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# WHAT'S THE (GENDER) DIFFERENCE?

## Views on male primary teachers from three controlled primary school communities

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# Abstract

Northern Ireland, like most developed countries, has experienced a long-term decline in the proportion of male primary teachers, to around 15%. The question of males in teaching has been connected in public discourse to the long-standing problem of underachievement lying particularly with working class, Protestant boys. According to existing research, this is mainly due to the joint assumptions of gender matching (the idea that boys will achieve better outcomes with a male teacher) and compensatory theory (the idea that male teachers provide role models that compensate for the lack (or shortcomings) of a father figure at home). However, these theories remain largely unexplored in the context of Northern Ireland's school communities. This qualitative pilot research project investigated the perceptions of male and female pupils, teachers, parents and principals in three Controlled primary school communities in East Belfast and North Down, regarding the difference a male primary teacher might make.

Three key themes emerged from the project data. Firstly, it is clear that gender equality is a strong shared desire across all stakeholders in the primary school. This is both in terms of having a more equitable balance of male and female teachers and a balance in distribution across year groups, with parents in particular calling for more males 'down' the school, working with the youngest children in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 classrooms. Secondly, male teachers were seen as particularly 'fun' by pupils, parents and teachers alike. We suggest that this perception could be related to their rarity within the primary school environment, but is also counter-balanced by the similarly widely shared view that male teachers lacked 'caring', 'nurturing' styles of teaching. Thirdly, the theme of male teachers providing vital role models for children coming from disadvantaged and/or single-parent households was strong in parents', principals' and teachers' interviews. This theme aligns closely with compensatory theory, demonstrating that this is a widely shared point of view amongst adult stakeholders in primary education.

While this small pilot study cannot claim to provide generalised conclusions, the rich qualitative data gathered here goes some way to supporting calls to work harder to change the prejudicial views in society which appear to discourage males wishing to embark on a career in teaching, especially in primary schools and, most acutely, working with children in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Further research could explore the issue of the impacts of teacher gender in primary education across a wider range of schools of different management types and in different community settings across Northern Ireland and further afield.

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# 1. Introduction

In most economically developed countries globally, numbers of male teachers in primary schools have declined and remained low over the past few decades. The reasons for this change are diverse and complex, cutting across economic and social changes that have consolidated the perception of primary teaching as a low status, 'feminine' profession. Highly publicised revelations of historic child abuse perpetrated by men through the 1990s and 2000s in the UK, Ireland and several other developed countries have contributed to suspicion of the relatively few men who do remain in the profession. In Northern Ireland, though an extremely small increase in male primary teacher numbers has occurred in the past four years, only 15.6% of primary teachers are male (figure 1). The few male primary teachers find themselves disproportionately represented amongst principals, though male numbers are declining here too (figure 2). A similar long-term decline in male primary teachers stabilising around 15% has been experienced in England (Department for Education, 2018), France (Ministère de l'Education nationale, 2019), Germany (McDowell and Klattenberg, 2019), Ireland (O'Keeffe and Deegan, 2018) and Australia (Palmer *et al.*, 2020).

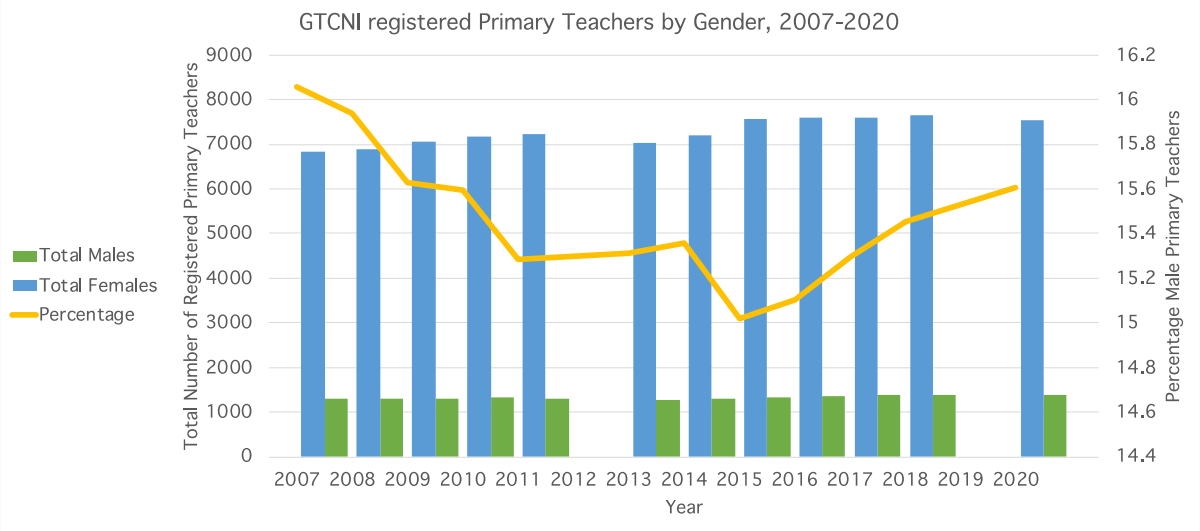


*Figure 1: GTCNI registered Primary Teachers by Gender, 2007-2020 Source: GTCNI (no data published in 2012 & 2019)*

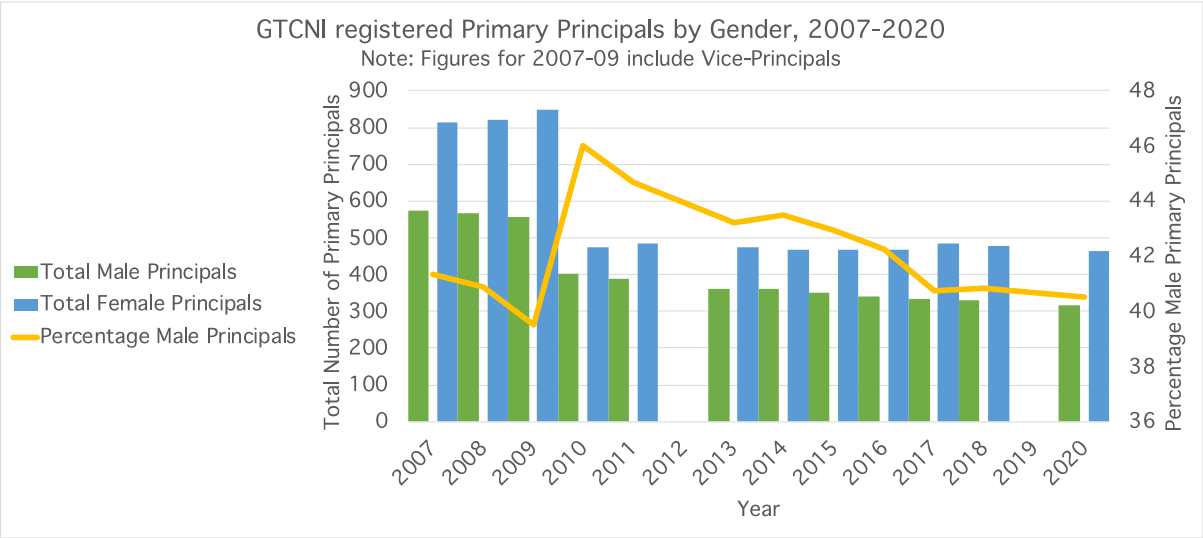


*Figure 2: GTCNI registered Primary Principals by Gender, 2007-2020 Source: GTCNI (no data published in 2012 & 2019)*

Over the same period of time, several other social changes have also taken place. Female employment has increased, and gender equality policies implemented. More children are now being raised in single-parent households where most often the custodial parent is the mother: data from the two most recent censuses indicates an increase from a total of 50,641 lone parent households with dependent children (92.2% female-headed) in 2001 (NISRA, 2020b) to a total of 63,921 (91.1% female-headed) in 2011 (NISRA, 2020a) in Northern Ireland alone. The census data also showed that 46.9% of lone parents were not in employment, 21.8% were in part-time employment and only 31.3% were in full-time employment, which suggests that lone parent families are likely to experience higher levels of deprivation and are more likely to live in social housing. Finally, boys have been observed to 'underachieve' in comparison with girls over the course of their educational career. Various causal links between these phenomena and low numbers of male primary teachers have been theorised at various times over the past twenty years (Watson ***et al.***, 2019). 'Compensatory theory' assumes that children without a 'father figure' in the home will achieve improved educational outcomes if they have a male 'role model' for a teacher. 'Gender matching' assumes that girls are advantaged by the dominance of female primary teachers, and boys are disadvantaged by the lack of male teachers, as children's learning can be improved by 'matching' them with a teacher of the same gender. Although the weight of evidence internationally points to teacher gender having little or no effect on the educational outcomes of either boys or girls, various policies have been put in place at national, regional and institutional scales to attract more men into primary teaching.

In Northern Ireland, the question of males in teaching has been connected to the long-standing problem of underachievement lying particularly with working class, Protestant boys.

Internationally, socio-economic background is a key predictor of underachievement, but in Northern Ireland this has a stronger influence than average for the OECD (Perry, 2014). Furthermore, on average, Catholic pupils outperform their Protestant peers, regardless of FSME status (Perry, 2016). The importance of gaining a place at a grammar school for post-primary education for ongoing academic success in Northern Ireland (Henderson ***et al.***, 2020) places a particular focus on the potential of male teachers to have an impact on children at risk of underachieving in the latter years of primary school (Key Stage 2). Despite some investment by the Department of Education and Northern Ireland Office in research at Ulster University (Lloyd, 2009, 2011; Harland and McCready, 2012), and ongoing Widening Participation initiatives amongst Initial Teacher Education institutions led by Stranmillis University College (www.malesinteaching.com), little primary research has been conducted on this issue in Northern Ireland. This pilot research project, undertaken in partnership with colleagues from the Controlled Schools' Support Council (CSSC), aimed to produce contextualised evidence through an investigation of three Controlled primary schools serving working class communities in East Belfast and North Down.

## 2. Literature Review

The role of teacher gender has been widely researched over the past two decades, particularly in relation to the issue of the perceived lack of male primary teachers. This short literature review will give an overview of the key relevant theories and scientific evidence to date.

Gender (most commonly characterised by femininity and masculinity) refers to the social construction of different behaviours according to sex (Cushman, 2008). It is therefore related to but distinct from biological male and female traits, performed by individuals and society through multiple repeated and constantly changing practices and behaviours (Butler, 1993). These practices and behaviours are frequently stereotyped in the course of our social interactions, leading to gender essentialism – the belief that gender is largely biologically fixed and that "women act in stereotypically female ways and men act in stereotypically male ways" (Cushman, 2008:124). This gender essentialism underpins much of the discussion around the perceived need for more male primary teachers, though it is challenged and critiqued, as we will see in the discussion. McDowell and Klattenberg (2019) recently undertook a comparative study between England and Germany examining the linguistic discipline strategies of male and female teachers, to test the hypothesis that "society's gendered stereotypes of what these roles entail, and the characteristics assumed necessary to adequately perform that role [are] causing

the continued lack of men in this occupation" (2019:952). Their approach examined the construction of gender in the classroom as much as the impacts of teacher gender on teaching and learning. They found that both "men and women used both direct (stereo-typed as hard/masculine) and indirect (stereotyped as passive/feminine) linguistic styles to perform discipline" (2019:957).

Gender essentialism lies at the heart of what various researchers in this field have termed 'gender matching': the idea that boys will achieve better outcomes with a male teacher, and *ipso facto* that girls will achieve better outcomes with a female teacher. A substantial study undertaken in England over a decade ago surveyed 8978 10-11 year-old children in 413 different classes across England, to determine if teachers of the same gender improve 'attitudes to school, reading, mathematics and science', and found little evidence of any statistically significant associations (Carrington ***et al.***, 2008). The most statistically significant relationship, in fact, showed that children (boys and girls) who had female teachers had more positive attitudes to school. This quantitative study was complemented by group interviews with 307 7-8 year-old children and interviews with their 51 teachers (even split of male and female participants) in London and Newcastle upon Tyne. Over 2/3 of children emphasised the 'sameness' of male and female teachers and of the 15% that said things would be improved by a teacher of the opposite sex, the largest group were boys preferring a female teacher. Teachers were more sympathetic to the idea that male teachers could provide a 'male role model', particularly for boys coming from deprived backgrounds, but a majority still disagreed that gender matching could lead to improved educational outcomes. They argued that more male primary teachers were needed, but primarily to reflect the gender balance of wider society (Francis ***et al.***, 2008).

These phenomena must be understood in their cultural and socio-economic context. A recent statistical study compiling data from 1,800 primary schools and nearly 40,000 students in ten Francophone African countries indicated that "being taught by a female teacher boosts academic achievements of all students, but particularly that of girls" (Lee ***et al.***, 2019:20), however this is in a context where academic gender stereotypes continue to advantage boys overall. Whilst England and Northern Ireland are not so different as this example, locally contextualised and up-to-date research is nonetheless required to inform devolved policy relating to education and employment.

Widely shared values of gender equality and balance inform and underpin the debate around male primary teachers. The desire for balance is crystallised in the form of 'compensatory

theory', the idea that male teachers provide role models that compensate for the lack (or shortcomings) of a father figure at home. In a recent study of the attitudes of 120 trainee teachers in North West England, Brundrett *et al.* found that "although aspiring teachers felt that males and females could make equally good role models for children their personal value systems perpetuated the myth that boys need male role models to achieve better educational outcomes" (2018:475). Several studies have sought to establish the qualities of such a 'male role model', underlining the idea's complex and often contradictory nature. Cushman's (2008) survey of 169 primary principals in New Zealand found almost unanimous agreement that more male teacher role models were needed, mainly to meet the needs of children from single-parent families and to provide sports leadership. In England, Brownhill (2014) surveyed 174 men actively working or training in 0-8 education, and found that the traits viewed as most important for these 'male role models' were not strongly associated with gender e.g. being reliable, trustworthy, kind, and respectful. Bricheno and Thornton surveyed 379 children in two primary and two secondary schools and concluded that "the majority identified loving, caring, friends and relatives from their direct social environment as role models" (2007:384), and that teachers were barely considered as role models by their pupils. No study has been able to provide clear evidence to demonstrate the effect of compensatory theory, but the existing research shows that it is a widely held belief amongst primary teachers that more male teachers are needed as role models.

Some recent research has been undertaken to establish some of the gender-related professional issues for male teachers in the primary setting. Cruickshank *et al.* (2018) used a survey of 53 male primary teachers in Australia to test the findings of previous qualitative studies. These had identified specific gender-related challenges including: dissatisfaction about salary, expectations to perform masculine roles, negative perceptions in society and the media, discouragement from family and friends, social isolation, questions about sexuality, uncertainty about role modelling, and uncertainty about making physical contact. They found that the most salient of these challenges were those concerning physical contact and social isolation, mediated significantly by the gender of the school principal and the presence/absence of any male colleagues. Taking a different perspective, O'Keeffe and Deegan's interviews with 11 male teachers in Ireland examined the gendered positionality of males in the staff room, and found that gender performances and discourses differed between male colleagues and between male and female teachers (2018). Some men, they argue, are able to benefit from "a patriarchal dividend of power, control and authority […] in working relationships" (O'Keeffe and Deegan,

2018:375), whilst others are excluded or constrained by their gender in their workplace relationships.

In Northern Ireland, such research has been limited. A small-scale study undertaken by Ulster University interviewed heads of year 10 in six post-primary schools on the subject of boys' underachievement, and identified a common understanding that family breakdown and a lack of male role models, coupled with boys being 'mammied' by female teachers and a failure of the primary curriculum had lowered the basic skills and attitudes of boys leaving primary school (Lloyd, 2009). A recent Master's thesis (Hamilton, 2018) investigated 122 primary principals' perceptions of male primary teachers, and showed that they look for the same qualities regardless of gender or background when recruiting a teacher. These principals also recognised that there are several barriers to males entering the profession causing their underrepresentation. However, this research did not consider the views of teachers, parents and children, and did not examine any link between teacher gender and pupils' educational outcomes.

It is not the ambition of this pilot study and report to provide conclusive evidence on this matter, but to make a contribution to an unfolding and unresolved question in education, training and employment policy in Northern Ireland.

# 3. Methodology

The project aimed to answer three research questions:

1. What is the perceived value of male teachers in Controlled primary schools serving working class communities?
2. What are the perceived difficulties in recruiting and retaining male primary teachers?
3. What is the nature of the impact of male teachers upon disadvantaged pupils in Controlled primary schools, for example in terms of attendance, attainment and aspiration?

Data collection was undertaken at three Controlled primary schools in East Belfast and North Down; school A (16 teachers, 2 male), school B (16 teachers, 1 male) and school C (10 teachers, 3 male). Over 40% of each school's intake had a Free School Meal Entitlement (FSME), a reliable indication of relative socio-economic disadvantage.

In each school, a mixed-gender team of two researchers interviewed two separate groups of 4-6 boys and 4-6 girls aged 9-10, a group of 2-3 parents (mostly female), a male and a female

teacher, and the school principal. In school A, the vice-principal was also interviewed. Interviews were semi-structured, following a schedule of questions designed for each type of interview (see appendices), and typically lasted 20-30 minutes.

This pilot study is purely qualitative owing to the school closures due to the Covid-19 pandemic from March 2020, which precluded the collection of sufficient quantitative data from the participating schools for robust analysis.

### i. Coding

Qualitative data analysis was undertaken through two rounds of coding based on a constructivist version of Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2006), and its related method of "Open Coding", which understands coding as an act of interpretation that is both subjective and interactive, and thus shaped by numerous individual and wider social influences.

The process of coding, understood as "naming data", is necessarily bound up with the researchers' perspective and thus reflects numerous influences and choices. Among the more overt influences were the research questions, which in turn informed the interview schedules (see Appendices). As a project team, we decided to use the interview schedule as guidance only, rather than as a strict framework for coding. This decision reflected first impressions, gained by transcribing the interviews, that interviewees' responses did not always "match" the questions closely: on the one hand, interviewees would often return to important themes at different points throughout the interview, so that interesting content relating to any specific question could often be found in a response to an entirely different question. On the other hand, interviewees often offered interesting thoughts on very relevant issues they had not been asked about explicitly. For example, some participants discussed male teachers' fear of being accused of sexual abuse and its impact on the teacher-pupil relationship, an issue that was not directly addressed in the interview schedule. Sticking too closely to the interview schedule would have meant losing many valuable insights emerging from the data. The openness of Open Coding, in turn, allowed for greater emphasis on the variety of themes actually discussed by the interviewees – whether prompted or not.

As a result of this approach (semi-structured interviews and open coding), and the lack of quantitative data, the findings below go beyond the original research questions to consider wider related issues.

# 4. Findings and Discussion

The findings reported here were selected through the coding process, which allowed the team to identify strongly matching codes across each dataset. These strongly matching codes indicate common themes within the responses, and suppress the reporting of anomalous individual views.

Where interviewees are quoted, their name is replaced with a code in the following format: school-status-gender. For example, a male pupil from school A is A-Pupil-M and a female principal from school B is B-Principal-F. Where names are quoted, pseudonyms have been used to protect individuals' anonymity.

## i. Pupils' Responses

Similarly to the findings of Francis ***et al.*** (2008), pupils in this study emphasised the 'sameness' of male and female teachers, both as professionals and as role models. Pupils denied that teachers' gender had an effect on learning, the classroom atmosphere, and discipline:

> *A-Pupil-F: This is the only year I've been taught by a male teacher, but I don't really see the difference because… they're teachers [LAUGHS].*

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> *Interviewer: Do you think that male teachers have more of an impact on boys or girls, or do they have the same impact on boys and girls?*
>
> *B-Pupil-M: I would say just the same.*
>
> *B-Pupil-M: Yeah, the same.*
>
> *Interviewer: Why do you think that?*
>
> *B-Pupil-M: Well, I mean, at the end of the day they are both teachers.*

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> *C-Pupil-M: [Teacher gender] doesn't really matter as long as you have fun and they are people who you like.*

Notwithstanding the perceived 'sameness' of teachers, consensus in all pupil interviews was that a gender balance of adults in the school environment was important:

> *A-Pupil-M: the whole P7 here in primary school you have had [only] female teachers, but it would be good to have both, just to experience both genders, yeah.*

*B-Pupil-M: I think it's just like, if you have [male teachers] every two years and then just have one male teacher, two years [with a female teacher], one male teacher.*

*C-Pupil-F: I think it should literally just be, if you were to have kids there for seven years, [we] should just have, like, a couple years with a female teacher and a couple of years with a male teacher*

These findings suggest that the pupils valued a gender balance in their teachers, but did not advocate 'gender matching'. Every interview asked if the gender of pupils' role models was important. In schools B and C both boys and girls initially responded that in general gender was not an important factor for whether they saw a teacher or any other person as a role model, however when asked about specific cases they offered gender matched examples.

*Interviewer: Just everybody try and think of somebody that is a role model to you in your life, you don't need to say it out loud, just think about who it is in your head. What's that person like? It doesn't need to be a teacher.*

*B-Pupil-M: Caring.*

*B-Pupil-M: Kind.*

*B-Pupil-M: Helpful.*

*B-Pupil-M: All the things that we just listed.*

*Interviewer: Ok. And are they male or female?*

*B-Pupil-M: male*

*B-Pupil-M: male*

*B-Pupil-M: male.*

*B-Pupil-M: male, I think.*

*[…]*

*B-Pupil-M: But there is also female ones as well that I have, like my mum.*

Similarly to the Bricheno and Thornton (2007) study, it may be that when asked, few children can readily identify their role models and are unlikely to view their teachers as role models. A more nuanced understanding of such a complex concept may only develop with hindsight and

adult maturity. The pupils' responses in this study indicate that gender may be a significant factor in their choice of role models, but not overtly and perhaps unconsciously.

Pupils' responses revealed a significant association between teacher gender and the kind of classroom talk that dominated teacher-pupil interactions. Teachers' gendered talk, perhaps employed as a means of building rapport to encourage pupil engagement as we will examine in the analysis of principals' and teachers' responses, made use of gender stereotypes. Pupils identified talking about sports (football and motor racing) as masculine traits, and talking about pets and fashion as feminine traits:

> *A-Pupil-F: In our classroom I know last year our teacher used to talk about shoes and shopping and things like that [LAUGHING] but this year our [male] teacher quite likes football, and [you'll find] a lot of the boys [will] start talking about football just like in the middle of the class, just start talking about… I don't know, the World Cup or something.*
>
> *Interviewer: Yeah. So, do you think the boys are maybe enjoying it more this year?*
>
> *A-Pupil-F: Yeah, whereas last year […] the boys would have just been just like… the saaaaame shopping talk agaaaain…!"*

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> *Interviewer: What about their personalities, do you think they are a bit different?*
>
> *B-Pupil-M: Well, like male teachers [are] into football, they like to talk more about football.*

---

> *C-Pupil-M: Like sometimes more the males are sporty and like the females are more [indoor] people [laughs]*
>
> *C-Pupil-M: Not just always work, work, work, or about fashion stuff*
>
> *C-Pupil-M: All you hear from the female teachers is "oh yeah, ahm, after I'll get some new heels" and all that…*

However, several pupils expressed a critical awareness of these stereotypes and were able to complicate them:

> *B-Pupil-F: There are some girls in our class who talk about football.*
>
> *B-Pupil-F: [unintelligible] talk about football, did you see who won yesterday? And we was like, no. [LAUGHS]*

*B-Pupil-F: But some girls in our class talk about football as well.*

*B-Pupil-F: Like, a girl might like boy stuff better than girl stuff, or a boy might like girl stuff better than boy stuff.*

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*C-Pupil-M: I know one of our teachers [who is really sporty], one of the girl ones, and she was like good…*

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*C-Pupil-M: Everybody likes male teachers because they like have the same interests, but like if there was a girl who had the same interests as you, it doesn't really matter because [we're] like the same, just like girls and boys.*

Finally, notwithstanding teachers' 'sameness' regardless of gender, there was a consensus amongst pupils that male teachers are 'fun' and brought a distinct sort of energy and focus.

*A-Pupil-M: [Having a male teacher] has been great so far, doing lots of fun things.*

*[…]*

*Interviewer: Does [your teacher] like to tell jokes or does he have a bit of fun with the class?*

*A-Pupil-M: Yes, I love it!*

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*C-Pupil-M: And [male teachers] are more funny.*

*C-Pupil-M: They are, yeah*

*C-Pupil-M: They're really, really funny.*

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*C-Pupil-F: The male teachers are funnier*

Girls tended to explain that boys were better behaved with male teachers, but boys from all three schools saw their male teachers as being <u>less</u> strict and stated a preference for strictness to keep them focused on their learning.

*A-Pupil-M: Mhm. Yes. [A lot of] teachers have been strict.*

*Interviewer: A lot of other ones before this have been strict?*

*A-Pupil-M: Mhm.*

*Interviewer: And what's Mr. X like?*

*A-Pupil-M: Not strict at all.*

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*C-Pupil-M: I think it's better to have a strict teacher, though.*

*C-Pupil-M: Yeah, yeah.*

*C-Pupil-M: 'cause you wanna do it.*

*C-Pupil-M: yeah, and who scares you a bit more. And that just makes you more… like not as silly.*

*C-Pupil-M: Yeah. Like more tough.*

---

*B-Pupil-M: It's good when the teacher is strict, 'cause that means you'll learn, like, to not [misbehave].*

Overall, children were cautious to avoid gender stereotyping, but when pressed by interviewees offered some distinctions based on their experience. These were almost never consistent across different pupil groups, including those of the same gender. There was also little evidence of 'gender matching' beyond descriptions of the kinds of classroom talk teachers might engage in. This demonstrates the elasticity of gender as a social construction, mediated by individual relationships, the particular context of each school and wider community.

### ii. Teachers' Responses

Teachers' responses mostly focused on pastoral care. Caring, nurturing, meeting emotional needs, and promoting a learning attitude were all stressed by male and female teachers as the central element of their role as teachers.

*A-Teacher-M: [My role]'s about caring for them first of all […] and I think the main thing is that the children trust me and they know that I trust them.*

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*B-Teacher-F: [My role] is really ensuring that the curriculum is delivered and that [pupils] are all learning in a happy and a safe environment.*

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*C-Teacher-M: I think meeting the needs of the children, obviously teaching is a key part but looking after the whole child, you know? […] You've got to make sure the kids are coming to school and they are safe and looked after.*

Male teachers however felt that they had to make a particular effort with the caring and nurturing.

*C-Teacher-M: the pastoral approach and things like that there, sometimes, or from my experience, I find that generally more women are more compassionate. Or it's easier for them, I feel anyway, to deal with those types of things.*

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*B-Teacher-M: You come here, you work with all women, who are much/ really good at caring and who are really good at that side of it, so until I was here, my caring side I struggled with.*

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*C-Teacher-F: I don't think they lack it, because, you know, a great lot of males are fathers [LAUGHS], so, you know, they have to look after their own children! I don't think that, I think again it's like aaahm, what people perceive as the norm, you know, I think it's more like that than anything else.*

Such a widely shared focus on pastoral care may indicate a priority in these schools for raising aspirations and meeting basic needs ahead of raising attainment. Teachers in each of the schools highlighted the fact that many of their pupils often came from deprived areas. The idea of providing positive male role models was strongly associated with working class children and children from single-parent homes. Gender does play a clear role here as it is most commonly assumed by both male and female teachers that children, particularly boys, lack a good male role model.

*A-Teacher-M: I know a lot of the children in my class they would have just have maybe Mum at home, or they wouldn't have an older brother, so I think it's good to see that male in the school.*

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*B-Teacher-F: Those children who really have had no sort of male figure within their life, and no sort of good role model, I think that could be, you know, seeing what's possible for them. It could make a difference to them.*

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*B-Teacher-M: I think… particularly in a school like this, you know, there's a lot of children who don't have males about, father figures at all, I think it's important just to set a good example.*

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*C-Teacher-F: I think, you know, a lot of it is, you know, coming from home, and what they are seeing at home and who they have in their house as well, and who their role models are and their immediate family or wider family as well. We have a lot of kids who come in from single-parent houses, you know?*

These views indicate a shared belief in compensatory theory amongst teachers. The perception that a particular, gendered approach is needed in relation to children from socio-economically disadvantaged, working class families comes through in the words of two of the male teachers interviewed. Both highlight the difficulties posed by generational cycles of educational disadvantage. One points to the different needs of young boys and girls arriving into a new class from a disadvantaged background, the other gives an example of how the male teacher actively offers his own life story as a role model for his pupils.

> *A-Teacher-M: [teaching in] a school on an estate, I know some of the parents' attitudes and views on school and education. My main thing is to try and get the children to think for themselves and then just to try and be that better person every day and that will eventually impact their work.*
>
> *I find the girls with… you know, your classic free-school-meals-girls, you know, with some of the families who have had a bit of issues with teachers, I would almost treat them the same as with the boys as well, just coming in.*

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> *C-Teacher-M: And basically parents have.., you know, haven't had a good education themselves and they struggle, you know, with learning, they didn't have a good student experience and we try and make every child's experience good so that, you know, the cycle doesn't happen again. […] So I try and bring my own journey into it, you know? I didn't go to a grammar school, I spent the whole seven years in secondary and I'm still in what I think is a good job.*

Such attempts to 'break the cycle' of disadvantage, fit with a compensatory model in which male teachers are imagined to occupy a privileged position as male role models, to impact the lives and aspirations of disadvantaged boys (in particular) and girls. However, in terms of the impact of male teachers on pupil attendance, teachers agreed that gender was unlikely to have any impact:

> *C-Teacher-M: The gender doesn't come into it, I think. You know, if they have a good rapport with that teacher then they want to come to school and they have had a good relationship with that teacher, either male or female, I think that's part of it.*

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> *B-Teacher-F: I think that some boys really do respond well, especially in Key Stage 2, where they might switch off a bit to school and their attendance […] to a male as a*

*positive kind of role [model], but I don't think it's made a difference to me, personally, for being a female*

Teachers' responses suggest that in circumstances where children (and particularly boys) come from socio-economically disadvantaged, single-parent homes, male teachers are believed to have a unique impact as positive male role models. This fits well with the compensatory theory commonly associated with calls for more male primary teachers.

iii. Principals' Responses

Similarly to their teaching staff, school principals stressed the caring/nurturing role as a key attribute for primary teaching, and associated these attributes more readily to females:

*A-Principal-F: I think females who go into teaching are a certain type of female, you know? […] And I think the nurture side of the female teachers is something that they really want to hold on to and you know, have that side developed. That they are nurturing, that they are caring, that person that you can come to and talk to…*

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*B-Principal-F: we are very much going down the 'nurturing' road, and a lot of these children do need either a maternal or a paternal influence, so my female staff here are great at working with those hard-to-reach children and the children who have maybe had attachment issues at home*

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*C-Principal-M: I consider myself a man in a caring profession. Ah, so, for me as a schoolboy I chose a career which was if you like not about stuff and how things work, it was about people*

In order to care pastorally and bond with pupils, principals frequently mentioned using sports and gendered talk to bond with boys, which reflects the findings of the pupils' responses.

*A-Vice-Principal-M: [A boy with challenging behaviour] would come in and if he worked for a short period of time then we could play football together and that just built up and built up and that was probably the most dramatic example that I had seen, the fact that he could do better work and then go out and kick a football in the playground with you, that was enough for him.*

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*C-Principal-M: I think male teachers "get" the boys who can't abide sitting for prolonged periods of time, they've just got sort of ants in their pants, they're just wanting to get out, let's get the Maths and English done […] so we get out to play soccer*

These examples suggest that 'gender matching' is understood to be effective in these primary schools, regarding individual pastoral care. Rather than suggesting that male teachers will impact on the aspirations and attainment of all boys, these examples suggest that gender matching could be a valuable element of pastoral care for challenging individual cases. Principals gave several further examples of impacts in specific cases, all related to pastoral care, where male teachers were understood to provide positive male role models. Again, issues of class and single-parent households were frequently raised.

> *A-Principal-F: There's a child who is currently in P5 who struggles with regulating his behaviour. And he has found that relationship with the male teacher a very positive one. There are very few male role models in his life and he has responded really well to that, to the point where he is not a forthcoming child with his emotions […] but when he heard that the P5 teacher was leaving, he went in to him personally and said../ Sorry, I get emotional there, that.. I'm gonna miss you, and that was../ Sorry. [starts to cry] That was a big thing for him, you know. Sorry!*

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> *B-Principal-F: Ahm, well, with regards to boys, I mean we would have quite a lot of boys here living in a home where there is a lone parent and it would be a female parent, and I do think you'll see a difference there when it comes to aspiration and achievement. If they don't have a male role model we do see a difference at home, that they don't have somebody to follow, and you know, taking that wider than the school context, then you can see, depending on where they live, that in certain social areas of Northern Ireland, that is why they gravitate towards the males who control some areas that they would live in, because that is someone to aspire to, because they see some of these guys and what they have and the lifestyle they live and they think it's something that they should aspire to. This year we have a new male member of staff and officially he works for a different organisation but he is part of our well-being team on school and he is regarded by the parents as part of our staff. He has made great inroads with a lot of boys from families who we would find are hard to reach, ahm, and the boys have responded really well to him, just from the point of view that they can sit and have a chat, they don't see him as one of the teachers, they tend to come from homes where there isn't a father in the home and they are almost treating him like a surrogate father, they'll open up to him, they'll talk about home circumstances, they'll talk about school, and he is able to have an influence on their attitude to school and even to influence their attendance at school and their ability to be involved when they are in the*

*classroom. He has only been with us since September, but we have certainly seen a difference already. I think it has been very interesting to watch. If we had brought someone in from the organisation to be part of the well-being team who was female, I don't think we would have seen the same positive outcomes that we have seen already.*

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*C-Principal-M: There's a lot of our boys that respond very well to male staff, because their male teacher is the significant male in their life. And for them it's as simple as that.*

These examples demonstrate that the principals see male teachers as fulfilling a compensatory role for pupils coming from disadvantaged and single-parent homes. The question of whether this compensatory role model should be found further 'down' the school in Foundation Stage or Key Stage 1 revealed that whilst principals were in favour of male teachers for their youngest pupils, that they had had almost no teachers in Foundation Stage or Key Stage 1, with only two short-lived experiments with male teachers in P3 across the three schools in recent years.

*B-Principal-F: We had one male teacher in Key Stage 1, in P3, at the beginning of last year […] It was a temporary arrangement, yes, it was to cover a maternity leave […] when [the children] had a male teacher in P3, they said, A man? You have given us a man? As if it was, you know, something that was unheard of …*

*I think in our society males tend to gravitate towards Key Stage 2, and for me that's too late, you know, males should be involved right from preschool, but I don't think Northern Ireland's society accepts that readily. I think there is still a view, a suspicious view, of men who want to work in teaching, "Why would you want to work with young children"?*

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*C-Principal-M: Our male teachers have taught in Key Stage 1, but not in the Foundation Stage, P3 is the lowest if you like in the school that any of them has taught.*

The 'suspicious view of men' who want to work with young children was cited by male teachers interviewed in this study as a reason why they would hesitate to teach in Foundation Stage or Key Stage 1. This theme is returned to in the analysis of the Parents' responses below. Principals were asked what they saw as the barriers to males entering the profession, particularly to work in Foundation Stage or Key Stage 1, and their answers centred on the female-dominated image of teaching, and poor perception of teaching generally:

*A-Principal-F: It would be lovely to see more males. It would be lovely for it to be a job that they saw as a good career move to make. I think that society needs to push that […] and I think though it's probably one of the most under-valued jobs […] We're not given credit for the work that we do.*

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*B-Principal-F: a lot of [males] also don't want to work in a profession which is predominantly female, it has its challenges […] and I just think the profession as a whole needs to be seen as more attractive. I think part of the problem is that the perception of the profession is it's very tough, very difficult, that children are all a nightmare to work with…*

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*C-Principal-M: not by design, but just by a process of how schools have evolved over years, I think that they can be aaah.. quite aaah.. female places to work. Simply because the majority of staff are female.*

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*A-Vice-Principal-M: One thing that is challenging is just from a social point of view, it can be quite difficult if you are one of the only males in the school […] You are missing out on certain aspects of having that... male... you know, company, if that sounds right.*

These examples, particularly coming from the male principals, correlate with the findings of Cruickshank *et al.* (2018) in relation to the challenges faced by male teachers in the profession. Principals agreed that having more male primary teachers would improve gender balance and workplace culture, but were divided on whether to introduce quotas or targets.

*Interviewer: what could or should we do to address [the lack of male teachers]?*

*B-Principal-F: Aaaah... goodness. I don't actually know. I don't actually know, apart from positive discrimination, the likes of which you see, I suppose, in the PSNI here, when they were trying to address the religious makeup of the workforce, but that doesn't sit well with me because then females who are very good candidates for teaching roles would lose out on the opportunity to train, so I don't think that's right.*

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*C-Principal-M: I think it needs to be addressed probably through recruitment into teaching in the first place. […] I think that schools should [then] be given a target, particularly primary schools, to redress/ I mean, no-one is probably going to be as bold to make a case for 50/50 recruitment, look how well that's done in Northern Ireland [laughs], but you know what? I think that primary school is so close to family, I think*

*that there's a target worth having, where there it needs to be at least more reflective of real life.*

Overall, these principals were able to identify specific circumstances in which male teachers had an advantage, due to gender matching and compensatory theory, in providing pastoral care. This is despite a general perceived difficulty with a 'nurturing' approach more associated with female staff. These specific circumstances articulated single-parent households, socio-economic disadvantage, class, and gender. Principals agreed that an increased proportion of males within primary teaching would be beneficial for both pupils and teacher colleagues by providing a gender balance more reflective of wider society, but were unsure of how this should be achieved.

### iv. Parents' Responses

In an interesting counterpoint to the concerns raised by principals and teachers about the social acceptability of male teachers in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, one of the strongest themes of consensus in the parents' group interviews was a call for more male teachers working with young children.

*A-Parent-F: I would love to see males in nurseries. Like, I would love that, that foundation, like, Oh, that'd be just brilliant! You know, that would be really, really good for both, like, you know, girls and boys I think.*

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*B-Parent-F: We had the [two male] Stranmillis students in, remember, in P2, they were… Oh, they absolutely adored […]*

*B-Parent-F: and they loved them, they were really good.*

*B-Parent-F: They absolutely adored them, yeah.*

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*C-Parent-F: Well, I think personally [males in early years] should be introduced, but or maybe even start off with like a classroom assistant, that should have been from day one I think, because then to me it does develop the child's mind that it's almost like a family […]*

*C-Parent-M: That could be an idea. Could be a good idea that.*

However, some parents did recognise that 'others' might not be as comfortable with the idea:

> *C-Parent-M: talking about my son here, we took him to Squirrels[1] at a very young age […] Squirrels was two men. That's at age four, alright, it's only an hour a week, [but what with] myself and stuff always being at home, he never had any problems, but it is funny […] There is a bit of a perception there where, you know, if there was a man to commence P1, I think the first year people would definitely be very sceptical, now […] we don't like change over here [and] this just hasn't been done.*

This scepticism wasn't only linked to (largely unspoken) fears of the child abuse historically associated with males, but more overtly to the idea that male teachers might not have a sufficiently nurturing or caring pastoral approach:

> *C-Parent-F: I'm not saying men don't have like a caring approach, I don't mean it that way, but it's still that nurturing side, that children need. I know it's not Mummy, but still…*

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> *B-Parent-F: When my eldest was here, it was a male Principal and I think there was a lot of… sort of respect and following of the rules and it was very little [stepping out of line], whereas now everything is much softer, there's encouragement […] I see a huge change in the past five years, and I think that's the female influence […] driven by a senior leadership which is all female.*

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> *B-Parent-F: most [male teachers] were a lot more strict and would have come done sort of heavy on any, you know, frivolity and mucking about, whereas I think… female teachers are a bit/ you know, have a bit more patience, a bit softer, so…*

Notwithstanding this perceived 'hardness', male teachers were universally agreed to be popular with pupils. This is linked to gender matching in creating a social bond with male pupils, and to the rare, exotic nature of a male teacher within the primary school environment.

> *A-Parent-F: there was definitely the impact on [my son] going to school, wanting to be at school and actually Mr. Y hasn't taught [my son] I think in about two years now, and he insisted on writing a letter to him and saying like what impact he had and thank you for believing in me, that sort of stuff.*

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> *B-Parent-F: Mr. Z comes into the canteen at lunchtime and he's like a football star "[GASPS] Mr. Z!" [LAUGHTER]*

[1] Squirrels is a section of Scouts for 4 and 5 year-olds, run by volunteers

*Interviewer: Is that just the males or the female pupils too?*

*B-Parent-F: Yeah, no, they all love him, all of them, yeah. All absolutely adore him.*

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*C-Parent-M: my daughter has only had two male teachers, which were in [school C]. So for her, it was a big… woah, there's a man! But she absolutely warmed to both teachers, and I think she flourished, she's done really well. My son […] I mean he had his first male teacher in P4, with Mr X, and absolutely loved the class. So, I think for the kids it's a nice change for them, you know? It's a difference, so it does…*

These examples suggest that part of the unique perceived impact of male primary teachers stems precisely from their rarity within the system, and raise the question of whether such impacts would be reduced where male teachers are more 'normal'. Interviewees from school C, where men and women teach in equal numbers, seem to answer this question in the affirmative.

Finally, parents' discourse around the theme of positive male role models complemented that of principals and teachers. They outlined what they saw as male teachers' unique capacity to inspire boys, particularly from single-parent households. Parents perceived male teachers as more able to command respect, and engage dads:

*A-Parent-F: there's a couple of male parents I'm thinking of […] at Sports Day or at the school gate, you know, it's football matches […] again I talked about Mr Y, - there was a guy who came to [school A], and was new, but they began this football chat, you know, and then this guy ended up coming and being part of stuff that we were doing as parents. And I think it was the fact that he had this connection with Mr Y.*

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*B-Parent-F: I know my husband is coming this year for the first time to help out on some trips, which he might not have volunteered to do quite so readily when it was a female teacher.*

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*Interviewer: So, parents in general respect male Principals and teachers more than females?*

*B-Parent-F: Some. Some. Yes. I think they just accept if a male tells them that their child has been misbehaving or so, and they are like oh no… while with a female it's basically no, what are you talking about, what do you know, or…*

*B-Parent-F: What did you do to upset him?*

*B-Parent-F: Yeah. [LAUGHTER] You know?*

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*Interviewer: Would a male principal have closer connections maybe with male parents?*

*C-Parent-F: I would really agree with that 100%.*

These examples suggest a more widespread understanding of gender matching, beyond the teacher-pupil relationship, which might have effects on parental engagement and therefore children's aspirations, attendance and attainment. Overall parents' interviews were very varied in their content, but showed strong consensus in calling for more males in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. They suggested that whilst different to more 'nurturing', 'caring' female teachers, male teachers were often very popular with children and parents alike.

# 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

## i. Discussion of Key Themes and Response to Research Questions:

This project's findings have been varied and subjective but have nonetheless shown that several points of view were shared across the different interviews. This is important as frequently investigations into this field have focused on the views of one particular subset of the school community without taking into account those of other stakeholders. Three key themes emerged from the data outlined above:

1. Gender equality is a strong shared desire across all stakeholders in the primary school. This is both in terms of having a more equitable balance of male and female teachers and a balance in distribution across year groups, with parents in particular calling for more males 'down' the school, working with the youngest children in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 classrooms. Pupils emphasised the 'sameness' of their teachers in terms of their roles as professional educators (despite noting differences in their interests and language), and didn't express a view of their teachers as role models. Teachers and principals agreed that more male primary teachers could be beneficial for both pupils and colleagues in terms of reflecting the gender balance in wider society. Only one of the principals (the male) however was in favour of positive discrimination in recruitment to the profession in favour of males.

2. Male teachers were seen as particularly 'fun' by pupils, parents and teachers alike. This could be related to their rare, exotic nature within the primary school environment, but is also counter-balanced by male teachers' perceived lack of 'caring', 'nurturing' styles of teaching. Beyond these broad stereotypes, interviewees disagreed as to whether male teachers were more 'strict' or 'hard' (pupils reported that they were less strict, parents that they were more 'hard'), demonstrating the subjective and contextual construction of gender identity which is dependent on the influences and individuals in a given person's experience.

3. The study schools had high rates of socio-economic deprivation (>40% FSME), and the theme of male teachers providing vital role models for children coming from disadvantaged and/or single-parent households was strong in parents', principals' and teachers' interviews. This theme aligns closely with the compensatory theory outlined in the international literature. Whilst this study neither proves nor disproves this theory, qualitative evidence from the adult stakeholders in these three schools demonstrates the widely held understanding that male teachers can provide important positive male role models for children (particularly boys) from

single-parent households within working class communities. None of the pupils interviewed articulated this point of view.

In terms of the three central research questions posed at the outset, the following reflections are offered:

1. What is the perceived value of male teachers in Controlled primary schools serving working class communities?

The research undertaken within these three Controlled primary schools (each with >40% FSME) would suggest a high value placed on male teachers by pupils, parents, teachers and principals. There was a general consensus that it was desirable to have more male teachers in their schools, and that pupils would benefit from having exposure to both male and female teachers throughout their time at primary school, as a reflection of the gender balance within broader society, and (in line with compensatory theory) to encourage pupils (especially boys) from single mother households to engage more actively with learning in the classroom.

2. What are the perceived difficulties in recruiting and retaining male primary teachers?

The study confirmed that there were enduring challenges in recruiting more male primary teachers into a profession which is perceived to be demanding and undervalued but also dominated by a largely female workforce. It was also noted that there remain largely unspoken gender-related assumptions about the aptitude of males to offer the caring, nurturing, pastoral approach required for primary school teaching, especially in the lower year groups. Interestingly, there was little suggestion in any of the interviews that a teacher's subject knowledge or pedagogical skill was in any way related to their gender. While parents expressed a clear desire to see more male teachers in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 classes (years 1-4), there was also an acknowledgement that some parents might be uncomfortable or sceptical about male teachers wishing to work with young children (with suggestions of links to abuse), and doubtful of their ability to offer the nurturing approach required. In terms of addressing the current imbalance, only the male principal was in favour of positive discrimination at the stage of recruitment to the profession, while one of the other (female) principals felt that positive discrimination risked excluding talented female teachers simply on account of their gender.

3. What is the nature of the impact of male teachers upon disadvantaged pupils in Controlled primary schools, for example in terms of attendance, attainment and aspiration?

In line with compensatory theory, there was a clear perception among teachers, parents and principals (though not by pupils) that male teachers could have a significant impact on disadvantaged pupils (especially boys) in terms of their ability to motivate and engage them in learning. Both male and female teachers acknowledged that male teachers could play a unique role as a male influence or role model, and often mentioned the importance of this male influence for children in single-parent (mother) households.

There was some discussion too of the importance of male teachers as positive role models in working-class communities There were also several accounts provided by the teachers and principals of boys who, it was claimed, had been motivated to attend school and focus on their learning as a result of a positive rapport developed with a male teacher, though it is not clear whether this level of engagement led to long-term changes in attendance, attainment and aspiration.

A further unexpected finding from this study was the indirect influence of male teachers on the increased engagement of fathers in school or class activities, where, it was claimed, there would have been more reticence, had the teacher been female. In this way, it could be argued that schools with a more equal gender balance on the teaching staff could be in a better position to promote parental engagement involving ***both*** parents, where traditionally mothers are more likely to attend or help out at school events. This could also be developed as a way to engage more fathers more directly with their children's learning, something which the Department of Education in Northern Ireland has sought to achieve through its recent 'Give Your Child a Helping Hand' media campaign which has explicitly featured adult male figures (e.g. dads, grandads) reading with their children.

### ii. Recommendations

Two key recommendations are offered from this pilot study as follows:

First, while we believe that any suggestion of an imposed quota would be largely unworkable and would unfairly discriminate against female applicants, broad support emerges from this study for the targeted recruitment of more male teachers to Controlled primary schools serving working class communities, as a way of better reflecting the gender balance of broader society, and in some cases, to offer opportunities for some disadvantaged boys (in particular) to develop a unique gender-matched rapport with their teacher which could serve to motivate, engage and inspire them to attend, aspire and achieve. While this small pilot study cannot claim to provide generalised conclusions, the rich qualitative data gathered here goes some way to supporting

calls to work harder to change the unhelpful and unfounded prejudicial views in society which discourage males wishing to embark on a career in teaching, especially in primary schools and, most acutely, working with children in Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. This study highlights the desirability of having more males in the primary school (as shared by pupil, parents, teachers and principals), and, contrary to what might have been expected, demonstrates the support among parents for more males to work across all year groups, including the youngest children.

Second, while this pilot study has raised many interesting questions and provided some tentative answers, there is a clear need for further research in Northern Ireland and beyond into the difference (if any) that male teachers can make within primary schools in disadvantaged communities. Further research could, for instance, examine in more detail the validity of the compensatory and gender matching theories mentioned above; and, could explore the qualitative dimension across a wider range of schools of different management types (Catholic maintained, integrated, Irish medium), in different community settings, and in more rural settings where experiences and perceptions could differ from what has been recorded across these three urban, Controlled schools serving largely Protestant working class communities in East Belfast and North Down. There is also scope to collect quantitative data to provide evidence of any impact on aspiration, attendance and attainment, based on the gender of the teacher, although the challenges of identifying clear correlations in the presence of multiple variables are immediately recognised.

In any case, this small-scale qualitative inquiry has helped to shed further light on the complex nature of the impact of a teacher's identity / gender on their multifaceted role as an educator committed to caring for, nurturing, protecting, engaging and teaching all of our children to become happy, responsible and successful contributors to society.

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# 7. Appendices

## i. Principals' interview schedule

| **Core Question** | **Supplementary questions** |
|---|---|
| Introductory Questions: | |
| How many teachers do you employ in your school and how many are male? | In which classes do they teach? Have you ever had male teachers in FS/KS1? |
| Recruitment: | |
| Would you have many male applicants for teaching posts in your school?<br>- overall? \| at FS/KS1? \| at KS2? | Why do you think this might be? Are there now more or fewer male applicants than in the past? |
| Impact: | |
| To what extent do you think it makes a difference at KS2 if boys are taught by a male rather than a female teacher? | To what extent do you think having a male teacher can make a difference in terms of ***raising educational aspiration*** \| ***improving attendance*** \| ***raising attainment*** among boys at KS2?<br>Do you think having a male teacher can have any other impact on boys? |
| Role Models: | |
| A lot has said in the past about the importance of male teachers serving as positive male role models for boys, particularly those with few other positive male role models in their lives. In your experience, do you think there is any validity to this claim? | If yes, then in what ways can male teachers act as role models?<br>If no, then where has this claim come from? |
| Implications: | |
| Do you think that the lack of male teachers in primary schools/ at KS2 is a "problem" to be addressed/solved, or a reality to be accepted? | If it is a problem, then what should/could we do to address it?<br>If not, then how do we dispel the myth? |
| Any other comments? | |

ii. Parents' Interview Schedule

| **Possible Questions** | **Possible Follow-up Questions** | **Probes** |
|---|---|---|
| Tell me a bit about your connections with the school. | What children do you have in the school?<br>Did any of your other children come here?<br>Are you a past pupil?<br>Are any of you involved with the school in any other way? | |
| What experience do you have of male teachers in primary school? | Are any of your children taught by a male teacher?<br>Or did one of your children in the past?<br>Have any of your children never been taught by a male teacher?<br>Were you ever taught by a male teacher in primary school?<br>Do you feel that there were more male teachers in the past? | |
| A lot of what has been written about male teachers has to do with them being good positive role models. Would you agree with this? | Do you think that there is a lack today of positive male role models? Are too many boys role models negative influencer?<br>Do you think that male teachers can be a good role model for boys and female teachers be a good role models for girls or are they all good role models for all children?<br>Do you think that the gender of the teacher matters in being a role model? If yes, why? Or why not? | |
| Do you think that primary schools project a more feminine environment? | Because there are more female staff in schools, would it be fair to say that they are a more feminine environment?<br>If any of you have boys in school, do you think that they see school as a girly place? | Think of places like hairdressers, car repair garages etc. |
| Do you think that there is the view that all male teachers aspire to become, or should be principals? | Does it make any difference having a male or female principal?<br>Can this have an impact on the way the school functions?<br>Would a male principal have a better connection with male parents and the wider male community? | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Do you think there should be more male teachers in Nursery and early Years? | We have no male nursery teachers in NI and few in early years, why do you think this is?<br>Might some parents be concerned with a male teacher in an early years environment? If yes, what would these concerns be.<br>Would males be 'caring and gentle enough' for the early years? | |
| Do you think that your children have any preference for male or female teachers? | If any of your children have experienced being taught by a male teacher, did they express any preferences?<br>From your own experience in the past did you have any preferences?<br>Is it too simple to assume that boys like to be taught by males and girls females? | |
| Do you think there are differences between a male and a female teacher? | Tell me a little bit more about what you think those differences are?<br>Do you think that all male or female teachers take different approaches to learning?<br>Is the difference largely in the way they teach in the class, or how they engage in the wider school, e.g. sport, clubs, and trips?<br>Do you think that it makes any difference if the male teacher is from the LGBTQ+ community, i.e. not heterosexual? | Teaching style<br>Personality<br>Interests |
| Do you think that male teachers have more of an impact on boys or girls, or may be the same? | Is this a different impact to female teachers or the same? | And…?<br>Why? |
| To what extent does a male teacher make it easier for a male parent to | Has anyone any experience of a male teacher having a positive impact on a dad or father figure? | |

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| engage in their child's schooling? | Do male teachers appear to get on better with dads at pick-up time and parents nights etc?<br>Are disengaged dads just as likely to happen with either gender of teacher? |
| There are generally fewer male teachers than female teachers. Would you like to have more male teachers in your school? | Why/why not?<br>What do you think would be the positive/negative points about having more male teachers in primary school?<br>How do you think that we could get more male teachers? |
| Overall, in your opinion, does gender affect a teacher's ability to be a 'good teacher'? | Please explain a little more. |

iii. Pupils' Interview Schedule

| **Possible Questions** | **Possible Follow-up Questions** | **Probes** |
|---|---|---|
| Can you tell me if you have been taught by any male teachers before? | When were you taught by a male teacher? Would you have liked to have a male teacher in a different class? | |
| Do you have a preference for male or female teachers? | Why? | Tell me more. |
| Do you think there are differences between a male and a female teacher? | Tell me a little bit more about what you think those differences are. Do you think they help you learn differently? | Teaching style<br>Personality<br>Interests |
| Do you think that male teachers have more of an impact on boys or girls, or may be the same? | Is this a different impact to female teachers or the same? | And…?<br>Why? |
| There are generally fewer male teachers than female teachers. Would you like to have more male teachers in your school? | Why/why not? What do you think would be the positive/negative points about having more male teachers in primary school? | |
| Do you think that male teachers can be a good role model for boys and female teachers be a good role models for girls or are they all good role models for all children? | Do you think that the gender of the teacher matters in being a role model? If yes, why? Or why not? | And?<br>What happens in your school? |
| In your opinion, does gender affect a teacher's ability to be a 'good teacher'? | Please explain a little more. | |

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