

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

**CANON 806  
INSPECTION REPORT**



St John the Baptist Catholic Primary School  
Milton Lane  
Dartmouth  
Devon  
TQ6 9HW

URN 140761

Head Teacher: Liz Hamilton  
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## Introduction

The inspection of St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Primary School was carried out under the requirements of the Education Act 2005, and in accordance with Plymouth Diocesan Framework and as a multi-academy Trust school (CAST) with the Schedule for Diocesan Canonical inspectors, approved by the Bishop of Plymouth.

## Context for the Inspection

St John the Baptist Catholic Primary is a small school with 71 pupils on roll. Of these 21% of children are on the SEN register, 14% are eligible for pupil premium, 10% of children receive free school meals and 7% of children have English as an additional language.

Since the last inspection school has undergone significant changes:

1. The school currently has an executive Head over two local Catholic Primary schools.
2. Become an academy as part of CAST – a multi-academy trust incorporating all Catholic primary schools within Plymouth Diocese.

## Key Finding Grade 1

John 13:14-15

**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.*

St. John the Baptist school is a vibrant and warm community where children and adults are committed to the service of one another in a most profound way. Consistently across the two days of this inspection, people demonstrated their commitment to living out the Gospel message. This is not just a 'nice' school. It is a thriving learning environment where the children and adults relate in such a manner that every child is nurtured to become the very best that they can be.

The commentary on John 13:14-15 truly reflects the life of St. John the Baptist school. The school has a strong commitment to living fully the mission of the Church and to be seen to be a beacon of faith in its own community. The open, honest and warm disposition of the leadership team ensures that all who come to St. John's, parents, staff and children, feel welcomed, respected and valued for who they are.

## Summary of Key Findings

- The spirit of the Gospel permeates the life of the school and is consistently expressed in its' prayer life and in the relationships which exist within the school. It is tangibly experienced in the way that the Sunday Gospel message is taken up in a variety of ways. The school genuinely puts Christ at the centre and bases its work on faith, hope and love.
- Relationships within the school are highly positive, contributing to the ethos of the school as a whole.
- The school is a highly respected in the local community of Dartmouth and valued as a place of integrity and worth. This is evident in local reporting, parental surveys and the fact that many people from outside of the school comment on the welcome that all visitors experience.
- Induction for new staff is seen as integral to the success of the school and results in a high level of support for those new to the Catholic community. Its' fully inclusive nature enables those who are not Catholic to feel that they have something to contribute to the ethos and purpose of the school.
- The vibrant school website, newsletter and internal systems ensure that communication in the school is strong.
- The school has a well-developed outreach programme that supports the local community in a variety of ways including being involved in local projects which impact on the local community e.g. the closure of the local swimming pool.
- Throughout the children's displays are of a very high standard and truly reflect the Catholic nature of the school. Artefacts and focal points are well-cared for and a reflection of the importance of them for the whole community.

## 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.

- Re-visit the school Mission statement and work with parents, children and staff to create a new statement which truly reflects the life and work of the school as a faith community.

## The School as a Catholic Community

(Welcome, Welfare, and Witness)

### Grade 1:

John 13:14-15

Every aspect of St. John's speaks of the desire of the whole community to work together to create an alive learning environment which reflects vitality and enthusiasm. Children like coming to St. John's and parents trust the school to keep their children safe, engaged and able to learn. The message of the scripture passage associated with a grade 1 is to do as Jesus did and 'wash the feet of one another'. This commission of Christ is lived out to the full in St. John's. Small and often random acts of kindness that children do for children, adults for adults and adults for

children, reflect a genuine concern for one another and a humility that leads to service of one another.

Although a small school, St. John's welcomes children from a range of backgrounds and with a variety of needs, some very challenging. The structures and clear programmes put in place ensure that all children are treated fairly and equally according to their personal circumstances. Nurturing children who clearly struggle is a key element of the high level of care offered to all children. The school has invested in a number of adults being trained as 'Thrive' practitioners. This ensures that there is a clear and consistent approach to how children are worked with and enabled to make progress not only in their learning but also in their relationships and their understanding of what are their needs. The quality of care that the children receive is such that both in the classroom and in larger settings children with difficulties feel safe and supported. Opportunities for therapeutic interventions and on-going assessment ensure that the needs of all children are met. The presence of adults at the entrance when children arrive in the school provide parents with an opportunity to express any concerns about their child and for the staff to pick up on how children are and respond appropriately from the start of the day.

As well as caring for the children there is plenty of evidence that the adults also care for one another. Simple acts of kindness such as making sure that those supervising swimming on a very cold day got a hot drink, are the norm. When the school was left without meal time supervisors, the teaching assistants offered to take on the role of supervising children at lunch-time, thus enabling the quality of care to be maintained and strengthened. All the support staff at St. John's are a tremendous asset to the school and re-inforce it as a school where people truly wash the feet of one another.

Whilst parents express their happiness with every dimension of the school, the staff are keen to try and develop relationships further. At present the size of the building makes it difficult to invite parents into school on a regular basis but efforts to change this are constantly under review and form part of the school's development plan. Currently the school does not have particularly strong links with the local Catholic Parish. This is a concern to the school but a consequence of a parish which is split in two by the River Dart. As a result it is difficult for the Parish Priest to engage with the school. Another Parish priest from a different parish offers some support but ultimately the school would like a more consistent engagement with the Parish. The local Anglican community from which some of the children come have been supportive and able to offer their Church so that the school can celebrate the bigger Feasts in the local community. These opportunities have been appreciated by the parents.

As mentioned in the Key findings, the school engages with a number of projects in the wider community. Although small the school ensures that the children are aware of the needs of other people and as a response they regularly engage in a number of charitable activities and community outreach. What is particularly notable about this is the way that children are encouraged and taught to see beyond 'money raising' to the needs of people on a human level. An example of this would be the way that

children are taught to talk to and show respect and care for the elderly people they visit.

### **Focus for Development**

- To work on developing links with the Catholic community in Dartmouth and establish relationships with the local community in order to enhance the nature of St. John's as a Catholic School.

## **The School as a Catholic Community – Leadership and Management**

### **Grade 1**

### **John 13:14-15**

The quality of life at St. John's would not be possible without the faith-filled commitment of both the Head teacher and the Head of Teaching and Learning, who also leads on RE. Their sensitive, thoughtful, clear vision has allowed the school to flourish. As a consequence numbers for next year are significantly higher.

Both leaders work well together and have a sense of what is important. They believe there is always more that they can do and work hard to ensure that every adult is supported to meet the demands of the new curriculum whilst never losing sight of the reason for the school's existence. All that they do stems from a clear desire to serve and bring the Gospel message to decision making and planning. This way of being inspires others to want to do the same. There were many examples throughout the inspection of how the adults support one another. Teachers, TAs' and other staff have a genuine care and concern for one another. With a small staff the burden of responsibility falls on every member of staff to ensure the running of the school is smooth, effective and supportive of every child. Being clear about expectations makes this an easier task than might be expected. The commitment of all staff was very evident. As a result the leadership team, though small, is able to be effective and creative with its vision.

### **Focus for Development**

- For the new governing body to be given a full induction in the life of the school so that they can embrace their responsibilities with confidence. This will involve getting to know the 'School as a Catholic Community' framework in such a way that they can challenge and support the school effectively.

One of the most important aspects of teaching in a Catholic school is the need for teachers and teaching assistants to model for the children the face of Christ in all that they do. In every lesson and in every interaction, this was evident. St. John's is a school with a high proportion of children with special needs, many of these needs are emotional and challenging. Regardless of this, all children were able to learn and make progress as teachers and support staff worked effectively to help those children who might not cope without appropriate interventions. As a result children with difficulties did not impact negatively on the learning of other children. Differentiation is key to this and St. John's is doing this well. In all lessons observed, differentiation was evident and for the most part this was based on the on-going assessment of children and a sound knowledge of the children's religious understanding.

As a small school, St. John's has only three mixed age range classes. This means that the ability to differentiate in lessons is key to ensuring that all children can make progress. RE has a high status and is a valued and significant subject in the eyes of all staff. The RE co-ordinator has been exceptionally instrumental in supporting teachers to deliver lessons of quality and as a result standards are high in RE. Regular and critical monitoring allows the school to set a clear direction for raising standards and setting clear targets for the subject. At present these targets include the development of work in the area of AT2. The school has fully embraced the diocesan scheme for RE, 'God Matters' and it is now fully embedded across the school. New teachers are given every support they need to embrace the delivery of the scheme and this is consistently leading to a confident delivery of the subject. The school regularly attends the Diocesan INSET and takes up any other opportunities for shared planning and training.

Marking is consistently strong across the school, enabling children to dialogue with staff and know how to improve. In addition the learning environment of the classrooms is stimulating, well presented and well-maintained. Working wall RE boards reflect the learning and the engagement of children. Children have excellent recall in lessons and consistently demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.

Despite the needs of some, nearly all children respond positively to the tasks they are set and demonstrate great resilience when tackling challenging tasks. The learning atmosphere reflects the desire of the children to want to succeed and improve their learning. Conversations with the children revealed a high level of engagement and enjoyment of RE.

### **Focus for Development**

- To work on assessment to ensure that all pupils are given the opportunity to achieve at the highest level and in particular to develop the skills of all teachers to deliver effective AT2 activities.

There is no doubt that all aspects of the school's life contributes to the spiritual development of pupils at St. John's. God's presence pervades every dimension of the school's life. All members of staff fully embrace the Catholic life and fully support the ethos. Although the school has, due to distance and parish circumstances, very little direct contact with the local Catholic parish, the staff have worked very hard to ensure that the children do not miss out on opportunities to develop their liturgical skills and to participate in reverent and dignified acts of worship. A variety of prayer times were experienced during the inspection. Within these children participated fully and enthusiastically. They took on roles of leadership, demonstrated their capacity for stillness and sang beautifully.

At the heart of all prayer in the school is Scripture which is clearly revered and understood to be a very relevant part of the Catholic liturgical life. Following the liturgical year, focal points, displays and acts of worship reveal a heartfelt response to God's presence. All the worship experienced was topical and enabled all children to appreciate its significance.

Although a small school with limited space the school like to invite parents and carers to their acts of worship but this is difficult. In addition the school currently has little access to the sacramental life of the Church which they feel undermines what they are trying to do. The school has identified both these as areas for development and is exploring a variety of avenues to solve this issue.

### **Focus for Development**

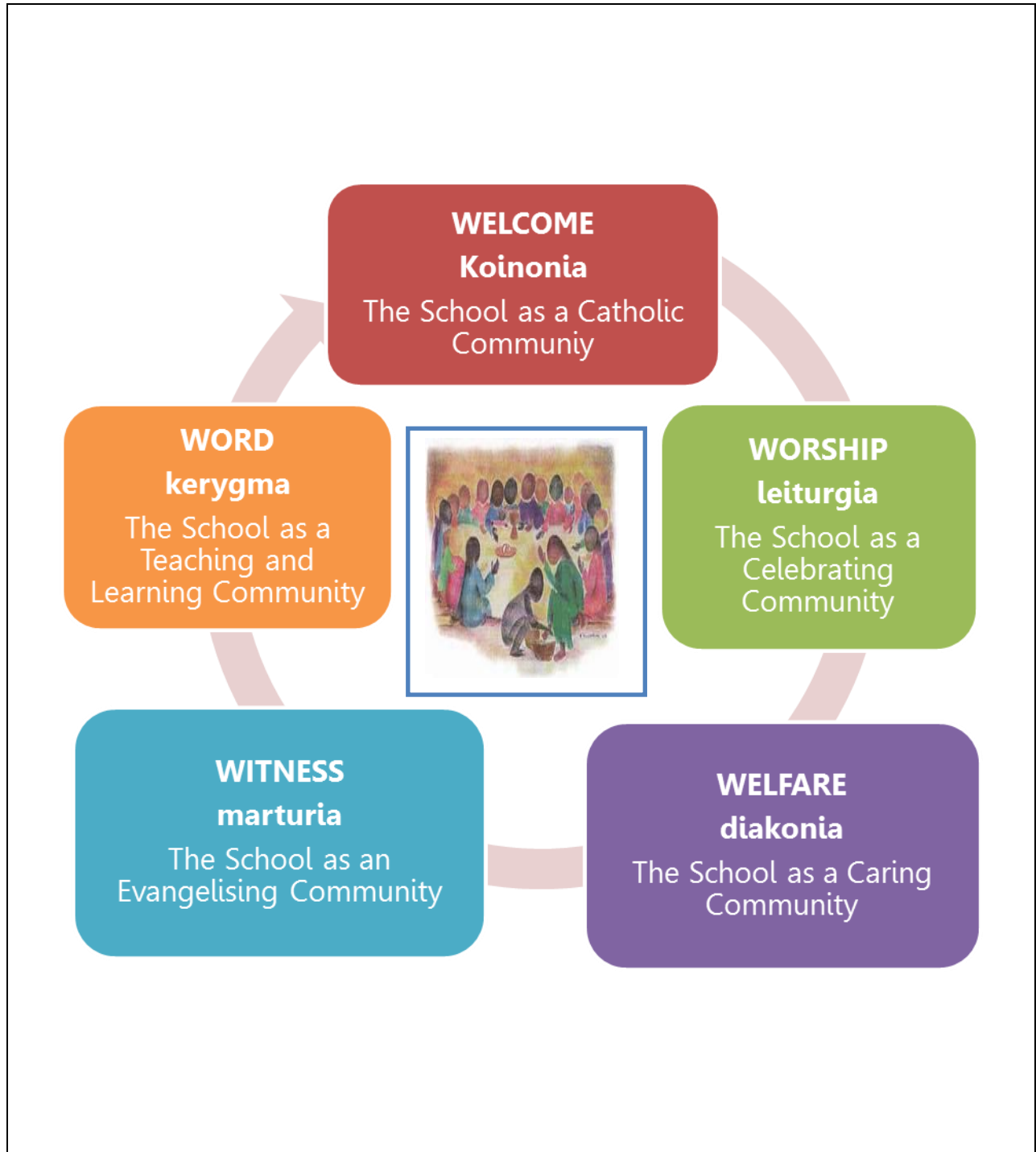
- To establish stronger links with the Catholic Church in the Parish and find ways for children and staff to experience Mass on a more regular basis.

### **Conclusion**

St. John the Baptist, Dartmouth is a delightful school where the whole community provides a sound witness to the teachings of Jesus. Their commitment to Gospel values flows through every dimension of school life and as a consequence the school is a beacon of hope and light in Dartmouth. The changes in staff that the school faces will be challenging and require sensitive and supportive handling. However, there is every belief that the remaining staff can provide excellent induction and maintain the rich ethos of the school. St. John's is a school of which the Bishop, parents and all engaged with the school can be proud.

**Sarah Adams**  
**June 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**

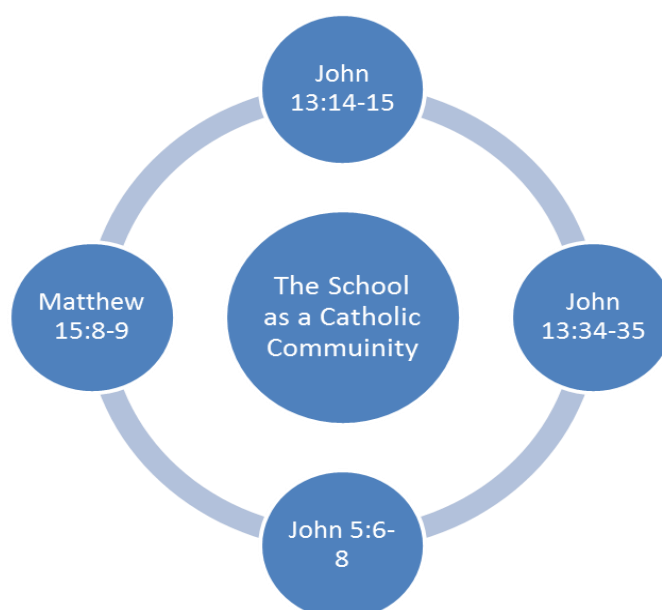
There will be three key areas within which these five elements will be reviewed:

- 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.

**Sarah Adams**