

**DIOCESE OF PLYMOUTH
VICARIATE FOR FORMATION**

**SECTION 48
INSPECTION REPORT**



Notre Dame Catholic Secondary School
Looseleigh Lane
Derriford,
Plymouth,
PL6 5HN

URN 113552

Head Teacher: Mrs Kate White
Chair of Governors: Mr. Graham Johnson

Inspectors: Miss Sarah Adams & Miss Kelly Dunne

Introduction

The inspection of Notre Dame Roman Catholic School was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with Plymouth Diocesan Framework and Schedule for Section 48 inspectors approved by the Bishop of Plymouth.

Description of the School

Notre Dame is a voluntary aided 11-18 girls' school with a mixed sixth form. The school works as part of a consortium for sixth form provision with four other secondary schools within the Plymouth Learning Trust (PLT) including the local Catholic boys' school. The proportion of students supported at school action, school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. Although the proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average, the number of looked after children and those from the armed forces families is above average.

The school educates the whole person 'Head, Heart, Hands' and summarises its Mission Statement as

- an optimistic school promoting Christian attitudes
- a school where every person belongs
- a school which values learning
- a school which rises to challenges and celebrates achievement

Key Finding	Grade 1: John 13:45
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'If I, your Lord and Teacher have washed your feet, you are also to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you should also do as I have done to you'

The night before he died Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. Peter, one of the disciples was affronted. To wash another's feet was the lowest job of all, one done by the servants. Jesus, as the leader of the community he was about to establish, was very clear. The call to Christian ministry is a call to service, a humbling act of giving to one another. Unless we can serve our brothers and sisters we can have no part of in the life of Christ. A secular understanding of leadership often results in a top down mentality and little shared responsibility. The Christian community however, is one where those in authority act out of their desire to serve, not to be served. As a consequence the message of serving one another permeates the whole community.

Notre Dame is a school which consistently operates at this level demonstrating in all areas of the school's life what it means to be rooted in the mission of the Church and a disciple of Christ. The distinctive Catholic nature is evident in all levels of leadership and in the school's systems and structures. All leaders are highly committed to the Catholic life of the school and the Mission in leading is by example. The chaplaincy, prayer life, spiritual and moral development of the pupils and staff is vibrant and an

integral part of daily life. This is evidenced in the many opportunities to celebrate achievement, by ensuring inclusion through high quality pastoral care and in the diverse roles and experiences offered and supported by outside agencies and a highly dynamic chaplaincy team. The liturgical life of the school is a growing area. Opportunities for a variety of prayerful experiences are encouraged and welcomed by staff and students.

Leadership of RE is of an exceptionally high standard both in quality of management and quality of teaching. Standards in RE are improving all the time with an on-going commitment to continue to raise levels of attainment. Despite the logistics of bringing a disparate department together, the commitment of the RE team is very evident in the excellent efforts made to respond to expectations and improve the quality of provision and there is no doubt about the capacity of the school to go from strength to strength.

Summary of key findings

- The faith life of the school is central to the life of Notre Dame and as a consequence there is an excellent sense of mission permeating every aspect of the daily running of the school.
- Students at Notre Dame make excellent progress in RE and results at KS4 and KS5 reflect this.
- Most students enjoy RE lessons.
- Teaching is for the most part excellent. Relationships between staff and students are excellent with students being clear about expectations and teachers committed to ensuring that all students understand what is expected of them.
- Behaviour around the school is excellent. Students enjoy coming to school and feel well cared for. They feel that have a voice in the school and they are clear about how they can access support if they are struggling or in need of any kind.
- Children from service families, those in care of the local authority and students who act as carers are very well supported, reflecting the mission of the school to be inclusive and caring.
- Leaders are clear about their expectations and work hard to ensure that communication is as robust as it can be so that all staff are clear about any changes to policy and that developments are put in place.

Areas of Focus for Development

The school's mission as a Catholic School would be further enhanced by focusing planned development in the following areas.

- Teaching of RE: Embed the excellent practice evident at KS4 and KS5 into KS3.
- Ensure that marking in KS3 is robust and helps the students to know what their next steps are.

- Outreach: develop the outreach in the school and fulfil the aspiration to host a CCRS programme for teachers, catechists and other interested parties in the Plymouth deanery.
- Website: this is currently being upgraded. This renewal could be a focus for celebrating the many rich and successful areas of Catholic life in the school.
- Engaging the parents and other members of the wider community to engage with and participate in the prayer life of the school.

Notre Dame as a Catholic Community	(Welcome, Welfare, and Witness)
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Gospel values permeate the life of this school and play an enormous part in ensuring that the quality of welcome is rich and warm. The school's mission statement 'Head Hearts Hands' is a true reflection of how the community lives and works together and impacts positively on all members of the community. This is evident in the open and generous spirit of engagement between pupils, staff, and parents. It is clear that there is a genuine desire to serve one another. The children see this and respond by displaying it in their own relationships and actions.

The Ubuntu programme, unique to Notre Dame and based on the traditional African ideal of "I am who I am because of others." which all students in Year 7 follow embraces the ideal that *'life can only be lived to the full if we are free to embrace and celebrate those around us who contribute to our welfare, and also to have respect for one's self no matter what life throws at us'*. Students at Notre Dame speak highly of this programme and enjoy the varied elements of the course which include, interpersonal skills, bonding with new peers, engaging with the school's mission statement, being part of a faith community and what it means to work as a team and be responsible.

Kairos another unique programme which builds on Ubuntu is followed by students in Year 8. Again this is a hallmark of the excellent provision within the school. Kairos is about looking at the needs of others and leads the students to have a greater sense of responsibility for the world around them and to develop the skills to respond to need in the here and now. Both Ubuntu and Kairos reflect the commitment the school has to witnessing to Christ and the attitudes developed here provide a bed-rock for how the young people grow into adulthood and more immediately engage with the life of the school.

Every two years the school holds a mission and currently the school is preparing for its next mission in 2014. All the students are very aware of the theme 'Small things with Great Love' and are enthusiastically preparing for this through thoughtful tutor time preparation. Around the school posters and information remind the students of the theme. They are excited by it and feel positive about the impact it will have on the school.

The school's Lay Chaplain plays a key role in the life of the school linking with staff, students, parents, carers, the diocese, parishes and other faith communities. She is consistently available to all members of the community and plays a key role in the

delivery of Ubuntu, Kairos and the House retreats on offer to students in Years 7 at Buckfast Abbey and to students in Year 10 and the sixth form at Kintbury. The school has a Christian Union run by the sixth form students and supported by the Lay Chaplain. She works closely with the leadership team to ensure that the Catholic life of the school remains central to the life of the school and assists with the monitoring and evaluating of all aspects of the faith life of the school. Her contribution has grown over the years and is excellent.

A wide range of engaging extra-curricular activities support and enhance the learning and development of the students. They also help to support vulnerable students and facilitate inclusion and opportunities for all students to shine outside of the academic curriculum. Students' involvement in school life is actively promoted and seen to be a key element of Notre Dame's commitment to developing the capacity of students to take on leadership roles. Students speak appreciatively about the opportunities that they are given and speak positively about the relationships that they have with staff which allow them to feel valued and supported.

Focus for Development

- To develop stronger links with the large number of feeder parishes and engage those communities so that they feel that they belong to the school.

Grade 1

John 13:14-15

The School as a Teaching and learning Community
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Word

The teaching of RE is highly valued at Notre Dame. The knowledge skills, understanding and achievement of students is excellent and robust assessment and recording ensures that excellent progress is made from KS2 to KS3 and to KS4. An emphasis in recent years has been on improving KS4 and KS5 results. This has been rewarded with a higher than average number of students achieving A-C grades at GCSE and a significant proportion of those being awarded an A or A*. 100% of 'A' level students responding to an on-line survey said that A Level Philosophy and Ethics is a strong subject and were feeling very confident of success. Numbers taking the 'A' level course have tripled and the profile has been raised without diminishing the challenging nature of the course.

The standard of achievement at KS3 is improving with 75% of students achieving a level 6 or above by the end of KS3. A high percentage of all students including those with learning difficulties make progress in value added terms. Results at KS3 have the capacity to be even better when the KS curriculum is fully developed and embedded within the department. The move away from text books has brought about more dynamic lessons with greater interaction and engagement with students. Greater

familiarity with the materials will improve the learning outcomes and the success for the students.

As a curriculum, RE is highly respected and effective, providing for academic rigour and excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The schemes of work have been devised with full attention to the Curriculum Directory for Catholic Schools and enables students to work well together in lessons. Students comment on the fact that they can 'share their views without being judged'. They enjoy good discussions and receive very appropriate feedback. In a recent department review more than 70% of the students said that they learn a great deal in RE.

The Head of RE is a quiet yet passionate advocate for Religious Education. His own enthusiasm for the subject is consistently conveyed to the students and the staff. Students comment on the clarity of his teaching and his commitment to meeting their needs to ensure success. In his four years at the school he has guided the RE department into new ways of working and it is a credit to him that, although he does not have a team of full time RE specialists, he has a group of staff who enjoy working in the department and is committed to raising standards and responding to his ideas.

Throughout the department RE is taught on the model of how Jesus taught. It is inspired by the Word of God, through scripture and Christian tradition. Attitudes and values communicated through the teaching reflect the person of Jesus and reflect the confident and open attitude to teaching by all the staff. Diversity and inclusivity is central to the ethos of the school and has a strong place in the curriculum. Students are expected to respond with respect and tolerance to one another. This is evident in class discussions on a variety of subjects. In addition the student Respect group leads special days to provide students with experiences that increase and encourage their awareness and appreciation of diversity.

Focus for Development

- Continue the work to embed the KS3 curriculum so that all teachers are able to access and use materials provided appropriately.

Faith expression and worship form a natural part of the life of Notre Dame and is intrinsic to the daily life of the community. Founded by the Sisters of Notre Dame, the school has a rich history of deeply rooted spirituality. Although the Sisters are no longer responsible for the school, their spiritual influence continues to live on, adapted as it is to the needs of the students today.

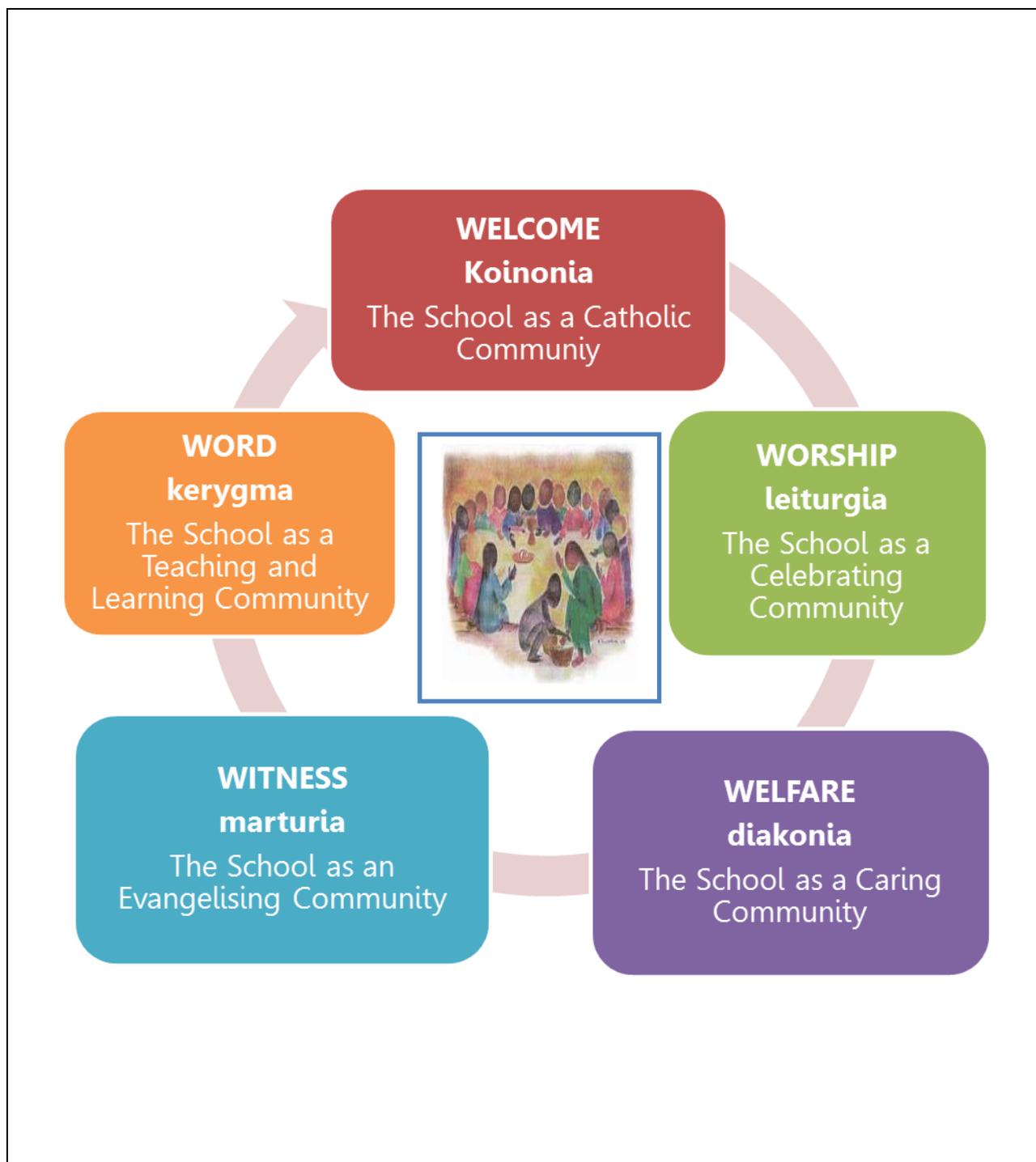
The school has a diverse community made up of Catholics, Christians of other denominations and students of other Faith communities. Daily acts of worship are common place and take place in the context of the tutor group, House groups, Year groups and in Key Stage groups. As a consequence, the students are provided with a rich diet of different and engaging acts of worship. Students generally comment favourably about the quality and impact of them on their day to day living. Each week of the school year has a theme which is communicated to all staff and students via the school bulletin, student planners and through a Theme board within the school. Each theme, which links closely to the liturgical year, is explored in a variety of ways depending on those leading and preparing the acts of worship. Music, Drama and Art are employed in larger acts of worship and liturgies. Recently the school wrote and produced a liturgical production based on the Last Words of Christ by Fr. Timothy Radcliffe. This was performed on a number of occasions in a variety of venues, including Buckfast Abbey and Exeter Cathedral. This powerful and moving experience involved a large cast made up of students and staff from the school and boys from the local Catholic boys School. It was a shining example of how music drama and liturgy can be brought together in a profound way.

Sharing the Word on a daily basis, ensuring that the school environment reflects the Catholic nature of the school and the growth of the Christian Union, all serve to maintain a depth of spirituality at the heart of the school. Student and parent surveys demonstrate the positive impact of Ubuntu and Kairos.

Focus for Development

- Extend prayer to all meetings in the school
- Extend opportunities for the staff to participate in their own retreats and prayer
- Widen the scope and impact of the Christian Union.

THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC COMMUNITY



Introduction

The Catholic community is one that is rooted in Baptism, Eucharist and an on-going call to Conversion. The areas of Welcome, Worship, Word, Welfare and Witness can be described as the key components of what it means to live the Christian life. As such, the school as a Catholic community, is called to embrace these as a way of being community and living the mission of the Church. The manner in which these are expressed reveal for us the heart of where the community lies.

Koinonia - (κοινωνία) Welcome

Koinonia is the Greek word for communion, for participation, for the sharing with one another. It is to be welcome an 'other' in fellowship and love. It is to be of an open disposition to receive from another and to respond in love. Within the community it can be minimalized to the gesture of greeting at the front entrance. In school it might simply be seen as the role of the receptionist. Koinonia however, requires a much greater vision of what it means to welcome. Ultimately it speaks of the disposition of every member of the community to be open to the needs of another, be that to listen, to hear, to respond, to act. The idea of welcome will be embedded in all aspects of the school's way of doing things.

Leiturgia – (Λειτουργία) Worship

The Greek word 'leiturgia' means public activity or in a religious sense it means 'respect' or 'service'. When it was adopted by the Church it meant to carry out a religious service. It is a public service as opposed to private prayer and concerns the Christian community gathering first and foremost to celebrate the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ. It is also a time when the community gathers to be reconciled, to celebrate, to be fed, and to be sent out in mission. Central to the Catholic School is its call to be a Eucharistic community in the widest sense – that is to be the body of Christ ready to serve the world in its fullness. All prayer, all liturgy ultimately is intended to lead to this. It is not something that happens once a week and has no further meaning. It is an invitation to live each day what has been received through Word and Eucharist.

Marturia – (μαρτυρία) Witness

The core meaning of the Greek word marturia means to testify, to give witness, from which we get the word martyr. Simply it means to share our values and faith with the world and our local community so that others may come to know the love of Christ. Within the Catholic School community this will mean promoting a shared vision and shared values which stem from a shared sense of the teaching of the Gospel. The Christian is called to witness to Christ's teaching in the way they live their life. Like John the Baptist these values are those which direct others to Christ.

Diakonia - (διακονία) Welfare

The word 'diakonia' comes from the Greek word to mean to serve the poor and the oppressed. The emphasis within the word is on service and care for others. Within the Christian community diakonia is a way of being with others. It encourages care and concern for every person regardless of who they are or where they come from. Within the Catholic school, service lies at the heart of the community. It is about how children are supported in their learning, shown compassion when their behaviour is challenging and cared for when they are unhappy or in need. Equally it is about how adults are cared for and care for one another. At the same time the community is one that reaches out to the local community and the wider world, recognising the needs of others and responding to these generously.

Kerygma – (κήρυγμα) Word

Kerygma is the New Testament Greek word for preaching or proclaiming the message of Christ. Within the context of the school this is expressed both in how we expose young people to the person of Christ as revealed in scripture, and the manner in which we teach. Access to the WORD of God through scripture and Christian tradition is considered to be a significant part of what the Christian community is about. By the way they are taught children come to know that God speaks to us in the way that we experience and engage with kindness, beauty, justice, the wonders of the natural world, relationships and the needs of others. It is therefore seen as important that in every subject, every lesson, positive values and attitudes are communicated. A confident and open attitude to teaching of lessons well thought about and prepared is central to achieving this.

Self-Review

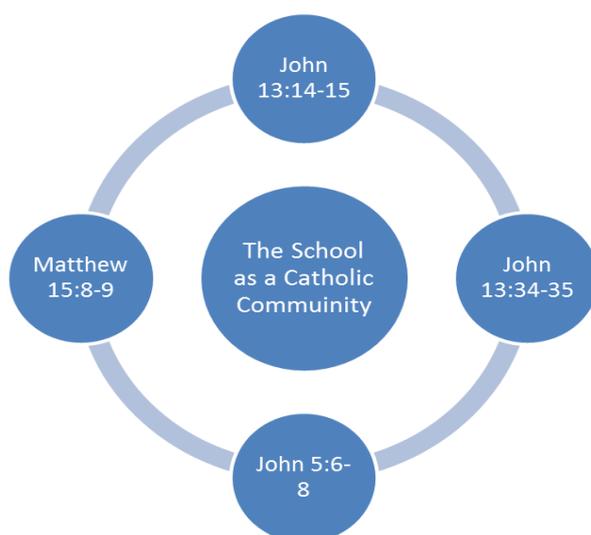
There will be three key areas within which these five elements will be reviewed:

- The School as a Catholic Community (Welcome, Witness and Welfare)
- The School as a Teaching and Learning Community (Word)
- The School as a Celebrating Community (Worship)

For each of these sections focus areas for evaluation are offered and means of gathering evidence to support this work. See appendix for further guidance.

Scripture Passages

Scripture passages have been selected to highlight where the focus for the community may be at any one time. These will act as a guideline for the self-review process when schools consider the health of its community. The approach to these is best considered within the context of a cycle. Any anyone time the school may find different areas of its life at different points on the cycle:



CONTEXT FOR THE CHOICE OF SPECIFIC SCRIPTURE REFERENCES –

Scripture has throughout history been interpreted in a variety of ways and is constantly being reinterpreted. The interpretations given here are one way of looking at how the passages may be understood within our own context. Equally there are many other passages which may have been selected but for now these reflect what is at the heart of our mission and seem appropriate.

Grade 1: 'If I, your Lord and Teacher have washed your feet, you are also to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you should also do as I have done to you'. John 13 14-15

The night before he died Jesus washed the feet of his disciples. Peter, one of the disciples was affronted. To wash another's feet was the lowest job of all, one done by the servants. Jesus, as the leader of the community he was about to establish, was very clear. The call to Christian ministry is a call to service, a humbling act of giving to one another. Unless we can serve our brothers and sisters we can have no part in the life of Christ. A secular understanding of leadership often results in a top down mentality and little shared responsibility. The Christian community however, is one where those in authority act out of their desire to serve, not to be served. As a consequence the message of serving one another permeates the whole community.

Grade 2: 'I give you a new commandment that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you love one another'. John 13:34-35

The greatest of all commandments is that we love one another. Living the Christian life is to live a life of love which ultimately leads to washing one another's feet. This is a journey. There are times when we succeed and there are times when we become distracted. Other priorities take over or we fall susceptible to the secular world which may be offering a different set of priorities or values. Fear, anxiety or a lack of confidence can impact on the capacity of those in leadership to fully respond to the Christian call above all other demands. As a result, although most of the time the community is responding to the call to love, there are times when this gets forgotten and anomalies creep in.

Grade 3: 'Do you want to be made well? The sick man answered him, 'Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way someone else steps down ahead of me.' Jesus said to him, 'Stand up, take your mat and walk.' John 5:6-8'

The sick man lying by the pool of Bethsaida has been there for a many years, stuck in the one place. Although he wants to be better he appears not to be able to move without some help. Jesus offers this to him and orders him to get up and walk. It could be said that the sick man has resided for too long in a 'blame someone else way of being'. Sometimes leaders and school communities do become 'stuck'. Leaders blame teachers, teachers blame students or leaders and the culture prevents an honest engagement in what needs to be done for any progress to be made. Schools stuck or struggling in this kind of cycle need help and support to break free. Healing and reconciliation may need to be a part of this journey. Honest clarification of priorities and challenging self-searching needs to take place for change to occur.

Grade 4: 'This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines. Matthew 15:8-9

The Pharisees and scribes accuse Jesus and his disciples of breaking the rules. The rules have become more important and the heart has been lost. The Pharisees and Scribes may appear to follow the law but they have forgotten what it all means. Where there is little service, no attention to love and no understanding of what it means to live a fully developed Christian life, there is little heart. When this is the case the school has lost sight of its meaning and purpose. As a consequence children are being failed and adults not supported to do what is right. Only a radical re-evaluation of what it means to be a Catholic community and a Catholic school will lead to a rediscovery of the commandment: 'Love one another' and ultimately to people washing one another's feet

