

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

**SECTION 48**

Inspection 20-21<sup>st</sup> March 2017



Priory Catholic Primary School  
St. Catherine's Road  
Torquay  
Devon  
TQ2

URN 140

Interim Head Teacher: Cathy Lowry  
Chair of Governors: Adam Tapp

Lead Inspector: Sarah Adams

## Introduction

The inspection of Priory Catholic Primary School was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with Plymouth Diocesan Framework and Schedule for S48 inspections as approved by the Bishop of Plymouth.

## Context for the Inspection

Priory is smaller than average-sized primary school with 183 pupils on roll. Of these 14% of the children are EAL. 14% of children receive free school meals and 27% of children were in receipt of pupil premium at the start of the academic year. 11% of children are on the SEND register with eight children having a statement of special educational needs. The school serves the parish of Our Lady of Help and St. Denys. 50% of the children are baptised Catholics.

Since the last inspection in 2012 the school has experienced a number of significant changes:

1. The previous Head took up another post in September 2015 following a secondment.
2. The current, Interim Head, took up post over as Head in September 2015
3. In April 2014 the school became an academy as part of CAST – a multi-academy trust incorporating all Catholic primary schools in the Diocese.
4. The school was placed in Special Measures following an Ofsted inspection in October 2016

<b>Key Finding</b>	<b>Grade 3</b>
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<b>John 5:6-8</b>
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**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', particularly if they feel that all is going well. A failure to monitor and challenge rigorously can lead people to believe that they are doing better than they are. There can grow a reluctance for 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. Honest clarification of priorities and challenging self-searching needs to take place for change to occur.*

Priory is a warm and welcoming school with many positive attributes which reflect a strong ethos and a commitment to Catholic Education. At this time in its history the school is going through a very challenging time, having been placed in Special Measures following its last Ofsted inspection in October 2016. Despite this, the Catholic Life of Priory continues to lie at the heart of all that the school is doing to improve and move forward. The school motto, 'We honour God through our actions' is a true reflection of how the staff seek to ensure that children are looked after, have their needs met and are safe. Parents speak highly of the school and believe that their children are happy in school. Unfortunately there are gaps in the provision being offered to the children, which Ofsted have identified and which this inspection could also see. The leadership team are very aware of these gaps and are looking at a myriad of ways to overcome them and set the school back on a firmer footing. Leaders are committed to bringing about change and they have a vision for this. At times there appears to be so much to do that it is hard for them to prioritise exactly what needs doing next. However, with the right kind of support they can be successful in meeting the demands placed upon them.

Although the school is vulnerable, there are many signs of what underpins the nature of this school and these in particular reflect the qualities of 'welcome, welfare and witness'. In addition a prayer life rooted in the Gospel provides a spiritual and theological underpinning for how and why decisions are made. With this in mind there is no reason why the school cannot take the necessary steps to ensure that the children receive the very best of Catholic education that is possible.

### Summary of Key Findings

- Gospel values lie at the heart of the school and are lived out on a daily basis.
- The school's mission statement 'We honour God through our Actions' reflects the ethos of the school.
- Although there are some children with challenging behaviours, relationships within the school are highly positive.
- Pastoral care within the school is excellent. It has a high priority because of the number of vulnerable children who attend the school.
- Children are provided with a range of opportunities to grow spiritually and are encouraged to participate by taking on different roles when they can.
- Currently there are some key absences amongst the teaching staff and as a consequence not all teachers are familiar with RE teaching. Others are new to teaching and as such need more support with their planning and delivery of the RE.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of children and as a result work in books is often poor in quality and marking is inconsistent.
- Children are not challenged sufficiently in lessons to ensure that they remain engaged and able to make progress.
- Children are given a number of opportunities to take on different roles of leadership and are proud to be given responsibilities, particularly when it involves helping younger children.

### Areas of Focus for Development

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

1. Within the constraints of the budget to work on ensuring that throughout the school, the environment is well maintained and honours the dignity of everyone in the school.
2. Work to ensure that children not only have a voice but see themselves as having a responsibility for their learning.
3. For governors (and in particular new governors) to ensure that they are clear about their role to know the strengths and weaknesses of the school and continue to challenge effectively.
4. For school leaders to have every increasingly high expectations with regard to teaching and learning so that children grow in their capacity to work and learn with confidence.
5. Increase support for teachers to plan and deliver RE that has pace, ensures learning and children make progress.
6. Ensure that teachers have high expectations regarding presentation and mark work accordingly.
7. Ensure that all teachers are supported to facilitate meaningful acts of worship within the classroom (in addition to meditation and formal prayers).

There may be many challenges facing Priory School but their commitment to the Catholic Life is to be commended. Knowing and understanding the significance of Gospel values is key to ensuring that the Catholic life is strong. At Priory they are intrinsically linked to the fact that this is a Rights Respecting School with specific values. Each week one value is highlighted at the start of the week within the Monday Liturgy. It then continues to be explored throughout the week, not only in prayer times but across the curriculum as a way of helping children to develop positive learning behaviours and relationships. During the inspection the value of respect was linked to the Sunday Gospel of the Woman at the Well. As well as focusing on 'Respect' for one another the liturgy also encouraged the children to think of those of different nationalities and faiths and the concept of inclusivity.

Regular meetings between staff and parents ensure that parents are supported and guided with regards to the learning of their children. A homework club has been established to further support parents. As a result the school has a very high turn-out for parents meetings – on average 98% of parents attend.

Priory school is very clear about its' mission statement, 'We honour God through our Actions'. It is evident throughout the school and referred to often. Children clearly see this as the reason why they act as they do and why they engage in many activities which reflect this. The school's Ethos group made up of staff, governors, parents and parishioners is committed to supporting the school in living its' mission both within the school and in the parish. This is strengthening links between the school and the wider community.

The establishment of peer mediators, play leaders and learning mentors gives children with the school, genuine opportunities to serve the mission of the school, grow in responsibility and form positive relationships. An example of this would be Year 5 children acting as learning mentors for children in Year 1. Guided by their teacher, the Year 5 children learn themselves how to develop their own learning skills by teaching these to the younger children. This has helped both groups in turn.

The school sees that in the way they care for every group of children in the school is to 'honour God through their actions'. The establishment of a specialist centre, 'Paradise' has for a number of years provided children in need, who are struggling behaviourally and/or emotionally, with a safe space. The school has a number of staff who have had basic Thrive training and at five members of staff who have had the full training. The school is committed to increasing the numbers of staff who understand Thrive as a way of approaching and working with children who are emotionally vulnerable. This understanding ensures that teachers have a clarity about how to plan their lessons and provide learning experiences that such children can access appropriately. Rainbows is well established within the school and offers children support for all kinds of bereavement. Governors are very conscious of the need also to support staff, who in the light of the Ofsted outcomes, may be struggling. This has to be balanced with the need that children need to be provided with the best learning opportunities possible.

As a consequence of all these approaches, the pastoral care within the school is strong. The school works hard to reflect the social dimensions of the Gospel in all its decisions both strategically and in day to day interactions. Forgiveness, compassion and understanding underpin all interactions not only with children and each other but with parents also. As a result relationships with parents are positive. Parents trust the school and have fully supported the Leadership of the school as they work to move the school forward. Communication is key to this and the school has clear and accessible channels of

communication. The school are not complacent in this respect, actively seeking to improve in this area through the use of technology (Website, weekly class blog and Newsletter sent out by email and as a paper copy).

In a number of respects the children have a strong voice in the school through the School Council and various groups already mentioned. They regularly ask to set up clubs or hold fundraising events and with support often take the lead on these. Examples of these would be the Maths club run by the Year 4 children and a Dance club run at lunch times by a group of Year 6 children. Fundraising is important to the children. They see this as being part of a Catholic school and a way of serving the wider community. Conversations with children revealed how children see this connection and value it.

Welcome is a quality of the school. Visitors are encouraged to visit the school and induction for new members of the school is a priority, particularly with new staff who need to be able to immerse themselves quickly in the life of the school. The leadership team takes care to ensure that those who are new have the support they need and know what is expected of them. One member of staff who works with a number of schools commented very positively about his experience in the school and the difference in the quality of welcome he had received compared to other schools he had visited. In particular he commented on the openness of the school to what he had to offer and his suggestions as to how they could strengthen their practice.

All the children spoken to were very positive about their school. They enjoy coming to school. For some this begins with attending Breakfast Club at the beginning of the day. This is a well-established facility with a longstanding and committed member of staff and her team. They have lengthened the time of the Breakfast Club to support the needs of parents who have to go to work. It is relaxing and positive experience for the children.

The school is an old building and space is at a premium. As a consequence it can appear cluttered and untidy in places. However, throughout the school there are displays and artefacts which reflect the Catholic nature of the school. These would be enhanced if attention could be given to decluttering in key areas so that people are drawn to the displays and do not miss them.

<b>Priory School as a Catholic Community</b> <b>Grade 3</b>	<b>Leadership and Management</b> <b>John 5:6-8</b>
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Following an Ofsted judgement that suggests the school leadership is currently inadequate, this inspection, six months on, would suggest that while the leadership is still struggling, progress is being made and in some respects leadership has developed. Senior Leaders are aware of the challenges they face and have identified a programme of improvements. At present however, they do not have a stable staff group and this means that the rapid progress which the school needs to make is hampered. When there are so many things which need doing it requires leaders to be forensic when bringing about change and courageous in their implementation. This cannot be done alone and requires the support of other agencies to ensure that changes are appropriate and managed.

As Christian leaders, those on the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) consistently model a positive Christian ethos and as a result others within the school community engage with the ethos and appreciate its value and meaning. Members of the community feel valued and recognise that those in leadership aim to bring about change in the best way possible. As a result staff try to emulate the approach of the SLT so that children experience compassion, kindness, and are respected as unique and special.

The SLT and Governors are motivated to bring about the changes that Ofsted have highlighted. Support to be effective in focusing the school's priorities is essential if the Leadership team is to be successful. With new governors about to join the governing body, the need for speedy induction and an appreciation of the challenges facing the school, will be essential.

A key area which will need to be addressed will be the monitoring of RE and the achievement of children so that this core subject does not become side-lined with the pressures of improving English and Maths. A new RE governor has now been identified. Her role will require her to ensure that RE is being monitored effectively and the needs of the teachers in delivering this area of the curriculum, are identified to bring about higher standards.

**Priory as a Teaching and learning Community**  
**Grade 3**

**Word**  
**John 5:6-8**

RE is seen as a curriculum priority and the school meets the national expectation that 10% of taught time is given over to the teaching of RE. Many teachers are new to the teaching of RE and as a number are supply teachers they have not had access to training opportunities. That said the RE leader does recognise the need to provide support with helping these teachers in particular to develop an understanding of the theology they will be teaching. This is seen as key to offering appropriately planned lessons. Since the Diocese has developed a Writing group to devise materials, the school has ceased to work with other local schools to support planning. However, continuing with this arrangement would be advantageous so that teachers can discuss with other professionals how they approach the delivery of the materials from the writing group.

Lessons were observed across the school. For the most part the lack of confidence in delivering RE was apparent. Lessons generally lacked pace, clear direction and challenge. Relationships that some teachers have with pupils are positive and so children were engaging with what was offered to them, but learning and opportunities to make progress were often limited. Too often the building blocks to ensure deep learning and depth of understanding were missing. In some classes the result was that children disengaged and low level disruption occurred, without being challenged. Expectations for the quantity and quality of work need to be greater and marking needs to be more consistent if children are to engage with their learning and make progress.

Most classes have attractive working walls which match the unit being taught. Care is clearly taken with this. In some classes they also contain work that children have been doing. At present the point of the working wall is insufficiently understood and as a consequence they are not yet as interactive in most classes as they might be. This is an area which could be developed further in a way which is similar to other subjects. Aligned with this focal points and prayer tables, though present, do not appear to engage the children in a way that would encourage them to take ownership and develop. As part of an on-going programme of CPD, the purpose of a focal point could be explored with staff and children.

The use of TAs' and the contribution they could make to lessons is not fully appreciated and they are not always employed effectively. Ensuring that they have specific tasks to support children would ensure that their time is used well and children would benefit by their engagement. Occasionally the use of support staff was excessive, resulting in children not needing to develop their own independent skills for learning.

There is an in-depth development plan for RE but it consists of so many areas that achieving successful outcomes, which move things forward, is unlikely. Development issues need to be precise and manageable with clear outcomes and an appropriate time line. As each area is achieved further areas can then be added. This would result in a more focused approach with greater possibility for success and improvement.

<b>The School as a Celebrating Community</b> <b>Grade 2</b>	<b>Worship</b> <b>John 13:34-35</b>
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Regular Masses, classroom prayers and whole school Acts of Worship all serve to reflect the opportunities children at Priory have to grow spiritually and morally. The quality of opportunities offered to the children and staff make this a strength of the school. An understanding of the Liturgy means that the whole school is drawn into meaningful times of prayer, which raise the mind and heart to God and give God glory and praise. Staff and children participate well. There is a genuine sense of a community coming together.

As a consequence of the quality of prayer children are learning about the beauty of life and can speak of the presence of God within it. They are developing a deep sense of what it means to be still and allow God into their busy and often frenetic lives. Their capacity for stillness is enhanced by a daily time of meditation after lunch. They value this time as it helps them to reflect and relax after the lunch playtime, so that they are ready to access the afternoon's learning. Scripture is seen as integral to this and plays a prominent part in the life of the school. Linking the Gospel to the values the school is focusing on adds to the impact that Scripture has on the life of the school.

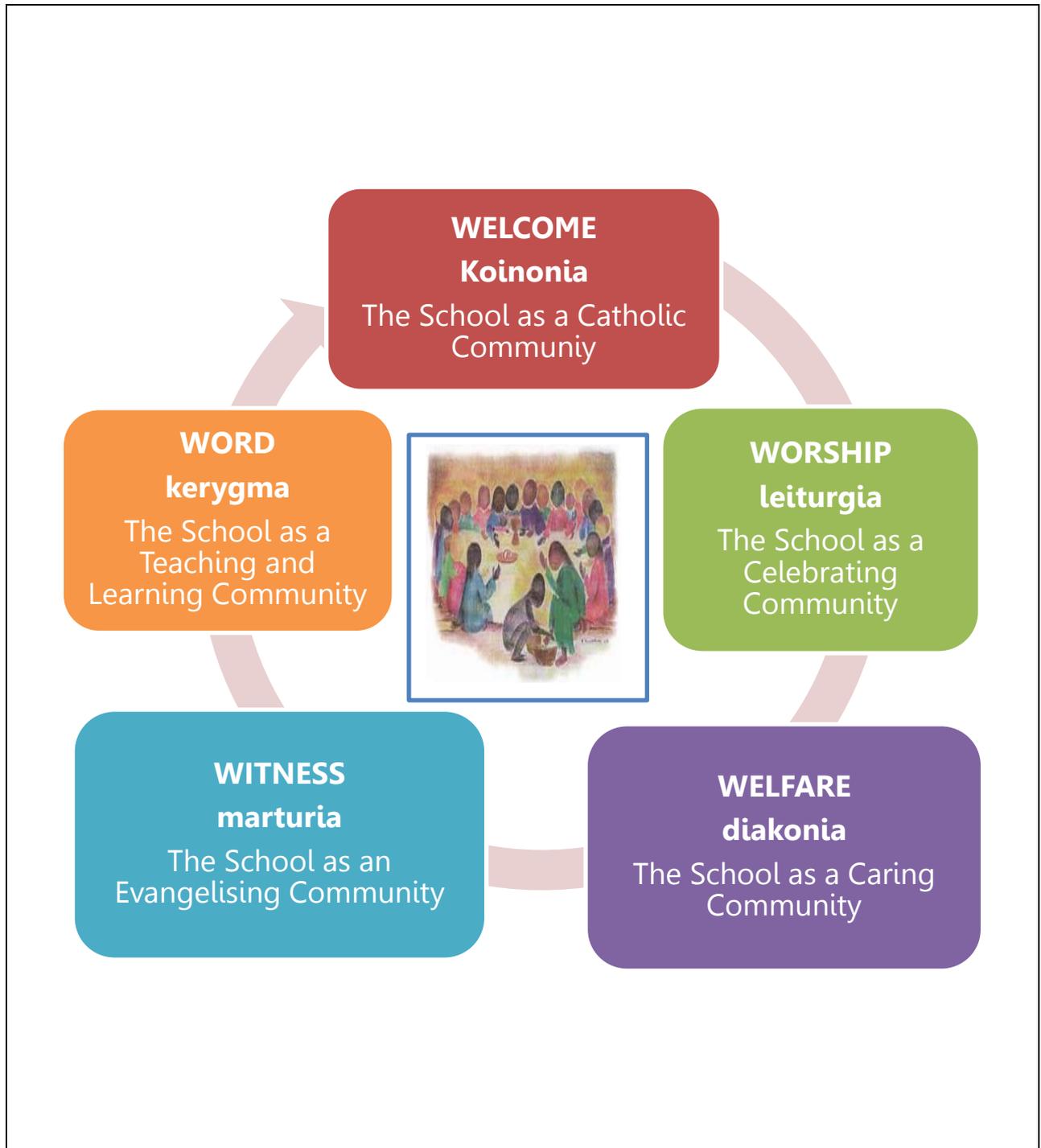
With whole school Acts of Worship, children and adults participate by reading, singing, and engaging in ritual action as well as showing respect for one another. Each week one or two classes attend the parish Mass. This ensures that children have access to the Sacraments on a regular basis and come to a deeper understanding of liturgical form and ritual. Through this and the Monday Liturgy of the Word, they are enabled to grow in an appreciation of the traditions and practices of the Catholic Church. The liturgical year provides a sound framework for the school's worship life. The school is fortunate to be close to its parish church and has a parish priest able and willing to engage with the school in on-going formation of the adult community. Parish links are positive and supportive, not least in the engagement between the school and the parish in the catechetical preparation of children for First Communion.

As yet children are not at the fore-front of planning liturgies, but this is something that, over time, could be developed when there are less pressures in other areas of the life of the school.

## **Conclusion**

Priory is a school with tremendous potential. At present it is identified as a school which needs significant support to ensure that it provides an education fitting for the children in its care. Catholic Education is about doing just that. The leadership team is committed to implementing the changes necessary to move the school forward so that children can learn and grow to be the very best that they can be. They should take encouragement from the fact that the school does have the potential to be a beacon of hope for the future.

## 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 – (leitourgía) 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**

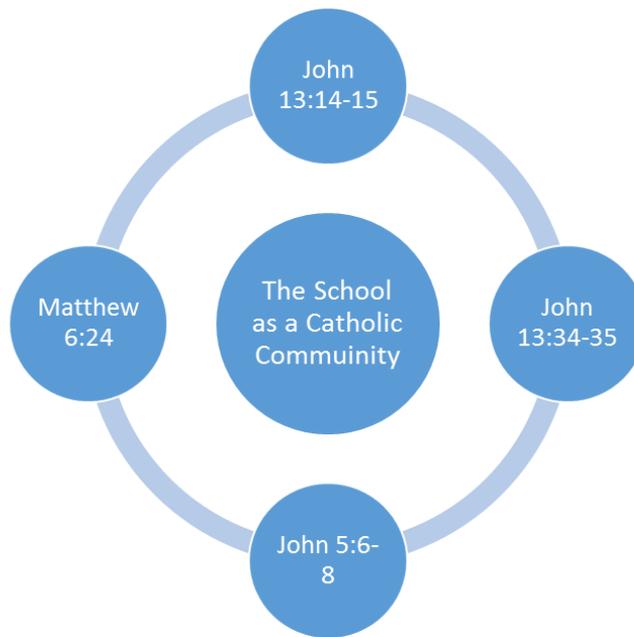
There will be three key areas within which these five elements will be reviewed:

- 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: 'No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. Matthew 6:24**

Throughout Scripture we are taught that we must choose between God and false gods. Jesus wants us to be free, not just of concerns but of all worries, in order to serve God. It is easy when we are under extreme pressure to respond in ways which are detrimental to our core beliefs and vision. Sometimes this happens because we are facing understandable difficulties. At other times we are insufficiently discerning and go with what seems to be more attractive or safe. Schools can fall into this trap when results and progress become more important than the all-round development of the child. 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.