

**DIOCESE OF PLYMOUTH
VICARIATE FOR EVANGELISATION CATECHESIS AND
SCHOOLS**

**CANON 806
INSPECTION REPORT**



St. Mary's Catholic Primary School
Barn Lane
Bodmin
Cornwall
PL31 1LW

URN 140773

Head Teacher: Kevin Storey
Chair of Governors: Bernadette Wiggett

Introduction

The inspection of St. Mary's Catholic Primary School was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with Plymouth Diocesan Framework and Schedule for Diocesan Canonical Inspections (806), approved by the Bishop of Plymouth.

Context for the Inspection

St Mary's is an average-sized primary school with 259 pupils on role. Of these 25.2 of children are in receipt of pupil premium and 11.16% of children receive free school meals. Significantly 11.6% of children are on the SEN register and 5 children have a statement of special educational needs. 8.5% of children have English as an additional language.

Since the last inspection the school has become an academy as part of CAST – a multi-academy trust incorporating all Catholic primary schools within the Diocese.

Key Finding Grade 2:

John 13:34-35

'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.

St. Mary's school motto, *We are St. Mary's. We like each other. We help each other. We forgive each other. Love above all* sums up the life of this special school. From the moment one arrives at St. Mary's in Bodmin it is clear that children and adults enjoy being here. All the evidence points to a calm and happy community where children feel safe and special.

At the heart of the school's vision is the desire that all children should achieve their very best in an environment which nurtures faith, honesty and trust. Despite being in a nationally recognised area of deprivation, the school has great aspirations for the children who attend St. Mary's. It is the belief of the entire adult community that with appropriate support and guidance all children can achieve their full potential. This is a vision which is being lived out in many ways and has a real impact on the well-being of the whole community. An example of this is the innovative response to the growing Polish community which has brought a rich dimension to the life of the school. As a result the school took the decision that children learn Polish as their second language. This has proved to be very popular and offers Polish children an opportunity to offer their support to those learning the language. As a result the children are able to embrace one another in their diversity and enjoy this challenge.

From a religious education perspective the children at St. Mary's demonstrate excellent subject knowledge, especially of Scripture. They are enthusiastic and enjoy their RE. In many

cases they are making sound progress. However, despite a genuine commitment to the teaching of the RE, a lack of confidence on the part of teachers to deliver lessons with learning from RE (AT2) is currently preventing children from growing in the capacity they clearly have to engage articulately and critically with the subject. The school is aware of this and has identified it as an area that requires attention. This also applies to planning lessons with differentiated activities to ensure that all children progress.

Summary of Key Findings

- The school's vision and mission lies at the heart of this school and serves to direct how everyone responds to the challenges and expectations of school life. The Mission statement emphasises 'love above all' and throughout the two days this was very evident in the care, attention to detail and vibrant environment experienced.
- Gospel values lie at the heart of the way that this school operates. The school is rooted in Catholic Tradition and the way of Christ permeates how people treat each other and celebrate. Throughout the school displays and artefacts reflect a rich community of faith. In particular displays in classrooms reflected a high level of engagement with matters of faith. The children talked enthusiastically about this dimension of their school life. The inspectors particularly liked the holiday homework by year 4 children which led to many physical displays of the Easter story artistically created by the children.
- The school has a rich liturgical life and is well-supported by the Parish and Parish community.
- Although the teaching of RE requires some significant work the teachers are committed to providing positive experiences for the children, who consistently demonstrated a high level of knowledge and understanding, in particular of Scripture. With greater attention to planning and in particular AT2 activities the children will grow in their confidence and ability to reflect from a personal point of view.
- St. Mary's is a calm school with very engaging children who behave well and are responsive to adults, including visitors. High expectations and clear boundaries help the children to respond appropriately. At the same time the children experience a high level of nurture and affection from the adults.
- The school community is comprised of a significant number of children with particular needs. Caring for these children and ensuring that they can fully engage in the life of the school is clearly important and a focus for the adult community. As a consequence the care and nurture that these children receive enables them to become the very best that they can be.

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.

- That all members of the school community including governors engage with the framework for the School as a Catholic Community (SCC) and when completing the SEF ensure that it reflects the language of the Gospel out of which the school so obviously lives.
- That SCC is the first priority and lies at the heart of the school development plan and that governors have it as a standing item on their agenda.
- That teachers are enabled to develop their confidence in delivering effective and high level RE lessons with AT2 as a clear focus.

St. Mary's as a Catholic Community

(Welcome, Welfare, and Witness)

Grade 1:

John 13:14-15

At the heart of St. Mary's is a deep commitment to the service of one another. Repeatedly seen were acts of kindness to one another and in particular from children to children. The Head Teacher's attitude of openness, warmth and humility models for everyone what it means to witness to Christ. This approach leads to a welcoming community into which all are invited to come and grow. The Senior Leadership team equally model this in different ways which means that there is a cohesive and rounded approach to some of the more difficult decisions that leadership can bring. Throughout the school the desire to 'wash the feet' of others is evident. Parents comment favourably on the welcome that they receive and the confidence they have in the school to serve their children well.

The concept of welcome in the school is much more than how people are greeted at the door. At St. Mary's people are open in their disposition and ready to lay their own needs aside to support others. When it comes to children, with any kind of special need, rigorous systems are in place to ensure that all of their needs are being catered for. Speech and language therapy and music therapy are both offered as part of helping children to progress. Consistency and a willingness to gauge the needs of different personalities ensures that appropriate plans are put in place to meet these needs. The Parent Support worker is a particular asset to the school in the way that she works tirelessly to reach out to parents and engage them. Her skills and expertise ensure that the school has very positive links with the wider professional community.

Parents, grandparents and parishioners are regularly welcomed to the school and in particular to liturgies and assemblies. An increasing number of these attend and in particular the Fairtrade Fund Raising event 'Big Brew' is very well supported.

All of the above demonstrates amongst many other things the quality of the Witness that permeates this school. There are many ways in which the children are able to absorb the shared values of the adults. Older children regularly take care of the younger children as well

as being reading buddies. Curriculum days offer younger children the opportunity to work alongside older children and as a result important and respectful relationships are forged. The Gardening club is particularly popular. The school has just received a major award from the Royal Horticultural Society for the quality of its school garden, the first school in Bodmin to achieve this.

The school is well respected in the local community. The local secondary school have noted that the children who come from the St. Mary's regularly win prizes for work in the community. The children are known for being friendly, articulate and warm in their interactions, something which was experienced consistently during this visit.

Focus for Development

- To ensure that there is a rolling programme of engagement with the SCC and that the RE team works together to lead on this to ensure that all staff and children have a voice in its development.
- Ensure that there is a clear programme of induction for all adults joining the community so that they know what is expected of them and are supported to deliver these expectations in relation to the ethos of the school.
- Governors and leaders will need to ensure that the school's mission and vision continues to be at the heart of the school as it moves into a period of transition following the retirement of the current Head Teacher.

The School as a Catholic Community – Leadership and Management

Grade 2

John 13:34-35

At the heart of St. Mary's is a leadership team that is growing in its effectiveness as it serves with humility, reflecting Christ's call to each of us to love one another. The team works hard to ensure that all members of the school community are valued and recognised for the gifts and talents they have to offer. It is also sensitive to the support that is needed to help those who may be struggling with any aspect of their professional or personal life. The school is keen to develop its middle leaders and to ensure that all are equipped with the skills they need to fulfil their potential as prospective leaders.

Although there is still work to be done in the area of monitoring the teaching and learning in RE, the leadership team is confident that it has accurately identified areas for development and is now seeking to address this. The openness of the leadership to learn and respond to advice makes this a very viable team, able to progress and secure even higher standards. Their own personal witness to the religious life of the school provides a sound model for all adults and children. This is complemented by an RE Team made up of clergy from the parish, a catechist, a TA and the RE Co-ordinator.

From the materials provided by the school and the conversations which took place it is clear that the school is putting in place the necessary development plans to ensure that following the retirement of the current Head Teacher, the mission and vision of the school will not be diminished but will continue to grow.

Governors are committed to supporting and challenging the leadership team to ensure that the strategic direction of the school is maintained. The RE Co-ordinator provides a robust report for the governors on a termly basis. It would further help the leadership if governors are able to increase their capacity to monitor and assess what progress is being made by a planned set of visits to look specifically at such areas as planning in RE, use of ICT in lessons and other appropriate areas as suggested by the RE development plan.

In addition to the opportunities for INSET and staff training, the leadership team will need to support the RE Team to ensure that all staff continue to receive up to date and pertinent training to deliver effective RE in the classroom.

Focus for Development

- That the RE Team develops a constructive plan to support and guide the RE Co-ordinator to develop a range of activities which will lead to effective teaching in RE.
- That members of the SLT join the RE Team to support and guide their work.

The School as a Teaching and learning Community
--

Word

Grade 3

John 5:6-8

Throughout the school teachers and support staff consistently model Christ in the way that they relate to the children and deliver lessons. They are engaging, compassionate and reassuring so that children feel safe and willing to learn. It is clear from the planning and that the teachers work hard. However, it is also apparent that teachers are unsure about how to approach their teaching in RE and as a consequence miss that dimension of Christ's teaching which was to challenge in such a way as to take people forward. In this respect teachers need to develop their capacity to offer lessons which will enable the children to grow in their understanding and make progress.

As well as visiting the Foundation Stage, six lessons were observed. In all but one of the lessons the teaching reflected a need for greater understanding of how to plan and deliver appropriate lessons. Too many lessons were dominated by the teacher and too often children were not challenged sufficiently. In most lessons children demonstrated that they had a sound knowledge base on which to build and talking to children revealed a much greater capacity for working at a higher level than was being allowed by the lessons observed. Marking in books has yet to be consistent and though some teachers include comments to take children further there does not appear to be enough opportunity given for them to respond.

The school has a high number of TAs who work well with children. In RE lessons they could be used more effectively by targeted planning, especially when children are engaging with the teacher on the carpet. In some lessons it was clear that TAs were being used to make notes which is one way for them to maintain a record of what children contribute to discussion.

For the most part activities offered to the children engaged them but did not always develop them or allow them to achieve at the highest level. Despite this children spoke of enjoying their RE and their books did reveal a variety of learning activities and approaches. Their large

class books are very popular and allowed the children to talk freely about their learning in a very positive way. Although a relatively new initiative these are an excellent way to maintain engagement.

To its credit the school has identified that there is an issue with the delivery of lessons which engage the children in AT2 activities. Planning of RE is currently dominated by AT1 activities and there is little evidence of any AT2 activities taking place. It may be that more is happening than was evident but if this is the case this needs to be recorded or clearly represented in the planning. AT2 is an important dimension of RE teaching and one which the teachers need some support to deliver. Given that most, if not all the children, will leave the school and not go onto another Church school it is important that they ultimately leave St. Mary's able to understand, age appropriately, what the different views and opinions of others might be and articulate their own view point with respectful confidence. From conversations that took place it is clear that the teachers are committed to developing their teaching to ensure that this is a long term outcome.

Focus for Development

- To develop the quality of teaching through the use of imaginative and creative resources including ICT to enhance learning.
- To provide appropriate pre-topic opportunities for adults to develop and share their subject knowledge to ensure a growing confidence in their ability to deliver engaging lessons where children consistently make progress.
- To ensure a robust system for assessment and monitoring of progress.

The School as a Celebrating Community
--

Worship

Grade 2

John 13:34-35

It is clear from the ambience of the school that St. Mary's is a community rooted in a strong prayer life, where children and adults are open to the presence of God in all that they encounter. A wide range of experiences contribute to the spiritual development of both adults and children. This has been particularly highlighted by the gift of last year's Year 6 children who as a way of saying thank you asked to create an outdoor Sacred Space. This is now a popular quiet place with flowing water where children can go to be quiet and reflect. This choice of gift reflects how much the children came to appreciate the value of prayer in their own life and their gratitude to the school for providing them with opportunities to grow spiritually.

St. Mary's has a growing and deepening liturgical life as the school strives to develop the quality of prayer and worship experienced by the whole community. Mass is central to the prayer life of the community and the school is blessed to have the Parish Church close by and a Parish Priest who is able to celebrate Mass with the school as required. At present all children attend Mass every other week and participate as appropriate with readings and other ministries.

Whole school acts of worship are increasingly led by children. They are keen participants and take their roles seriously. Parents and parishioners are invited to attend these. As a way of including them, children of parents present join them for the final prayer. In addition it was very moving that not only was a member of each class given a symbol of commissioning to

take to their classroom but also a representative of the parents and the parishioners were also given this same symbol. As clear evidence of the schools desire to include all children and adults some hymns are signed and children enthusiastically participate in this activity.

Liturgy and prayer experienced during the inspection were generally uplifting and joyful experiences with every member of the community able to participate and doing so with enthusiasm. Singing at St. Mary's is particularly strong and helped by the weekly Prayer and Praise gatherings. These sessions are not simply about learning new music but giving thought to the meaning behind words used and how they fit with the liturgical season. It was notable that music used in the liturgy was also used as a tool in a lesson later seen, to help the children develop their understanding of what they were learning. This is made possible because liturgy in the school follows the liturgical year and often flows from the Sunday Gospel of the week or the topic from God Matters.

Each year children from years 2, 4 and 6 spend a day in 'retreat'. This is a rich experience offered to the children by members of the RE Team and held in the Parish Centre. Children really appreciate these tailor-made retreat days which give them an opportunity to learn more about the Church or prepare for moving on from St. Mary's. The days are rich in reflection, appropriate input and engaging activities. The school is blessed to have these volunteers able and willing to offer their time to these days.

Focus for Development

- To build upon current practice and continue to develop child led liturgy.
- To utilise the skills and expertise of the RE Team and wider Church and CAST communities to help teachers to offer a wider variety of prayer styles and experiences and capacity for monitoring the experience of the children.

The School as a Catholic Community	Spiritual and Moral Development
---	--

Grade 1	John 13: 14-15
----------------	-----------------------

There is no doubt that the children of St. Mary's are enabled to grow spiritually and morally during their time at the school. Children have a clear sense of right and wrong, compassion for others and an appreciation of the presence of God in the world and in their own lives.

The prayer life, emphasis on Scripture and the disposition of the adult community all contribute to the children growing into responsible and spiritually aware young people.

The school's commitment to the wider community and desire to serve others and the common good is very evident. Through a variety of experiences and opportunities children are given clear messages about issues of morality and helped to see that they are members of a far bigger community than St. Mary's to which they have a positive contribution to make.

Focus for Development

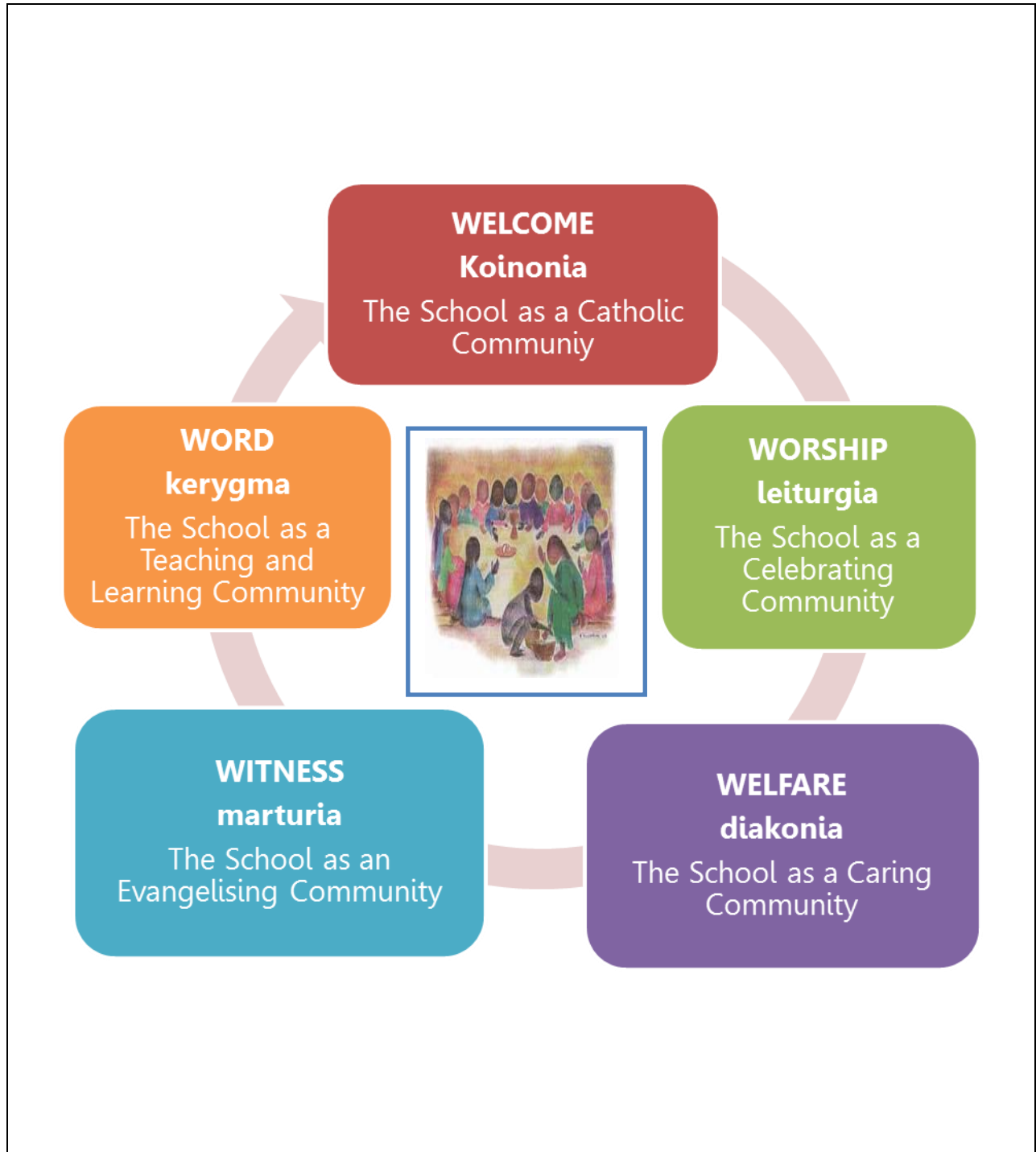
- Consider other opportunities for individual prayer outside of arranged times and develop meditation or opportunities for quiet contemplation for both adults and children.

Conclusion

St. Mary's is a delightful school which is growing in its capacity to provide a safe, engaging and challenging learning environment for the children in its care. In a part of the country where aspirations are not particularly high, the adults of this community seek to change that and enable the children to see a bright and rewarding future for themselves and their families. The school is to be commended for this and not least because it is a vision deeply rooted in the Gospels which reveal that this is the ambition of Jesus for all people. The school recognises that it still has a work to do but is committed to the change which lies ahead and ensuring that the previous good work is not lost but built upon and developed. The Bishop, Diocese and Parents can be confident that this is a school committed to 'love above all'.

Sarah Adams
May 2015

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

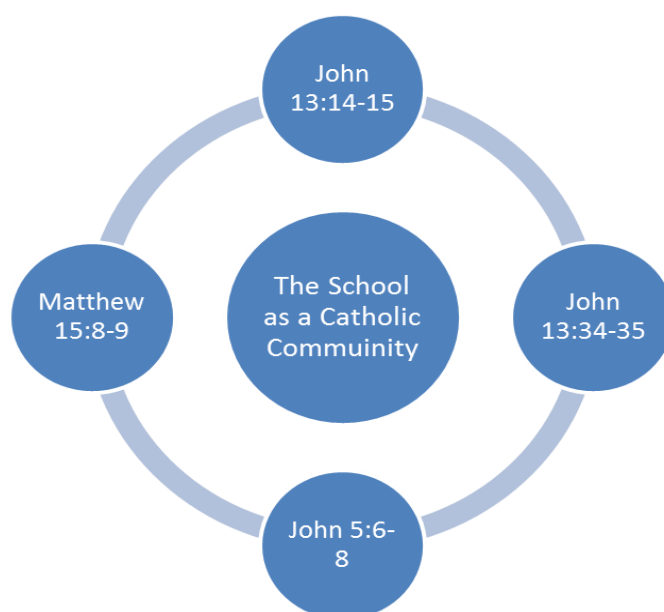
There will be three key areas within which these five elements will be reviewed:

- 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 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.

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 honour 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.