

Publications
from
The Primary School Attitudes Survey

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Francis, L. J., Lankshear, D. W., & Eccles, E. L. (2017). The internal consistency reliability and construct validity of the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity among 8- to 11-year-old students in Wales. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 20(9), 922-929.

Abstract

The Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity was designed in the mid-1970s to assess individual differences in attitude through childhood, adolescence and adulthood from the age of 8 years upwards. This study examines the internal consistency reliability, factor structure, and construct validity of the instrument 40 years later among 1,511 year 4 students (8-9 years), 1,544 year 5 students (9-10 years), and 1,526 year 6 students (10-11 years) in Wales attending Church in Wales voluntary aided and voluntary controlled primary schools. The data support the internal consistency reliability and construct validity of the instrument among the age range and commend the instrument for continued use in research.

Keywords: Attitude toward Christianity, children, Wales, psychology of religion

Lankshear, D. W., Francis, L. J., & Eccles, E. L. (2017). Engaging the student voice in dialogue with Section 50 inspection criteria in Church in Wales primary schools: A study in psychometric assessment. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 26(3), 237-250.

Abstract

The inspection criteria for schools with a religious character within the state-maintained system in England and Wales require the sponsoring body to report on aspects of the distinctiveness of the school ethos and on school worship. This paper argues that the inspection process could be enhanced by taking into account the student voice on these areas. The paper then reports on a pilot study conducted among 1,899 students attending year-five and year-six classes within Church in Wales primary schools. On the basis of this pilot study six short scales were constructed to assess student attitude toward: school ethos, school experience, school teachers, relationships in school, school environment, and school worship. The data reported satisfactory internal consistency reliability for each of the six scales. The scales are commended for further application.

Keywords: church schools, school inspection, student voice, attitude assessment, Church in Wales

Francis, L. J., Fisher, J. W., Lankshear, D. W., & Eccles, E. L. (2018). Modelling the effect of worship attendance and personal prayer on spiritual wellbeing among 9- to 11-year-old students attending Anglican church schools in Wales. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 23(1), 30-44.

Abstract

This study employs a modified form of the Fisher 16-item *Feeling Good, Living Life* measure of spiritual wellbeing (assessing quality of relationships across four domains: self, family, nature, and God) among a sample of 1,328 students drawn from year five and year six classes within Church in Wales primary schools, alongside measures of frequency of worship attendance and frequency of personal prayer. The data demonstrate frequency of personal prayer is a much stronger predictor than frequency of worship attendance in respect of spiritual wellbeing. This finding is consistent with the view that personal prayer is a key factor in the formation of individual spirituality.

Keywords: spiritual wellbeing, prayer, church attendance, psychometric analysis

Francis, L. J., Lankshear, D. W., & Eccles, E. L. (2018). How students perceive attending Church in Wales primary schools: A psychometric assessment of Section 50 inspection criteria. *Research in Education*, 102(1), 2-12.

Abstract

A sample of 4,581 year 4, year 5 and year 6 students (8-11 years of age) attending Church in Wales primary schools completed six short scales designed to operationalise the Section 50 inspection criteria concerning aspects of the distinctiveness of church school ethos and concerning school worship. The data demonstrated the internal consistency reliability of the six measures and showed more positive attitudes to be associated with being female, being younger, and attending church. Overall the students displayed positive attitudes toward school ethos, toward school experience, toward school teachers, toward relationships within school, and toward school and environment. Attitude toward school worship was less positive.

Keywords: Church in Wales, church schools, school inspection, student voices

Lankshear, D. W., Francis, L. J., & Eccles, E. L. (2018). Monitoring attitude toward Christianity among year 5 and year 6 students attending Church in Wales primary schools. *International Journal of Christianity and Education*, 22(2), 112-127.

Abstract

This study employs the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity to explore the Christian culture and climate of Anglican church primary schools within the state-maintained sector across Wales. The analysis is based on the responses of 1,899 students from year 5 and year 6. The data demonstrate that the majority of students hold a positive attitude toward Christianity and that this is especially the case among female students. The data also demonstrate that a significant decline in attitude toward Christianity takes place over the two year groups included in the survey, and that there is a much more positive attitude toward Christianity among students who attend church than among students who do not attend church.

Keywords: church schools, student attitudes, religion, primary schools

Francis, L. J., ap Siôn, T., Lankshear, D. W., & Eccles, E. L. (2019). Factors shaping prayer frequency among 9- to 11-year-olds. *Greek Journal of Religious Education*, 2(1), 39-52.

Abstract

This paper begins by reviewing the evidence from international research concerning the personal and social correlates of prayer frequency during childhood and adolescence. Overall these data continue to support the view that young people who pray not only report higher levels of personal wellbeing but also report higher levels of pro-social attitudes. These findings raise a research question of particular relevance within church schools regarding the factors that predict higher levels of prayer activity among students. The Student Voice Project offers data that can illuminate this research question. Among the 3,101 9- to 11-year-old students who participated in the project 11% prayed daily, 9% at least once a week, 32% sometimes, 11% once or twice a year, and 37% never. The present paper tests the power of four sets of predictor variables to account for individual differences in prayer frequency among these students: personal factors (age and sex), psychological factors (using the three dimensional model of personality proposed by Eysenck), church attendance (self, mother, and father), and family discussion about prayer (mother, father, and grandparents). Multiple regression analyses identified discussion of prayer with mother as the single most important predictor. These findings locate the development of the practice of prayer within the home, even more than within the church.

Keywords: psychology of prayer, parental influence, church schools, children

Francis, L. J., Lankshear, D. W., & Eccles, E. L. (2020). Assessing student attitude toward Christianity in Church in Wales primary schools: Does aided status make a difference? *British Journal of Religious Education*, 42, 56-64.

Abstract

As a consequence of the 1944 Education Act church schools were given the choice of opting for voluntary controlled status or for voluntary aided status. In voluntary aided status the Church had more control but carried greater costs. Within England and Wales this distinction is still maintained. This study measures the attitude toward Christianity of 4,581 year 4, 5 and 6 students (8- to 11-years of age) attending 87 Church in Wales primary schools, and compares the responses of 1,678 students attending controlled schools with the responses of 2,903 students attending aided schools. After controlling for sex, age and frequency of church attendance, voluntary aided status is associated with a more positive attitude toward Christianity. In other words, aided status does make a difference to students' religiosity.

Keywords: church schools, Wales, student attitudes, Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity

Francis, L. J., Lankshear, D. W., Eccles, E. L., & McKenna, U. (2020). Sustaining churchgoing young Anglicans in England and Wales: Assessing influence of the home. *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, 41(1), 34-50.

Abstract

Responding to the problem facing the Church of England, as identified by the Church Growth Research Programme, regarding sustaining churchgoing young Anglicans, and also responding to the Renewal and Reform agenda to address this problem, the present study discusses the roles of three agencies in delivering effective Christian education and Christian formation: local churches, local schools, and the home. Building on a fruitful stream of research within Australia and the UK, the present study drew on two samples of young Anglicans: 2,019 9- to 11-year-old students attending church primary schools in Wales, and 2,323 11- to 16-year-old students attending church secondary schools mainly in England. The data demonstrated that young Anglicans who practised their Anglican identity by attending church did so primarily because their parents were Anglican churchgoers. Moreover, young Anglican churchgoers were most likely to keep going to church if their churchgoing parents (especially mother) talked with them about their faith. The implications from these findings, for an Anglican Church strategy for ministry among children and young people, is that alongside resourcing local churches and promoting deeply Christian schools, it may also be wise for the Church to invest in the education and formation of churchgoing Anglican parents.

Keywords: Anglican, churchgoing, schools, churches, parents

Francis, L. J., Lankshear, D. W., & Eccles, E. L. (2021). Introducing the Junior Spiritual Health Scales (JSHS): Assessing the impact of religious affect on spiritual health among 8- to 11-year-old students. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 26(4), 199-213.

Abstract

This study describes the developing and testing of a measure of spiritual health accessible to 8- to 11-year-old students that is consistent with the four-domain model as operationalised by Fisher's family of measures, but avoids explicit religious or theistic content. Data generated by 4,803 students in Wales confirm the rotated four-factor structure of the new 12-item measure and also the coherence of employing the total scale score as a unidimensional measure of global spiritual health ($\alpha = .90$). After taking personal factors (school year and sex) and psychological factors (extraversion, emotionality, and toughmindedness) into account, regression analysis demonstrated that religious affect contributed additional power to predicting higher spiritual health scores on this new measure that was not itself contaminated by explicit religious or theistic content. This instrument is commended as providing a sound foundation for assessing the spiritual health of primary school students within a variety of religious and non-religious schools.

Keywords: spiritual health, religious affect, children, personality

Francis, L. J., Lankshear, D. W., Eccles, E. L., & McKenna, U. (2021). Assessing the impact of the Student Voice Project on shaping the ethos of Anglican primary schools: A study focusing on the Diocese of Llandaff. *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, 42(1), 300-314.

Abstract

Inspection criteria for schools with a religious character in England and Wales require the sponsoring body to arrange assessment on aspects of the distinctiveness of the school ethos. The Student Voice Project was designed to include year-five and year-six students in this process. Within the Diocese of Llandaff, the Diocesan Director of Education utilised the customised reports prepared at the end of the first year of the survey for schools participating in the project with the senior leadership teams in order to enhance school improvement and effectiveness. The present study compares the responses of the 1,192 students participating in year one of the survey with the responses of the 1,111 students from the same 23 schools participating in year two. These data show a significant overall increase in scores recorded on the six-item scales designed to measure student attitude towards five areas of ethos (school character, school experience, school teachers, relationships in school, and school and environment). These findings suggest that the Student Voice Project, effectively implemented by the Diocesan Director of Education, had significant impact on the participating schools. Similar impact was not found, however, in the control group of students from 41 schools within four other dioceses.

Keywords: school improvement, school ethos, church schools, student voice, research impact

Lankshear, D. W., Francis, L. J., & Eccles, E. L. (2021). Engaging the student voice within Anglican school self-evaluation and statutory inspection within Wales: The Lankshear Student Voice Scales Revised. *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 30(2), 209-220.

Abstract

Drawing on data provided by 4,803 year-four, year-five, and year-six students (between the ages of 8 and 11 years) attending 88 Church in Wales primary schools, this paper discusses the development of eight short scales designed to operationalize themes concerning aspects of the distinctiveness of Anglican church schools and school worship identified by the school inspection process. The eight themes include attitude toward the general character of the school and attitude toward the religious character of the school. The data demonstrated the internal consistency reliability of these eight measures that comprise the Lankshear Student Voice Scales Revised and showed more positive attitudes to be associated with being female, with being younger, and with engaging in personal and public religious practices.

Keywords: ???

Francis, L. J., Lankshear, D. W., & Eccles, E. L. (2022). Assessing the ethos of Anglican primary schools in Wales: The Student Voice Project. *Journal of Anglican Studies*, 20, 80-97.

Abstract

Since the Anglican Church in England and Wales began to build schools long before the state developed machinery to do so, around a quarter of all primary schools remain connected with the Anglican Church. The church school inspection system maintains that Anglican schools have a distinctive ethos. The Student Voice Project argues that school ethos is generated by the implicit collective values, beliefs and behaviours of the students, and was designed to give explicit voice to the students in response to six specific areas of school life identified by the Anglican school inspection criteria as relevant to school ethos. Drawing on data provided by 8,111 year-five and year-six students attending Church in Wales primary schools, the present study reports on the six ethos measures and on significant differences reported by female and male students, and by year-five and year-six students.

Keywords: church schools, school ethos, student values, quantitative research, Wales, student voice

Francis, L. J., Lankshear, D. W., & McKenna, U. (2022). Comparing the attitudes of Muslim and Christian year 5 and 6 students within four Anglican primary schools in Wales. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 44, 80-86.

Abstract

This paper set out to explore and to compare the experiences and attitudes of self-identified Muslim students (N = 84) and self-identified Christian students (N = 87) attending the same Anglican primary schools in Wales within the context of the Student Voice Project. The data identified two distinct attitudinal trajectories, one assessed by the Scale of Attitude toward my School and the other assessed by the Scale of Attitude toward Religion in my School. No significant differences were found between Muslim and Christian students in terms of attitude toward their school. However, Muslim students recorded a significantly less positive attitude than Christian students toward religion in their school. These findings are interrogated against Anglican visions for their church primary schools within the state-maintained sector in England and Wales.

Keywords: Anglican schools, school ethos, school assemblies, Muslim students