

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



St. Mary's Catholic Primary School  
Old Mill Ln,  
Sturminster Newton  
Marnhull  
DT10 1JX

URN 140776

Head Teacher: Mrs Charlotte Targett  
Chair of Governors: Mr Ross Palmer

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Canonical Inspection under Canon Law 806 on behalf of the Diocese of Plymouth and  
inspection of Denominational Education under S48 of the Education Act 2005

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**Date of Inspection 23-24<sup>th</sup> May, 2017**  
Reporting Inspector: Miss Sarah Adams

## Description of School

St Mary's Catholic Primary School is located in the rural village of Marnhull in north Dorset, 6 miles south of Gillingham and 3 miles north of Sturminster Newton. There are 60 pupils on roll with 40% boys and 60% girls. There is also a preschool facility that has 19 children. As the only Catholic Primary School in the north of Dorset, the school welcomes children from a wide geographical area. The school welcomes families from different backgrounds and has a long history of welcoming and supporting high numbers of vulnerable children to the school. St Mary's is a nurturing school that offers a range of social and emotional interventions along with a designated nurture room.

Pupil characteristics: 1 child = 1.6%

- 23% (14) of pupils are currently in receipt of Pupil Premium funding
- 3% (2) of the children have English as an additional language
- 5% (3) of the cohort are Gypsy/Roma/Traveller
- 27% (16) of the children are from Catholic families
- 21% (13) of children are School Need of which 3% (2) are on an EHC plan.

The Head Teacher joined the school as Head of Teaching and Learning in September 2014, becoming the Head Teacher in January 2016.

<b>Over-All Effectiveness:</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>Grade 1</b>
The School as a Catholic Community:	Outstanding	Grade 1
Leadership and Management:	Outstanding	Grade 1
RE Leadership	Outstanding	Grade 1
RE Achievement	Good	Grade 2
Quality of Teaching	Good	Grade 2
Worship and Spiritual Life of the School	Outstanding	Grade 1

The capacity of the school community to improve and develop is **outstanding**.

## **THE SCHOOL AS A CATHOLIC COMMUNITY (Welcome, Witness, Welfare)**

### **Key Strengths**

- St. Mary's is a warm and welcoming community where Gospel values permeate all aspects of school life.
- The school's mission statement clearly reflects the mission of the Church and impacts positively on all members of the school community. This is clearly seen through actions, words and relationships.
- Relationships within the school are highly positive and contribute to the success and ethos in a variety of ways. Everyone is highly valued as is reflected in the school's mission statement 'Everyone Matters and is Loved by God'.
- There is a high level of openness and willingness to ensure that all members of the community (immediate and wider) feel welcomed.
- The school takes great care with its environment, ensuring that it truly reflects the Catholic nature of the school.

- Pastoral Care is a priority of the school and as a result every child is nurtured and cared for in such a way that all children are enabled to grow to become the very best that they can be.
- Children are highly sensitive to the needs of others and are generous in their response to these needs. A pertinent example of this was on the day immediately following the Manchester bombing, the children expressed their desire and took the opportunities which teachers gave them to write prayers and poems for those who had died and those affected by the bombing.

#### **What the school can do to improve further**

1. As already identified in the school action plan, continue to seek ways to develop pupil voice so that children can contribute further to their own learning and the life of the school.
2. Make links with a school in another part of the UK and the wider world so that children are helped to grow in their knowledge and understanding of different cultures and ethnic communities.

*'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. Mary's is a delightful school with a strong sense of identity and community. Repeatedly people speak of the care and support that everyone has for each other. The sense of everyone pulling together and moving in the same direction is a common theme. There is no doubt that this is a school where staff are determined to serve the children in every way possible. They model Christ in their attitudes, behaviour and total commitment to nurturing and enabling pupils to achieve the highest possible outcomes. High expectations of behaviour, application to work and engagement in the life of the school are reflected in the capacity of the children to respond with generosity and confidence.

Children enjoy coming to school and feel safe. 97% of children believe that all the adults are there for them and will help them in any way that they can. 97% of children say that they are treated well. Parents are very happy with the school. Many speak of the caring and friendly environment with *'increasingly great education'*. Communication is strong and parents feel that the school takes seriously any concerns which they may have. One parent described the school as *'the most wonderful school I could ever wish for'* and another said, *'I wouldn't send my children anywhere else'*. Such comments, among many, speak of the integrity and commitment of the staff to provide the best for the children at St. Mary's.

The quality of welcome within the school lies in the warm, open, humble disposition of the whole community. Adults are keen to listen and develop their own practice so that children learn what it means to be a decent human being. Teachers are keen to develop and so respond well to constructive advice as to how to improve. Their humility allows the pupils to know that it is

acceptable to make mistakes and that it is possible to grow from this. The openness of the school community has brought about excellent relationships with the parish and parishioners, who regularly contribute to the life of the school. In particular, termly 'Faith Days' are highly popular with both parishioners and pupils. These days offer children the opportunity to explore a particular religious theme or season through a variety of activities, coordinated by the RE leader and led by parishioners.

Pastoral Care is central to the life of the school. Knowing the academic progress and pastoral needs of every child is central to the success of St. Mary's. Weekly meetings address educational needs and the emotional well-being of each child. This ensures that all staff are fully cognisant of what they need to do to provide for and meet these needs. Staff training to ensure that adults understand the various behaviours which children may present have given them a confidence to embrace vulnerable children with confidence. Those children who may struggle either with learning or with relationships are supported by the school's trained ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) practitioner, who also works in every class on a daily basis. As a result she knows all the children well and is able to quickly identify a child who may need additional support. Clear systems for behaviour ensure that children know what is expected of them and how they will be treated if they do not respond to expectations. Children believe the system to be fair and clear and they feel safe in this knowledge.

A knowledge that Christ is present in all things clearly influences the atmosphere at St. Mary's. Every member of the school community knows the school strap line, 'Everyone matters and is loved by God' and the school mission statement, *'to love, value and respect each other within our Catholic family, to nurture each individual's talents and skills, as Jesus taught us'* promotes harmony, justice and generosity within the community, making God central and visible within the school.

Children and staff have a commitment to serving the wider community wherever they can and in particular through the charitable work in which the school engages. Through the school council, children make decisions about what charities they wish to support. One charity in particular that has captured the imagination of the children is 'Mary's Meals' which raised a substantial amount of money by the children taking on a variety of jobs at home to earn the money they raised. This quality of witness is seen in a number of other areas including the spending time meeting with local residents of a residential home and singing for them. The 'Welly Group' makes a point of looking after the school grounds as well as taking time to appreciate God's creation throughout the seasons.

The school has strong partnerships with other schools both within the locality and in particular the network of CAST schools to which they belong. As a result the sharing of good practice in many areas is helping to further develop the adults and ensure that they grow in their own confidence and practice.

## **The School as a Catholic Community (Leadership and Management)**

### **Key Strengths**

- Service to the whole community lies at the heart of the school's leadership and the influence of such a Christian vision is evident throughout the school.
- The leadership team highly values every member of the community and through the development of the Guardian Group, representatives from each section of the community are able to contribute to the development of the school.

- Through the example of Christian leadership in action the senior leadership and governors inspire the community in such a way that there is a strong sense of shared purpose, vision and mission.
- A range of rigorous and extensive monitoring, searching analysis and self-challenge enable the school to devise and implement well-focused plans, firmly rooted in the mission of the school.
- Governors are highly committed to ensuring the success of the school and work hard to challenge, support and guide the school on their journey.
- The potential of all staff is recognised and areas for development identified and supported through a range of highly effective training.
- Morale is very high and the success of the school runs through all levels of staff.

**What the school can do to improve further:**

- Provide all staff with the opportunities for training in order that they can know, understand and articulate Catholic Social Teaching.

To be an outstanding leader in a Catholic school requires the person responsible for that leadership to fully appreciate the message of Christ to *'do this in memory of me'*. In John's Gospel this reflects the command to wash the feet of one another. This great act of humility puts other people first. Servant leadership, in this sense, is about ensuring that those for whom you are responsible, are enabled to embrace a way of being which does not diminish but allows individuals to flourish. This is the case at St. Mary's. The Head Teacher's desire to be there for others allows others to embrace this way of being and is manifested in the way adults within the school consistently go beyond the call of duty to support the most vulnerable of children while ensuring that the most able also achieve their potential.

There is no doubt that the leadership of St. Mary's is robust and faith-filled. The Head Teacher has worked tirelessly to develop a staff team who are committed and effective in providing for every child in the school. Her personal commitment to give of her best encourages and enables others to do the same. Her clarity of vision, capacity to challenge and compassionate nature inspire others and as a result morale in the school is exceptionally high and every one feels highly valued.

Governors are totally committed to supporting the ethos of the school and work hard to ensure that they also have vision, challenge effectively while at the same time realising the need for sensitivity as they work to move the school forward. They are doing this with growing success. A balance of professions within the Governing body brings depth and appropriate insight to the conversation. Skills are deployed effectively so that ultimately there is a sense of everyone pulling together to move in the right direction. They are to be commended for this.

RE leadership has a high priority in the school and the current RE leader is outstanding. Her passion for the role, commitment to Catholic education and her own personal faith are significant factors in the Catholic confidence which is growing in the school. Although she only joined the school in recent months, her support to teachers in terms of teaching and classroom prayer is already having a substantial impact. She is highly thought of and respected, not only as a classroom practitioner but as someone who has a quiet confidence about what she is doing and how she enables others.

## The School as a Teaching and Learning Community (Word)

Over-all grade 2 (Good)

- Curriculum RE is has a high status in the school and is valued and seen as important by teachers, leaders, parents and governors.
- Senior leaders and governors take a keen and active interest in the subject and are well aware of its strengths and areas for development.
- The person with responsibility for leading and co-ordinating RE is a key figure within the school, who actively promotes the highest standards in RE, through her own secure subject knowledge and ability to inspire pupils and staff.
- A range of rigorous monitoring activities have had impact and as a result the quality and quantity of work reflects a commitment to continue making improvements to teaching and learning.
- Children are keen and committed to succeed in, extend and to improve their learning.
- All pupils are able to demonstrate their learning through a variety of strategies.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils is exemplary and make a significant contribution to learning.
- Teaching is consistently effective, ensuring that pupils are motivated and engaged.
- The majority of teaching is securing good progress and learning.
- Teachers embrace any opportunity they can to develop their subject knowledge so that they can offer lessons which enthuse and contribute to pupils' enthusiasm for RE.
- All learning environments are stimulating, well presented, organised, relevant and well-maintained. As a result learning is well-supported.

### What the school can do to improve further:

- Ensure that the pace of lessons leads to progress by children in every lesson.
- Allow children to form answers to good questions and explore further their answers.
- Continue to work on developing appropriate differentiated tasks and where possible encourage enquiry and analysis as part of independent work.
- Continue developing assessment tracking in line with Diocesan guidance.

Teachers and teaching assistants at St. Marys are a very committed group of people who believe that every child is entitled to achieve the highest academic standards of which they are capable. To this end they work tirelessly and enthusiastically to deliver a balanced curriculum which includes ensuring that the children receive the RE to which they are entitled. Their interactions and relationships with children are exceptional. As a result children see Christ being modelled to them on a daily basis. The staff seek to provide a safe and secure base within which children have confidence to explore and express themselves. In such an environment children can and will learn freely.

The staff have an open and calm disposition. They know every child's needs and are sensitive to these. Each day they greet the children on the playground and make themselves available to parents so that if a child is struggling at the start of the day they can respond appropriately and compassionately.

RE is a popular subject within the school and children speak positively about their lessons. They enjoy the different activities and feel that they learn 'a lot'. Teachers plan carefully and are thoughtful in their delivery of lessons. Discussions with children, a scrutiny of the books and the vibrant wall displays show that teachers are committed to providing children with a very positive experience in RE. Children have a good understanding of Scripture and can readily retell different Bible stories. They are able to draw from these, messages which help them know how to live their

life. Teachers have developed good practice in this area. Occasionally the pace of lessons can be slow and not all teachers allow sufficient time for children to think about their answers, in some cases answering the questions for the children. Teachers offer a variety of different activities to explore different themes. Children are confident learners and can work independently when given opportunities to do so. When teaching assistants are available they work effectively and unobtrusively with those who need support.

The school has embraced the Diocesan curriculum programme and value the work of the recently formed writers' group. They are keen to grow in their own knowledge and understanding so welcome the support of others who can help to guide them in understanding better Catholic teaching and the different units which they teach within RE. Members of the Parish have been generous in providing effective support for this growth.

### **The School as a Celebrating Community (Worship and Spiritual Development)**

#### **Key Strengths**

- Every aspect of school life at St. Mary's contributes to the spiritual development of the children and as a result they are open to God's presence in all that they encounter.
- The traditions and practices of the Catholic Church provide a context for all aspects of school life, enrich the worship and promote and stimulate spiritual development.
- Inspirational worship follows the liturgical year; it is topical and tailored to individual needs.
- Attitudes to worship demonstrate a heartfelt open response, showing a deep connection with God.
- Scripture is revered and its relevance is understood by all.
- All members of the school community pray together and parents and carers are invited to participate.

#### **What the school can do to improve further:**

- Continue to develop opportunities for children to pray outside of organised occasions.
- Consider ways to nurture the adult members of the community so that they can explore and grow in their own spiritual journey.

The spiritual and worship life of St. Mary's is to be commended. The practice in classrooms and within whole school liturgies is seen to be an area which has grown significantly and in particular with the help of the RE leader. Three classroom liturgies were experienced. Without exception these were outstanding. In each case teachers led the children in a quiet, reflective time of prayer. Each had a different theme. Each involved music, silence, personal reflection on a piece of scripture and prayer. From the youngest, right through the school, children demonstrated their capacity to be still and to respond as appropriate. It is clear that the children are open to God's presence and have an open heart within these experiences. Teachers are non-intrusive, reflective in their delivery and sensitive about what they are offering the children.

Whole school Liturgies enable the children to participate in a different way, reading, speaking, praying and singing as well as being silent and reflective. The quality of singing in the school is outstanding. The school is blessed to have a musician who knows how to accompany and enable the children to enjoy their singing.

The traditions of the Catholic Church influence the life of the school and the Parish Priest is a very welcome visitor to the school. He visits regularly and supports the Head Teacher in her desire to

celebrate major feasts and the sacramental life within the school. During the inspection the school had its annual May Procession. This was a delightful experience for children to engage in a ritual tradition of the Church, not often experienced by many. It was an occasion to which parishioners and parents were invited and all participated.

A further development which is having a significant impact on the spiritual growth of the children is the introduction of spiritual journals. This started in Lent and was such a success that the school has continued with them. Each week every child has a time of quiet reflection when gentle music is played and children are invited to write or draw in their journals in response to one or more possible questions and in them talk to God. Although they are not marked and are only looked at by staff on occasions they often reveal a deepening sense of God in the life of the child. They are a very special opportunity for children to reflect at a deep and meaningful level.

Class focal points are of a very high standard. Interactive and child friendly, they add an extra dimension to the classroom. Children engage with them and appreciate their presence as part of the classroom.

### **Conclusion**

It is clear from what has been said that almost everything in the school contributes to the spiritual and moral development of the children at St. Mary's. They are blessed to come to a school which is rich in tradition and run by totally committed adults who care passionately about what they do. This is a school which is going from strength to strength. It is a credit to the local community, to CAST and most importantly to the Diocese. This is a school of which Bishop Mark and the Catholic Community of Plymouth Diocese can be justly proud.



## 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**

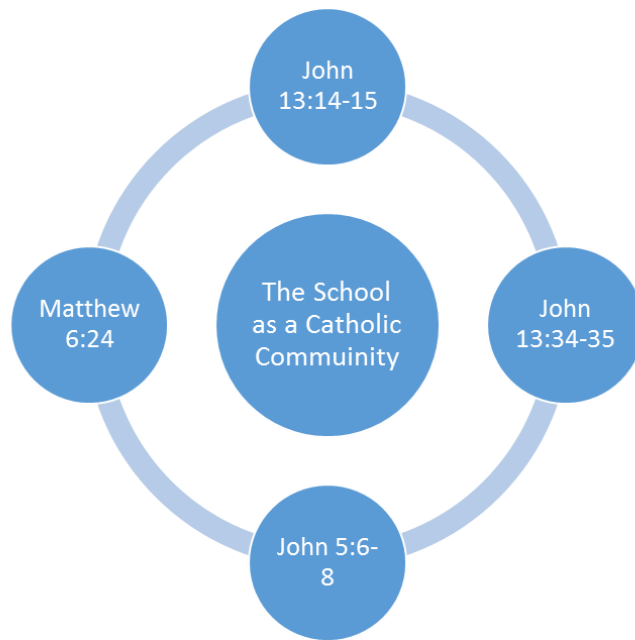
There will be three key areas within which these five elements will be reviewed:

- 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 any one 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.