the time set apart for religious instruction or observance in any such school shall not be less than that so set apart according to the use and wont of the former management of the school…
Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1929	**Section 31** **(1)** It shall not be lawful for a county council or for the town council of a burgh being a county of a city to discontinue the provision of instruction in religion in terms of section seven of the Education (Scotland) Act, 1918, unless and until a resolution in favour of such discontinuance duly passed by the council has been submitted to a poll of the local government electors for the county or burgh taken for the purpose, and has been approved by a majority of electors voting thereat. **(2)** A poll under the foregoing subsection shall be by ballot and shall be taken in accordance with rules to be made by the Secretary of State, which rules may apply with any necessary modifications any enactments relating to parliamentary or local government elections.
1945 Education (Scotland) Act	**Section 4 – Amendment of s. 68 of Act of 1872** Section sixty-eight of the Act of 1872, in so far as it limits the time or times during which religious observance may be practiced or instruction in religious subjects may be given, shall cease to have effect, and accordingly the words in the said section from "for elementary" to "meeting, and" shall be repealed.
1946 Education (Scotland) Act	**Section 8 – Religious Instruction** **(1)** Whereas it has been the custom in the public schools of Scotland for religious observance to be practiced and for instruction in religion to be given to pupils whose parents did not object to such observance or instruction, but with liberty to parents, without forfeiting any of the other advantages of the schools, to elect that their children should not take part in such observance or receive such instruction, be it enacted that education authorities shall be at liberty to continue the said custom, subject to the provisions of section nine of this Act. **(2)** It shall not be lawful for an education authority to discontinue religious observance or the provision of instruction in religion in terms of the last foregoing subsection, unless and until a resolution in favour of such discontinuance duly passed by the authority has been submitted to a poll of the local government electors for the education area taken for

	the purpose, and has been approved by a majority of electors voting thereat. **(3)** A poll under the last foregoing subsection shall be by ballot and shall be taken in accordance with rules to be made by the Secretary of State, which rules may apply with any necessary modifications any enactments relating to parliamentary or local government elections. **Section 9 – Conscience Clause** Every public school and every grant-aided school shall be open to pupils of all denominations, and any pupil may be withdrawn by his parents from any instruction in religious subjects and from any religious observance in any such school; and no pupil shall in any such school be placed at any disadvantage with respect to the secular instruction given therein by reason of the denomination to which such pupil or his parents belong, or by reason of his being withdrawn from any instruction in religious subjects. The time or times during which any religious observance is practiced or instruction in religious subjects is given at any meeting of the school shall be specified in a table approved by the Secretary of State. **Section 61 Inspection of educational establishments** **(2)** It shall be no part of the duty of a person authorized under this section to make an inspection of any educational establishment, to inquire into instruction in religious subjects given therein or to examine any pupil in religious knowledge or in any religious subject or book.
1962 Education (Scotland) Act)	**Section 1 – Provision of Educational Facilities by Education Authorities** **(2)** The Secretary of State may make regulations prescribing the standards and general requirements to which every education authority shall conform in exercising their functions under the foregoing subject section. **Section 3 – Secondary Education** **(2)** In this Act "secondary education" means progressive courses of instruction of such length and in such subjects as may be approved in terms of the regulations made under sub-section (2) of section one of this Act as appropriate to the age, ability and aptitude of pupils who have been transferred from primary schools and departments and to the period for which they may be expected to remain at school and includes – (a) special educational treatment; (b) the teaching of Gaelic in Gaelic speaking areas. **Section 8 – Religious Instruction** **(1)** Whereas it has been the custom in the public schools of Scotland for religious observance to be practised and for instruction in religion to be given to pupils whose parents did not object to such observance or instruction, but with liberty to parents, without forfeiting any of the other advantages of the schools, to elect that their children should not take part in such observance or receive such instruction, be it enacted that education authorities shall be at liberty to continue to said custom, subject to the provisions of section nine of this Act. **(2)** It shall not be lawful for an education authority to discontinue religious observance or the provision of instruction in religion in terms of the last foregoing section, unless and until a resolution

	in favour of such discontinuance duly passed by the authority has been submitted to a poll of the local government electors for the education area taken for the purpose, and has been approved by a majority of electors voting thereat. **(3)** A poll under the last foregoing subsection shall be by ballot and shall be taken in accordance with rules to be made by the Secretary of State, which rules may apply with any necessary modifications any enactments relating to parliamentary or local government elections. **Section 9 – Conscience Clause.** **(1)** Every public school and every grant-aided school shall be open to pupils of all denominations, and any pupil may be withdrawn by his parents from any instruction in religious subjects and from any religious observance in any such school; and no pupil shall in any such school be placed at any disadvantage with respect to the secular instruction given therein by reason of the denomination to which such pupil or his parents belong, or by reason of his being withdrawn from any instruction in religious subjects. **(2)** The time or times during which any religious observance is practiced or instruction in religious subjects is given at any meeting of the school shall be specified in a table approved by the Secretary of State. **Section 67 (2)** **(3)** It shall be no part of the duty of a person authorized under this section to make an inspection of any educational establishment, to inquire into instruction in religious subjects given therein or to examine any pupil in religious knowledge or in any religious subject or book.
1969	**Section 1** (1) In the Education (Scotland) Act 1962 (hereafter in this Act called "the principal Act"), for sections 1 to 3 (provision of educational facilities by education authorities) there shall be substituted the following sections:- (1). – (1) It shall be the duty of every education authority to secure that there is made for their area adequate and efficient provision of school education and further education. (2) In this Act – (a) 'school education' means progressive education appropriate to the requirements of pupils in attendance at schools, regard being had to the age, ability and aptitude of such pupils, and includes – (i) activities in schools and classes (hereafter in this Act called 'nursery schools' and 'nursery classes'), being activities of a kind suitable in the ordinary case for pupils who, for the purpose of school attendance, are under school age.
1980 Education (Scotland) Act	**Section 8 – Religious Instruction** **(1)** Whereas it has been the custom in the public schools of Scotland for religious observance to be practiced and for instruction in religion to be given to pupils whose parents did not object to such observance or instruction, but with liberty to parents, without forfeiting any of the

	other advantages of the schools, to elect that their children should not take part in such observance or receive such instruction, be it enacted that education authorities shall be at liberty to continue the said custom, subject to the provisions of section 9 of this Act. **(2)** It shall not be lawful for an education authority to discontinue religious observance or the provision of instruction in religion in terms of subsection(1) above, unless and until a resolution in favour of such discontinuance duly passed by the authority has been submitted to a poll of the local government elector for the education area taken for the purpose, and has been approved by a majority of electors voting thereat. **(3)** A poll under subsection (2) above shall be by ballot and shall be taken in accordance with rules to be made by the Secretary of State, which rules may apply with any necessary modifications any enactments relating to parliamentary or local government elections. **Section 9 – Conscience Clause** Every public school and every grant-aided school shall be open to pupils of all denominations, and any pupil may be withdrawn by his parents from any instruction in religious subjects and from any religious observance in any such school; and no pupil shall in any such school be placed at any disadvantage with respect to the secular instruction given therein by reason of the denomination to which such pupil or his parents belong, or by reason of his being withdrawn from any instruction in religious subjects. **Section 66 – Inspection of Educational Establishments** **(2)** It shall be no part of the duty of a person authorized under this section to make an inspection of any educational establishment, to inquire into instruction in religious subjects given therein or to examine any pupil in religious knowledge or in any religious subject or book.
1981 Education (Scotland) Act	**Section 16 – Inspection of Religious Instruction** Subsection (2) of section 66 of the principal Act (exclusion of religious instruction from inspection under section 66(1)) shall cease to have effect.

Extracts taken from the following sources:

Legislation

Education (Scotland) Act, 1872. Available here: https://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/acts/1872-education-scotland-act.html

Education (Scotland) Act, 1962. Available here: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1962/47/pdfs/ukpga_19620047_en.pdf

Education (Scotland) Act, 1969. Available here: https://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/acts/1969-education-scotland-act.html

Education (Scotland) Act, 1980. Available here: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/44/pdfs/ukpga_19800044_en.pdf

Education (Scotland) Act, 1981. Available here: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/58/pdfs/ukpga_19810058_en.pdf
Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1929. Available here: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1929/25/pdfs/ukpga_19290025_en.pdf
Education (Scotland) Act, 1945. Available here: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1945/37/pdfs/ukpga_19450037_en.pdf
Education (Scotland) Act, 1946. Available here: http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/acts/1946-education-scotland-act.html

Appendix 2: Reports' Statistics on National Provision

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>1983 School Census as per LTRE (1986).</th><th>1983 School Census as per ELTRE (1994), all secondary schools.</th><th>LTRE (1986)</th><th>ELTRE (1994)</th><th>SQRE (2001)</th><th>REP (2008)</th><th>IRRME (2014)</th></tr>
<tr><td>S1</td><td rowspan="2">“about 60%”</td><td rowspan="2">82%</td><td rowspan="2">“Most of…S1 and S2”</td><td rowspan="2">93%</td><td rowspan="2">75/76</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>S2</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>S3</td><td rowspan="2">“about 50%”</td><td rowspan="2">73%</td><td rowspan="2">“for a proportion of pupils in S3 and S4.”</td><td rowspan="2">88%</td><td rowspan="2">85%</td><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>S4</td><td></td><td rowspan="3">“In most secondary schools, young people are not receiving their entitlement to religious and moral education in the senior phase. Only a few schools have appropriate arrangements in place for S5 and S6. Increasingly young people in S4 do not have enough experiences of RME.</td></tr>
<tr><td>S5</td><td>“about 30%”</td><td rowspan="2">56%</td><td rowspan="2">“A minority of schools offered religious education beyond S4</td><td rowspan="2">53%</td><td rowspan="2">“Just over half”</td><td rowspan="2">“Many schools do not provide a continuing element of religious and moral education for pupils in S5/S6.” (p.3)</td></tr>
<tr><td>S6</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

Appendix 3: Leading RME Statistics

Report	Leadership Statistics
LTRE	1984 School Census 84 PT / 34 APT Report Sample - *n* = 63 PT & APT – 18 PT Only – 8 APT Only – 8 Unpromoted Co-ordinator – 11 Non-specialist – 16
ELTRE	N/A
SQRE	Report Sample – *n* = 76 PT = 39 APT or nothing = 37
REP	N/A
IRRME	N/A

Appendix 4: School Inspection Report Sample

LA Name	School ID	School Name	Date of Pub.	Type of Report	Lead Inspector	Meeting Statutory Requirements
Argyll & Bute	1	Tiree High School	02.2020	Full	Guch Dhillon	UC
Shetland Islands	2	Sandwick Junior High School	09.2019	Full	Celia McArthur	N
Shetland Islands	3	Whalsay School	06.2020	Full	Jacqueline Gallagher	UC
Aberdeen City	4	Aberdeen Grammar School	12.2018	Full	Aileen Monaghan	UC
Aberdeen City	5	Cults Academy	05.2019	Full	Carol McDonald	N
Aberdeen City	6	Harlaw Academy	02.2020	Full	Jacqueline Nimmo	N
Dundee City	7	Morgan Academy	11.2017	Full	Aileen Monaghan	Y
Edinburgh City	8	Leith Academy	4.2018	Full	Gary Johnstone	N
Edinburgh City	9	Tynecastle High School	2.2018	Full	Donald A Macleod	UC
Glasgow City	10	Hillhead High School	3.2018	Full	Aileen Monaghan	N
Glasgow City	11	Whitehill Secondary School	02.2020	Short	Aileen Monaghan	UC
Aberdeenshire	12	The Gordon Schools	3.2017	Full	David Gregory	N
Clackmannanshire	13	Lornshill Academy	2.2018	Full	Celia McArthur	Y
Dumfries & Galloway	14	Dumfries High School	12.2019	Full	Ann Floyd	N
Dumfries & Galloway	15	Sanquhar Academy	11.2016	Full	Joan C. Esson	N
East Ayrshire	16	Auchinleck Academy	1.2017	Full	Carol McDonald	N

North Ayrshire	17	Largs Academy	3.2017	Full	Jacqueline Gallagher	N
Renfrewshire	18	Johnstone High School	4.2017	Full	Guch Dhillon	N
South Lanarkshire	19	Biggar High School	5.2018	Full	Marie McAdam	N
South Lanarkshire	20	Duncanrig Secondary School	3.2017	Full	Marie McAdam	N
South Lanarkshire	21	Larkhall Academy	06.2020	Full	Gary Johnstone	N
Stirling	22	McLaren High School	2.2018	Full	Carol McDonald	Y
West Dunbartonshire	23	Vale Of Leven Academy	2.2019	Full	Joan C. Esson	N
Edinburgh City	24	Portobello High School	6.2017	Full	Carol McDonald	N
Fife	25	Balwearie High School	1.2018	Full	Marie McAdam	Y
Glasgow City	26	Govan High School	2.2017	Full	Charles Rooney	N
Glasgow City	27	Springburn Academy	1.2018	Full	Alistair Brown	N
Midlothian	28	Dalkeith High School	5.2018	Full	Celia McArthur	N
Aberdeenshire	29	Ellon Academy	01.2020	Full	Kirsty Macnab	N
Aberdeenshire	30	Inverurie Academy	6.2018	Full	David Drysdale	N
Angus	31	Webster's High School	3.2019	Full	Stuart Cathro	N
Argyll & Bute	32	Campbeltown Grammar School	4.2018	Full	Jacqueline Gallagher	Y
Dumfries & Galloway	33	Annan Academy	03.2019	Full	Frances E Graham	N
Dundee City	34	Craigie High School	2.2017	Full	Marie McAdam	N
East Lothian	35	Knox Academy	3.2017	Full	Carol McDonald	N
Falkirk	36	Graeme High School	8.2020	Full	Teri McIntosh	N

Falkirk	37	Larbert High School	3.2017	Full	David Gregory	N
Fife	38	Bell Baxter High School	06.2020	Full	Stuart Cathro	UC
Fife	39	Inverkeithing High School	2.2019	Full	Jacqueline Gallagher	N
Fife	40	Woodmill High School	5.2017	Full	Joan C. Esson	N
Highland	41	Gairloch High School	1.2018	Full	Joan C. Esson	N
Highland	42	Glen Urquhart High School	6.2018	Full	Joan C. Esson	N
Highland	43	Golspie High School	5.2017	Full	Mary Byrne	N
Highland	44	Portree High School	6.2018	Full	Marie McAdam	N
Moray	45	Buckie Community High School	02.2020	Full	Marie McAdam	UC
Moray	46	Milne's High School	6.2017	Full	David Drysdale	N
Na h-Eileanan Siar	47	Castlebay School	08.2019	Full	Guch Dhillon	UC
Renfrewshire	48	Renfrew High School	5.2018	Full	Ann Floyd	Y
Scottish Borders	49	Berwickshire High School	04.2019	Full	Aileen Monaghan	N
Scottish Borders	50	Hawick High School	03.2020	Full	Carol McDonald	N
South Ayrshire	51	Belmont Academy	02.2020	Full	John Reilly	N
West Lothian	52	Armadale Academy	1.2019	Full	Ann Floyd	N
West Lothian	53	Bathgate Academy	4.2019	Full	Ann Floyd	UC
Highland	54	Tain Royal Academy	2.2017	CER	Patricia Watson	N