

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

**CANON 806
INSPECTION REPORT**



St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Northbrook Road
Swanage
Dorset
BH19 1QE

URN 113829

Head Teacher: Linda Lake
Chair of Governors: Pete Meteau

Introduction

The inspection of St. Mary's 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.

Context for the Inspection

St Mary's is a smaller than average-sized primary school with 167 pupils on role. Of these 19% are from ethnic minorities. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is significantly lower (13%) than the national average as is the proportion of pupils who have special educational needs, and statements of special educational needs. 9% of children receive free school meals.

Over the last 18 months the school has undergone significant changes:

1. The transition from a first school to a primary school.
2. Becoming an academy as part of the CAST – a multi-academy trust incorporating all Catholic primary schools in the Diocese.
3. The relocation of the original school to a new site and building.

These changes have not been insignificant and have had a major impact on those working in the school. It is to the credit of all concerned that the school has responded very well to all of these changes, despite the difficulties they have had to face.

Key Finding Grade 2:	John 13:45
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'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.

The motto of St. Mary's 'Be Loving and Truthful' and the school's mission statement, reflects the commitment and desire of the school to hold the Gospel at the centre of its mission and the mission of the Diocese. St. Mary's is a school where children come across as very happy, enjoy learning and importantly engage enthusiastically in a wide variety of outreach activities. Across the whole community there is a deep desire to be the best that they can be. In line with other Diocesan schools the school is beginning to embrace a new framework for working. As all members of the adult community become familiar with this document and its expectations there is every belief that St. Mary's will continue to develop in all its fullness. Areas of focus for development will highlight where the school can improve and ultimately lead to it accomplishing its goal.

Summary of Key Findings

- The school's mission statement states that it seeks to 'provide an environment that nurtures all towards the fullness of life that comes from God and a curriculum that expands children's horizons; a place where all can realize their potential – intellectual, spiritual, moral, physical and emotional; and where children are prepared to take their places as effective, caring and respectful global citizens'. Over two days of visiting St. Mary's there was a very real sense that this mission statement is being lived out fully. The faith life of St. Mary's pervades every aspect of the school's life. Children are well cared for and leave school mature and confident in who they are. A wide variety of activities ensure that children are given many opportunities to thrive and grow.
- There is a strong ecumenical outreach with the school engaging with a number of the other Churches in the town. Each week guest speakers from the different Churches visit the school to lead assemblies. These visitors are well received and provide the children with a rich diet of prayer and reflection.
- Children enjoy their RE lessons and some are making excellent progress. With greater focus on planning, differentiation and assessment in RE all children will have the chance of achieving at the highest level.
- The school has a relaxed atmosphere coupled with a sense of purpose and expectation. Children behave well and interact with adults respectfully. Adults have high expectations and strong boundaries whilst demonstrating a great deal of care and attention to children who are in need. There are many examples of this in and around the school. In particular it is very clear that when children join the school they quickly feel welcomed and settle. Parents' surveys clearly indicate this.

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 adults, including governors, become familiar with the Diocesan framework and have a planned approach to its full implementation and regular review.
- To provide and monitor consistent CPD for teachers so all can deliver consistently strong and engaging RE lessons. This would include:
 1. Greater appreciation of differentiation in lessons to ensure that activities are appropriate to the needs and abilities of all children.
 2. Ensuring that marking is consistent and focused on how children move on in their learning.
- To develop the worship life of the school so that more children are involved in the preparation and have greater opportunities to lead worship.
- Engaging the parents and other members of the community to engage with and participate in the prayer life of the school.

The fact that Gospel values truly permeate the life of this school has probably been the main reason that the school has managed so much change in such a short period of time. The quality of genuine welcome in this school moves far beyond the entrance to the school. Primarily this is due to the open disposition that the adult members consistently show and enable within the children. Staff support each other and the care they show to one another is reflected in the way that children also care for one another. Parents choose the school for its capacity to welcome and ensure that children are happy and comfortable in their new environment. Children quickly settle into routines and into learning.

The new building has provided the school with a real opportunity to demonstrate its Catholicity in its choice of artefacts and focal points. Some beautiful artwork by the children contributes to this very well and in particular KS1 reflects a vibrant engagement with the Catholic dimension of the school's life.

The wider community is also welcomed into St. Mary's and the relationship that the school has to the town is one that they can be proud of, not least because it encourages links and participation in a variety of activities. There is much evidence for this around the school including a 'community' noticeboard which shows the substantial number of links that that school has in the local area and parish. Children enjoy the speakers who come in from other Churches. They particularly like the youth worker employed by the Churches in the town, who visits and leads assemblies using bible stories.

In addition, the school has an on-going and strong link with a Catholic school in Uganda. Through visits, letters and on-going sponsorship St. Mary's maintains sustainable links with this school so that children do have a more realistic appreciation and understanding of how the children in Africa have to live. Through the charitable efforts linked to the Uganda project and the school's commitment to working with CAFOD, the school consistently witnesses to the Gospel and helps the children to appreciate how Christ would respond to the needs of the wider community.

Focus for Development

- Consider ways for adults and children within the school community to witness to their faith experiences in addition to the people who visit from the town.
- Further develop the signs of Catholicity around the school particularly within KS2 classrooms with greater attention to focal points and their purpose.

The School as a Catholic Community – Leadership and Management

Grade 2

John 13:34-35

The leadership and management of the school has faced significant challenges over the past two years. In their efforts to ensure that the children have not suffered and parents have been kept informed, the good will that the school generates has not been compromised. Academic standards have continued to rise and the general feel of the school is one of growing confidence.

The Head Teacher in particular has a genuine sense of service and a desire to be the one who 'washes feet'. Her love of the community is unquestionable. This kind of leadership is also very evident in the vision of the new RE leader who is to be commended for her absolute commitment and drive to move the religious life of the school (and in particular the teaching of RE) forward. It is her commitment that has ensured that the framework for the Catholic Life of the school is now being implemented. Her vision and drive will ensure that this becomes a dynamic force within the school.

The leadership team recognises that it has some work to do in ensuring that everyone takes ownership of the 'School as a Catholic Community' framework and has expressed their commitment to making this happen.

Focus for Development

- To strategically plan to implement the Diocesan framework and to conduct regular reviews as a part of the process.
- To nurture and support the new RE leader in her role to deliver effective CPD to all staff.

The School as a Teaching and learning Community

Word

Grade 2

John 13:34-35

The greatest strength of the teaching at St. Mary's is the way that teachers consistently witness to Christ in the manner in which they deliver lessons to children. They are compassionate, gentle, reassuring and hardworking. However, Christ also challenged and in this respect the teachers have to grow in their capacity to provide lessons which take children forward.

In terms of delivery teaching of RE varied across the school. It is clear that whilst there is a heartfelt commitment to the teaching of RE, this is not always evident in the time allocated to providing RE lessons. Some lessons were very engaging and children had every opportunity to learn. In other lessons a lack of understanding of how to ensure that all children could learn prevented this from happening. For the most part activities offered to children were appropriate but they did not always allow for children to achieve at the highest level. Although children spoke of how much they enjoyed their RE, they could not say what their next step might be or how they might improve. The children produce some excellent written work but teachers seem to lack confidence in their approach to marking.

Planning of RE requires an understanding of AT1 and AT2 and the levels attached to these. The school recognises that it needs to do more in this area to ensure that all teachers

understand how to plan and how to differentiate. Along with consistent assessment this should help to develop the confidence of teachers and ensure that the teaching of RE becomes as strong as literacy and numeracy.

Focus for Development

- To provide regular monitoring of RE teaching and support for teachers to develop their skills to deliver dynamic and engaging lessons consistently.
- Ensuring that all activities offered in RE are appropriate to the needs and abilities of children so that all learn in relation to their knowledge and understanding of RE. Planning with other schools would be an appropriate way forward.
- Ensuring that marking is consistent and focused on how children move on in their RE learning.
- Ensure that displays are up to date and reflect teaching and learning.

The School as a Celebrating Community
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Worship

Grade 2

John 13:34-35

The worship life of St. Mary's is seen as integral to the life of the school and the children have many opportunities to pray and reflect both in the classroom and as a whole school community. During the course of this inspection many examples of children being given this opportunity were evident.

The school is committed to different forms of worship including a weekly Mass in school to which parents and parishioners are invited. It is increasingly well supported by the local community. As mentioned earlier, the school has a programme of visiting speakers from local churches who come in and deliver engaging and varied acts of worship. Christ is at the heart of these acts of worship. Children are commissioned to live the message of the Gospel that they have received. This is in terms of their relationships and during this inspection had a particular focus on supporting the work of CAFOD and the school's global mission. Another example, was seen during a visit by a local Christian youth worker who led an assembly which focused on the invitation of Jesus to bring the children to him. Through story-telling, music and images the speaker fully engaged the children and helped them to see how precious they are to Jesus.

Links with the local Catholic community are strong. Parishioners come to liturgies in school and the school celebrates liturgy in the Parish Church on special occasions. This has resulted in many more families going to the Church for those occasions.

Although worship is important and varied at St. Mary's, how it is audited and reviewed has yet to be put in place. In addition, it is recognised by the school that the children do not have a sufficient say in what happens or opportunity to develop their skills to prepare and lead liturgy.

In addition, whilst many more parents are attending liturgies in school there is concern that they tend to be passive observers of what is happening rather than being able to fully participate. The school recognises that this is an area that could be developed.

Focus for Development

- Develop opportunities for children to gradually learn how to craft an act of worship and deliver it.
- Find ways to encourage parents and parishioners to participate in acts of worship.
- Ensure that liturgy is monitored and evaluated effectively, gathering from the children and adults insight into the impact of what is being offered and looking for ways to develop and improve the provision.

The School as a Catholic Community

Spiritual and Moral Development
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Grade 2

John 13:34-35

It is clear that a wide range of experiences contribute to the spiritual and moral development of the children at St. Mary's. An example of how they are open to God's presence is the way that the children were able to share their own personal experience of seeking a solution to a problem in prayer and by turning to the Bible.

Children participate in times of prayer with sensitivity, respect and enthusiasm. They are able to be still, reflective and responsive. A variety of resources help the adults to provide the children with positive experiences that allow them to deepen their relationship with God. Scripture is an important dimension to this.

Through different assemblies children are given clear messages about issues of morality and helped to understand what is and isn't appropriate behaviour. The children learn how to be with one another and how to be respectful in relation to the wider community. Through their work on other Faith traditions the children are gaining a deeper understanding of their own faith as well as the traditions and beliefs of other traditions. The importance of this cannot be under-stated.

Focus for Development

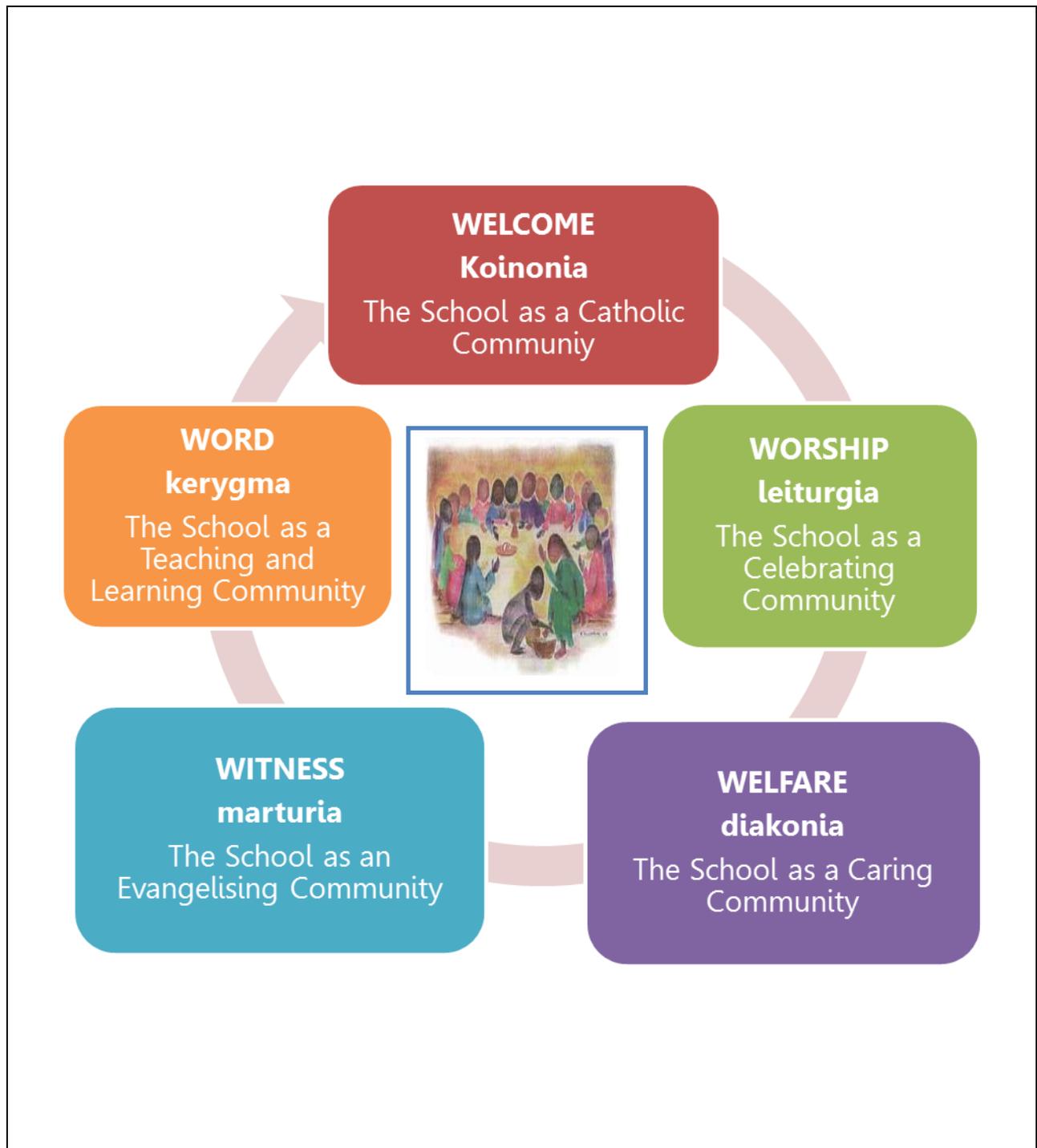
- Ensure that opportunities for the children's spiritual development to grow are found across the curriculum.
- Consider other opportunities for individual prayer outside of arranged times and develop meditation or opportunities for quiet contemplation.

Conclusion

St. Mary's is a school with a tremendous amount to offer and one which can be proud of its growing community. There is no reason why this school cannot move to being a school where service is at the heart of every aspect of the school's life, despite the on-going pressures that all schools have. There is a great sense of community here and a desire on the part of all the adults to be the best they can be. This in turn will enable the children to be the best they can be, truly fulfilling the potential that God has given them.

Sarah Adams
February 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 work 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

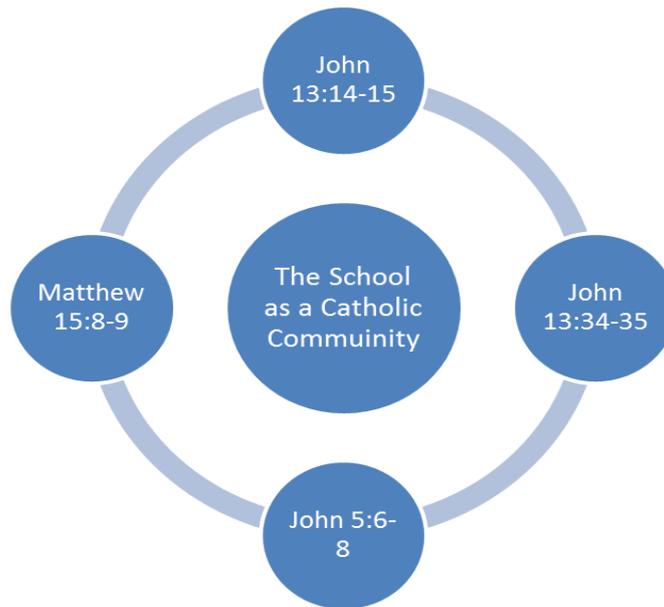
There will be three key areas within which these five elements will be reviewed:

- 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.