

Raising standards of Teaching & Learning whilst
maintaining Catholic School principles.

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Abstract:

This investigation set out to critically evaluate the tensions faced by Catholic school leaders in ensuring that quality education is provided in secular terms, whilst still upholding Catholic educational principles in the aim for excellence. In particular, the focus was on how raising the quality of teaching & learning in order to achieve positive Ofsted accreditation in a school previously deemed to be in a 'serious weaknesses' category – as well as improving examination results that are positive in terms of league tables – affected staff well-being and morale.

The methods employed in this were an analysis of a Catholic ethos staff questionnaire of a case study school, citing the changing teaching grades between April 2013 and July 2015. The research begins by focusing on said questionnaire, with references made to applicable Ofsted Section 5 and 8 inspection reports from the period 2013 to 2014. An element of qualitative research is evaluated through the option of allowing survey participants to make further comments after each question, should they so wish. A comparison is undertaken by looking at how the teaching staff from the English department, with the close focus placed on this department during the monitoring process, felt about the maintaining of Catholic school principles, compared to a selection of staff from other departmental areas (taken from other core and non-core subject areas). This is in order to consider whether responses may be impacted upon depending on how much a subject was 'under scrutiny' for improvement.

The conclusions reached are that despite the best intentions of the headteacher in promoting a spiritual and reflective school, the unavoidable focus on improved examination results have left some staff feeling demoralized and under pressure. However, the majority of participants from the English department, who were under particular scrutiny and pressure to rapidly improve, seem to have a different perception, and as a whole they feel that the process has had a more positive impact upon them where they feel more valued.

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1. INTRODUCTION:

The issues faced by Catholic school leaders today are effectively summarised as follows:

A distinctive element of Catholic education is that it may challenge secular values that pervade society at large. One headteacher, for example, said that: ‘As a Catholic leader it is about knowledge of how our Catholic distinctiveness affects, interprets and changes what we do and how we remain authentic in our constantly changing world of education and the wider world ...’

(Fincham 2010:69)

Therefore, the aim of this research is to critically evaluate the tensions faced by Catholic school leaders in ensuring that quality education is provided in secular terms, whilst still upholding Catholic educational principles in the aim for excellence. In particular, the focus will be on how raising the quality of teaching & learning in order to achieve positive Ofsted accreditation in a school previously deemed to be in a ‘serious weaknesses’ category – as well as improving examination results that are positive in terms of league tables – has affected staff well-being and morale. Within this, the tensions of maintaining a Catholic ethos whilst raising these standards in the case study school will be researched by:

- a) Exploring Catholic educational principles as well as quality in secular terms;
- b) Reflecting upon the tensions faced in trying to balance the two;
- c) Identifying examples of tensions, challenges and opportunities that are faced by leadership at all levels, including the ‘performance gap’ between the rhetoric and the reality;
- d) Analysing how raising the quality of teaching & learning has impacted on the case study school that was previously judged as having ‘serious weaknesses’;
- e) Evaluating the impact of the programme of monitoring on staff well-being and motivation;
- f) Exploring whether teaching in the English department versus other subject areas impacted on staff well-being and motivation; and
- g) Proposing a series of recommendations that build upon the strengths and move the case study school towards an ideal in terms of aiming for excellence in the quality of teaching & learning, whilst still upholding Catholic educational principles.

a) Rationale:

Throughout my teaching career working in schools placed into ‘serious weaknesses’ categories, I have witnessed first-hand how secular standards can override many elements of what it is to be a Catholic school, with an preoccupation on Ofsted judgements, league tables and examination results. Although Catholic school principles also prioritise pupils’ rights to a quality education that leads to excellent outcomes, it is important to maintain a balance, and I want to explore how this can be maintained, whilst striving to improve teaching & learning. Having witnessed what I perceived to be the erosion of Catholic school principles in my previous school in its search for excellence in secular terms, I want to focus on the impact of the programme of monitoring on staff rather than the focus to be on the pupils, although I will explore why it is important to uphold these standards of excellence, which are also part of Catholic school principles, as all pupils have an entitlement to the best, especially the poor.

b) Case Study School Context:

The research is based on my current school and the journey it has undergone from moving out of ‘Serious Weaknesses’ in April 2013 to ‘Requires Improvement’ in September 2014, and its ongoing journey as it strives to become ‘Good’. Within this, the school is working hard to improve its examination results for better ‘league table’ positions and is trying to turn around falling pupil rolls.

St Mary’s¹ Catholic High School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium (and therefore ‘disadvantaged’) is above average. The majority of students are from White British backgrounds, whilst the proportion of students from different minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than in most schools, as is the proportion that speaks English as an additional language. An average proportion of students is supported through school action. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.

The leadership structure in the school has a Senior Leadership Team (SLT) of seven, made up of the Headteacher, a Deputy Head, a Senior Assistant Head, three Assistant Heads and a Business Development Director. Departments are led by Departmental Heads and larger

¹ For ethical reasons, a fictitious name has been used.

departments also have Seconds in Department, whilst there is also a Lead Practitioner, who is working as part of the Extended Senior Leadership team.

The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. Achievement at the school is on an upward trajectory, improving by 9% A*-Cs including English and Maths in 2014. The school is judged as 'Requires Improvement' in Ofsted's Section 5 Ofsted inspection in September 2014, where it states that it is not good because:

- Students' achievement requires improvement. Not all students make the progress that is expected of them in English and mathematics. The most-able students are not achieving their very best. Disadvantaged students are not achieving as well as other students in some subjects.
- Teaching requires improvement. Teaching is not leading to good progress over time for enough students. Activities are not planned carefully enough to ensure that all students achieve their best.
- Students' behaviour requires improvement. The number of days that are lost to exclusion is too high. In a small number of lessons students are not fully involved in learning.
- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders have not yet succeeded in ensuring that teaching is consistently good and that students make good progress. Some subject leaders have not developed the skills they need to drive forward improvements in teaching and achievement quickly.

(30 September – 1 October 2014)

However, it did state that the school has the following strengths:

- The school is improving quickly. The headteacher is highly ambitious for the students and the school. His clear vision and high expectations set the tone for the whole school community. Leaders, staff, students and governors are working well as a cohesive team and are successfully improving behaviour, attendance, the effectiveness of teaching and students' achievement.
- Leaders' accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities arise from the stringent checks on teaching, students' progress and all aspects of school life. As a result decisive action is taken and leads to improvements.

As for other relevant comments, the report states that leaders have developed very rigorous means to check on all aspects of the school, so that they have a clear understanding of the school's priorities. Actions are tightly focused on priorities and rigorous checks make sure that any actions taken do make a difference to students. Leaders, staff and students are held closely to account for their work. The management of staff performance is rigorous and salary progression is linked closely to students' progress and the school's priorities. Teaching is also improving because staff have undertaken well-focused professional development and individuals receive the support they need to improve the impact of their teaching on students' progress, and the local authority has provided good support with effective professional development for teaching staff and leaders.

Improving the quality of teaching & learning is a key focus of my leadership role as Lead Practitioner. Therefore, I have a deeper understanding of both how my work – as well as that of SLT and middle leaders – manages to make an impact on the improvement of teaching & learning, and how far Catholic educational principles are upheld (both now and historically in the journey out of 'Notice to Improve') in this search for excellence, so will be able to make informed recommendations following the results of the research undertaken as part of this study.

There is no Section 48 Diocese inspection evidence available to cite here, as one has not occurred during – nor immediately prior to – the relevant time period.

c) Overview including methodology:

The hypothesis this research is working towards is as follows:

Historically, Catholic schools have provided, and will continue to provide, a quality education for all, rather than simply prioritising the outcome of their attainment in exams. How does being in a school that was recently deemed to have 'serious weaknesses' and now 'requires improvement' impact on the upholding of Catholic school principles in both the search for excellence and staff morale and motivation?

The key research questions are:

- To what extent are Catholic School principles upheld and fostered whilst searching for excellence in secular terms?

- To what extent is staff well-being and morale upheld in its search for Ofsted quality?
How much is Christ at the centre of this?

Quotes in the Section 5 Ofsted inspection report of April 2013, which were highly critical, will be referred to, as well as documentary evidence from subsequent reports (particularly the Section 8 Ofsted monitoring reports) and the Section 5 inspection report of September 2014, as already referenced. Other research will be in the form of quantitative analysis, using a summary of the change of teaching grades from summer 2013 to summer 2015, and a Catholic ethos questionnaire. A qualitative measure will be introduced by including open-ended questions in the survey about participants' experiences, motivation and morale throughout the process, both since April 2013 and over the subsequent two years. A brief comparison will be made between the English department of the school with other subject areas, to explore any perceived differences in their feelings of staff well-being and motivation, due to the 'close scrutiny' this department was under during the monitoring process.

d) Expected Conclusion:

Based on my experiences throughout my teaching career, I expect to find that despite the best intentions of the Head in promoting a spiritual and reflective school, the unavoidable focus on improved examination results will have left some staff feeling demoralized and under pressure. This will probably be as a result of inexperienced middle leadership, who are not practising Catholics, so are not aware of how to motivate the staff they line manage and therefore do not keep 'Christ at the centre' of the way they treat others. I hope to be able to make recommendations about how this can be improved upon to make teaching staff feel more valued and informed, whilst linking these recommendations to Catholic school principles.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

a) PRINCIPLES:

i) Catholic educational principles

The Catholic vision is that our journey is one of growing into whatever role God intends us to play. This role is not just for our own flourishing but for the growth and happiness of others.

(Bollan, 2007:81)

Teaching in a Catholic school is a vocation and helps students to ‘find meaning in their lives through forming a spirituality based on a mature relationship with Almighty God’ (Stock, 2005). Teaching in every school should be embedded in the values based on the Beatitudes, but the difference within a Catholic school is that teachers can use the love of God to help guide them in this and can embed this with their outward signs of prayer and displays.

Michael Holman (2002:77-78) maintains:

Teachers...do not just do jobs, they fulfil a ministry... It is a ministry founded upon a vocation from God and one that is vital to the future welfare of the community of believers in this country.

However, they can only encourage not force, so they need to share their love for their subject in order to try and inspire pupils in a love for learning, just as Jesus was a teacher. The Vatican II declaration: ‘a true education aims at the formation of the human person in the pursuit of his ultimate end and of the good of the societies of which, as man, he is a member, and in whose obligations, as an adult, he will share.’ (Vatican Council II, 1965:1) reminds us that it is not just about academic development, but spiritual development also.

A statement from the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales in 1996 listed five principles that Catholic schools should be committed to promoting:

- The Search for Excellence;
- The Uniqueness of the Individual;
- The Education of the Whole Person;
- The Education of All; and
- Moral principles

As the search for excellence means that all pupils should be given the opportunity to develop their talents to the full, Catholic educational principles should not involve a focus just on

examination results and league tables. However, in enabling pupils to achieve of their best in whichever area they excel – helping them to overcome whatever barriers to learning or life they face – then the results and league tables should be able to look after themselves. This then directly encapsulates recognizing the uniqueness of the individual, the education of the whole person and education for all because it enables teachers to focus on the child rather than the statistic. Grace (1998) highlights that the:

'dignity of the person', as an aim for schooling, includes measures of academic and personal achievement but places these in a more complex and sensitive matrix of respect and justice for all school members, i.e. a learning culture which is also a humane culture. From this perspective, effectiveness for Catholic schools has to be about:

- [creating] 'a place where children and staff feel valued — where children and staff are given individual support — where there is respect and trust for all';
- 'in addition to national curriculum and academic demands, [setting] out to create a happy atmosphere in which the dignity and worth of everyone is recognised, developed and safeguarded';
- 'encouraging, promoting, recognising and celebrating all aspects of achievement within the school';
- [creating] 'an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence in every sphere of academic, pastoral, social, moral, physical and spiritual activity'

(Grace, 1998:123)

A humane culture is the key, one that develops the whole child – and staff member – so that they have experience of life in a community founded on Gospel values and so they are prepared to serve as witnesses to moral and spiritual values in the wider world, thereby developing their own moral principles through those that are modelled to them due to the creation of 'an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence in every sphere of academic, pastoral, social, moral, physical and spiritual activity' (CES, 1997:55)

The CES publication *Evaluating the Distinctive Nature of the Catholic School*, reminds us:

It is the responsibility of the Catholic school and college to prepare children for life in a pluralist society. Positive attitudes and values concerning those of different race, faith, gender, age or ability are essential to the development of mature human beings in the likeness of Christ.

(1999:J31)

It is not just a pluralist society they need preparing for. Sadly, in this modern world there has been a breakdown of many morals and family values, where children have become more and more obsessed with materialism. A CBCEW article (1996): 'A wealthy society, if it is a greedy society, is not a good society,' so Catholic educators need to really challenge

materialism with young people. It is the responsibility of Catholic educators to ensure students are empathetic yet critical thinkers who can explore these and other moral issues ethically.

In the article *Moral Theology Today* (1994), James Keenan explores how it seems that Catholics are no longer ordered what to do; not instructed what is right and wrong. Instead, they are to explore their consciences and live their lives in the reflection of Jesus. They are no longer ordered to avoid sin, rather to serve as a disciple – Keenan’s basic conviction is that discipleship is central – to promote charity and be forgiving. ‘Jesus triumphed through brokenness’ (CBCEW, 2000) so people must be given a fresh start. It is no longer simply about avoiding evil and confessing sins. They must fight against social injustice, promote and give to charity, promote love and forgiveness – not just seek forgiveness. They are no longer ordered what to do and think; instead they are given guidance to reach morally right decisions that sit well with their consciences. Pupils need to be given the framework in which to explore consequences and alternative outcomes, within a spiritual ethos. They need to develop their own morality and be aided towards developing a social conscience; taught how to forgive and make amends; not to retaliate; to develop empathy and not to be judgemental – leading them to develop their ideas and conscience. This should also be true of staff.

In committing to an education for all, schools have a duty of care for the poor and to educate those who are socially, academically, physically or emotionally disadvantaged. As Morris (2005:3) states: ‘concern for the poor and underprivileged is not new but rather formed a central element of the Church’s understanding of its educative missions for over 150 years.’

A final note:

The Catholic character of a Catholic school is rooted in the Christian concept of life which is centred on Jesus Christ: he is the one who ennobles people, gives meaning to human life, and is the Model which the Catholic school offers its pupils.

(Vatican Document, 1997)

ii) Quality in secular terms:

Quality in secular terms could be a misnomer in that standards are key for all Catholic schools. This connects with two key principles of Catholic distinctiveness – the search for excellence and the dignity of the individual. It would be unfair to also state that even quality

in secular terms was predominantly about examination results and attainment. The majority of schools have very strong pastoral systems and there is a strong emphasis on the spiritual, social and moral development of young people in our schools today:

Secular schools...are not ideologically free zones. Secularism has its own ideological assumptions about the human person, the ideal society, the ideal system of schooling and the meaning of human existence... they characteristically permeate the ethos and culture of state-provided secular schools and form a crucial part of the 'hidden curriculum'.

(Grace, 2002: 14)

However, there seems to be an ever increasing emphasis on results and league tables, whereby Ofsted judgements are made about schools based purely on these results, despite their outstanding provision in other areas such as behaviour and pastoral care. This reflects the stated aim behind most of the Government's recent policy changes, which is a desire to drive up academic standards. It could be argued, however, that if students do not achieve their potential, then the above stated key characteristics (the search for excellence and the dignity of the individual) are not being achieved. In fact, the adoption of a standards-driven political agenda reflects the Church's own approach towards education, as the Bishops of England and Wales stated in 2011:

The Catholic Church in England and Wales is rightly proud of the high academic standards achieved in so many Catholic schools. However, it is aware that some schools fall short of the standard expected by both Government and Church (cf. Can. 806 §2).

Therefore, the Bishops' Conference mandates the CES to develop strategies alongside Diocesan authorities and within the wider Catholic sector to ensure that Catholic Schools in difficulty can be helped to improve rapidly so as to offer an excellent Catholic education to our children

(Plenary Meeting of Bishops Conference, 2011)

The Code of Canon Law cited here is that those who are in charge of Catholic schools are to ensure, under the supervision of the local Ordinary [Bishop], that the formation given in them is, in its academic standards, at least as outstanding as that in other schools in the area. Therefore, quality in secular terms and upholding Catholic school principles are not necessarily a juxtaposition; rather are complementary.

Some of the Government's recent policy changes are encouraging. The focus now on percentages of pupils making 3 and 4 levels of progress has put all learners back on the agenda, so they can once again be members of a community valued as having 'God-given gifts' (CBCEW 1997:16).

Obviously, the key to levels of achievement within a school is the quality of teaching. Not surprisingly, there is an emphasis on teaching and learning in successful and improving schools. Hughes (2002) asserts that:

A key difference between excellent and less effective schools is the *consistency* of teaching quality... continued improvement is dependent upon improving the quality of teaching that is taking place.

(Hughes, 2002:15)

Reassuringly, Ofsted are beginning to focus on progress over time when observing teaching and learning. It is no longer possible for a Teacher to 'perform' for the inspectors and achieve a grading of 'Outstanding', whilst not teaching good lessons the rest of the time. There is now much more of a focus on work in students' books and the progress they are making over time, with the lesson observation just being a snapshot of the judgement made. This is a real positive of the current inspection culture, as it gives pupils a real chance of making the progress of which they are capable in a much more consistent manner. There is also a strong focus on understanding, because:

Learning is an active process – the product of *doing* rather than *receiving*. For acquiring information is not the same as understanding it and making personal sense of information – understanding it – is what learning is all about.

(Hughes, 2002:93)

However, league tables and examination results are still the dominating factor in judging the success of a school. This is because:

Beginning in the 1970s, successive governments have sought to improve schools' academic standards by introducing a form of market economy into the education sector. Schools were given greater freedoms from local authority control, but made more accountable for their performance through inspection and the publication of test and examination results.

(Morris, 2008:165)

Although it could be argued that competition generates improvement, it could be also be argued that this puts pupils at the risk of becoming a statistic. For example, Hughes (2002:67) cites that:

A Year 9 student is quoted in John Macbeath's book *Schools Must Speak for Themselves* as saying: "I used to feel that this school cared about how well I was doing. Now I just think the only thing it cares about is how well *it's* doing."

This is definitely something to bear in mind in the current culture of competition and league tables.

Unfortunately, new measures being introduced may move schools away from the positives gained from measuring levels of progress. This is because of the new Department for

Education's (DfE) 'Progress 8' School performance measure. Reassuringly, 'Progress 8' means schools will still be measured on progress. Worryingly, this will put schools into direct competition with one another and the traditional measures of percentage A* to C grades will still be reported alongside. Also, because only GCSEs and 'any other approved, high value academic or vocational qualifications' will count, is this devaluing those students who can only achieve well by pursuing a more vocational route? Will this also lead to devaluing the teachers of these subjects?

As for leadership, in the 2011-2012 Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education Children's Services and Skills, Sir Michael Wilshaw emphasised its importance. Wilshaw suggested that it is leadership that drives improvement by creating the culture and ethos in order to push up standards (p.10). This is undoubtedly a true statement. If leadership does not create this culture, then how can a school improve? However, the main focus in this drive for improvement should be the SLT providing support and reward for staff towards improving standards; standards that would assimilate with Catholic school educational principles.

b) TENSIONS FOR CATHOLIC SCHOOL LEADERS:

Sir Michael Wilshaw emphasised the importance of leadership, as follows:

When I look at any inspection report, my eyes are always drawn to comments on leadership because leaders are the key people in changing and improving the culture and performance of the organisation. Leaders provide the role models for the rest of the institution.

(OFSTED 2011/12:9)

This is a very apt statement – leaders DO provide role models for the rest of the institution – but by this very nature, Catholic school leaders face many tensions in balancing quality in secular terms with Catholic educational principles. This makes one wonder:

Can a legitimate balance be found between Catholic values and market values or will market forces in education begin to compromise the integrity of the special mission of Catholic schooling?

(Grace in Hayes & Gearon, 2002:7)

Holman notes that there could be a conflict between the Christian ministry of schools and an emphasis on pupil achievement as leaders can become seduced by shallow indicators of approval:

In so far as successive governments have promoted competition between schools for pupils, there has been a tendency for some of our most renowned Catholic maintained

schools to seek out the brightest and the best and to shape their ethos in order to be well placed in the market place.

(Holman in Hayes and Gearon, eds, 2002:73)

Catholic school leaders need to resist the temptation of social sorting, which is an issue that has been much debated in recent years, whereby some studies have argued how faith schools have manipulated their admissions policies in order to admit more affluent and more academically gifted pupils.

Instead, leaders should keep in mind that national targets and the measurement of progress towards achieving these is not their only challenge. They must also ensure that the curriculum arises from the distinctive mission of the school as a Catholic learning community. They need to resist a materialistic soteriology and instead stay focused on Christian soteriology – focusing on how people are reconciled with God through the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. They need to fight to maintain their commitment to Gospel values during a time when examination results seem the be-all and end-all. They need to ensure our young people are given time to speak to God during prayer and quiet reflection. How can they place their deepest hopes in God if they are not given sufficient opportunity to speak to Him?

What of the teachers themselves? They too need to be reconciled with God and made to feel that their contributions are valued; they also need time to speak to God during prayer and quiet reflection; they need to ‘feed’ their spirit in order to prioritise staff well-being and motivation.

A National College for School Leadership article (2012) focuses on leadership within a faith school. Quotes from leaders of faith schools comment that: ‘The way you deal with an individual, the way you treat people, reveals, inter alia, your faith,’ and, ‘We search for God within ourselves – as we discover ourselves, we discover more about God.’ The article goes on to summarise some of the key issues emerging and the key words are ‘authentic’, ‘distinctive’, ‘spirituality’ and ‘mission’, stating that ‘the role is one of servant leadership – learning through faith, leading through faith and walking the faith.’

It also states that school leaders require time ‘for reflection and “internal sustenance” so that they can grow’. Both this article and Kevin Treston (1995:46) rightly remind us of the importance of finding strategies to reflect, allowing for ‘self-renewal’ whilst showing a concern for the ‘dignity of colleagues and pupils in the school’. Leading in a school can be a

profound experience and it is important that part of this reflection should be recognising mistakes that are made. This is confirmed by John Bolland:

Mistakes and errors are part of the learning curve: we identify them and move on with that little bit of experiential wisdom to strengthen our understanding and influence how we do things in the future. We should not be ashamed of our fallibility. The real cause for shame is to be so terrified of being found out that we adopt a paranoid mindset around our colleagues and students... The Catholic school should rise above this and be *places where people can be weak together*.

(2007:89-90)

It is vitally important that Catholic school leaders do not try and hide from mistakes because, as John Bolland says, 'it is seldom that we get to see powerful people suffer... yet the Christian leader, modelled on Christ, is expected to suffer.' (2007: 92) They need to show their staff that hiding from mistakes is not healthy and that weaknesses should be embraced and learned from, in the way that Jesus taught us.

Many of the issues and challenges faced by Catholic school leaders are similar to those of any school. However, according to Scott & McNeish (2012) there are several themes that recur in the literature:

- The need to maintain **distinctiveness** as a faith school. This includes retaining the school's religious character, sometimes challenging secular values and balancing the two priorities of educational attainment and moral and spiritual development.
- The need to manage the changing context of **admissions**, and increasingly provide for pupils of other faiths and of none alongside those of their own faith.
- The need to **build the capacity of the school**, including the recruitment, retention and development of school leaders, staff and governors. This has to be achieved in the context of balancing the importance of having staff who actively practise the faith of the school with the need to maximise staff quality.
- The need to maintain and develop a range of **partnerships**, within the faith community and beyond.
- The need to fulfil the expectations of the wider community and contribute to social cohesion, sometimes taking a **community leadership role**.

(Scott & McNeish, 2012:11)

The third point is a particularly challenging one due to the fact that more and more Catholic schools have teachers who are either non-Catholic or not practising their faith. Schools are finding it more difficult to recruit teachers and leaders who are both actively practising the faith and are of quality, due to a rapidly shrinking pool of staff to choose from, as explained:

Between 1978 and 1993, the percentage of non-Catholic teachers in maintained Catholic schools increased from 22% to 29% (Arthur 1995a,190f). Between 1993 and 2011, this percentage increased to 45%, with the pace of change accelerating annually.

(Arthur, 2013:83-84)

If less staff are of the Catholic faith, does this mean that the school will struggle to maintain its distinctiveness?

Finally, with regular changes to the National Curriculum, Catholic school leaders face other tensions in deciding what to provide on the curriculum. It seems that most weeks one organisation or another is pronouncing that their priority or focus should be taught in schools. It seems society is losing sight of the fact that parents are the primary educators. It means that:

In spite of all attempts at educational reform the child is still not sufficiently at the centre of things. The syllabuses are crowded, and there is little room for educational freedom for students and staff.

(Boelan, 1998:291)

Many of these areas relate to Personal, Social and Health Education, and as Boelan explains, it causes limitations to what the Catholic school leader can include as part of their distinctive Catholic curriculum.

Related to this, James Arthur asks pertinent questions:

This brings us back to the central question: Do we have a philosophy of education which is distinctive and how does it impact upon the school curriculum?

If we believe that Christ is at the centre of our world view, what would we expect to be included in topics within teaching and learning?

What is our view of Knowledge? Is it to acquire knowledge to increase our personal gain to exploit others – or is it to serve others? Is knowledge to help self-fulfilment or to encourage human development?

(Arthur, 2001:3)

In a more recent publication, he rather gloomily concludes:

The challenge before English Catholic schools is both to reconstruct a Catholic curriculum and address the militant secularism which surrounds them (Arthur 2009)... The de-Catholicising of the curriculum through a process of internal secularisation in Catholic schools is the result, which raises the question of what is the Church trying to accomplish with its considerable investment in Catholic schools?

(Arthur, 2013:95-96)

It seems much more needs to be done for Catholic schools to maintain their Catholic distinctiveness, to avoid Catholic schools simply presenting an alternative system of secular education with a Catholic label.

- i) Tensions, challenges and opportunities faced by leadership at all levels.

When Reynolds and Creemers (1990, p.1) asserts that: 'schools matter... schools do have major effects upon children's development... schools do make a difference', a Catholic approach has to ask (in detail), 'difference to what?'

(Grace, 1998:120)

Grace asserts that all schools have real opportunities to learn from the Catholic schooling culture with a particular emphasis on their mission statements being central to all aspects of school life. As much of the literature exemplifies, Catholic school leaders must not be seduced by the shallow indicators of approval of exam outcomes and league tables, but must instead embrace aspects such as spiritual and moral awareness; the dignity of the person; social bonding; social justice. These are the areas in which Catholic educators can make a real difference, whilst still helping their students to be the best they can be academically.

‘While Catholic establishments should respect freedom of conscience... they still have the grave duty to offer a religious training suited to the often widely varying religious situations of the pupils.’ (Konstant, 1981)

Teachers and leaders have to acknowledge and try to understand the reasons why young people experience and express doubt and indifference. Attitudes necessary to face this challenge include, as pointed out in a 1988 Vatican document: ‘affection, tact, understanding, serenity of spirit, a balanced judgement, patience in listening, prudence in the way we respond and availability to meet and spend time with the young.’ In doing this, Jim Gallagher (2008) says that teachers can develop students’ critical thinking skills in facing up to the negative aspects of their life and culture, whilst still expressing clear Catholic views with honesty and respect. At the same time, TOGETHER with them, he says Catholic educators must try to ‘recognise, understand and bless what is good in their lifestyle and culture, whilst presenting it in such a way that they can recognise that it addresses their questions and problems, their hopes and aspirations.’ (Gallagher, 2008)

Through this, young people will learn to trust in God's love, and this is where Catholic school leaders can really make a difference. Holman (2002: 73), however, warns that:

If a school says it lives by the Gospel but does not appear to forgive challenging pupils or appears only to be interested in those students who will make their league table position more favourable, then the stated aim of the school in promoting faith, of

which a key constituent is justice, will be undermined by the hidden or not so hidden, curriculum.

So if a school includes social sorting within its admissions policies and excessively excludes its students, it will not be honouring its mission as a Catholic school, despite what it proclaims in its mission statement.

Grace ends his chapter by saying:

While we cannot expect School Effectiveness Research to bring God into the equation, we can expect that future research will be more sensitive to the complex and interrelated nature of school outcomes and therefore more innovative in its conceptual analysis and in its methodological approaches. This could be achieved by extending the important concept of 'value-added' research to include the equally important concept of 'values-added' inquiry — a more catholic paradigm.

(Grace, 1998:124)

This really would be an opportunity for all young people to develop their 'God-given gifts'.

ii) The 'performance gap' between the rhetoric and the reality.

Whilst a Catholic school may have a clear mission statement, which articulates its aims and purposes in terms of gospel values, those principles may not always be apparent in the day-to-day reality of the school. This can mean the challenges of competitive pressures, such as the need to gain success in terms of league tables, can override the school's mission.

In those circumstances the question to ask is: does the rhetoric match the reality?

Catholic school leaders should measure their schools they lead against the Six Characteristics of Church Schools, as described by James Arthur (2001:4-5):

1. Church schools are characterized by the importance they attach to Ritual and Tradition.
2. Church Schools are characterized by an Incarnational Pedagogy.
3. Church schools are characterized by a Community of Memory.
4. Church schools are characterized by their Fellowship and Solidarity.
5. Church schools are characterized by their Religious Distinctiveness.
6. Church schools are characterized by always keeping in mind the end for which they were established.

By being honest in these reflections, it would enable them to really encapsulate Catholic school distinctiveness.

As mentioned in the last point, priorities are becoming more about results and league tables, to the detriment of spiritual values. In the publication from the CES (1999), *What is different about being a middle manager in a Catholic school*, it explains:

The core purpose of subject leadership is fully achieved in a Catholic school through commitment to the mission and the faith life of the school. This will include:

- securing the contribution of the subject to a curriculum where high standards and the dignity of the individual pupil and member of staff are promoted;
- supporting the growth of a community in which the quality of relationships demonstrates commitment to gospel values;
- ensuring that, in all areas, priority is given to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and staff;
- developing strategies, procedures and day-to-day routines which put into practice the mission of the school.

CES (1999:A7)

In a competitive market place, according to Grace (2001: 7), success is: ‘...measured, visible and cost effective...’ He warns, however, that this:

...does not articulate easily with Catholic values in education, where spiritual and moral culture is given precedence over material success, where education is seen as a service and not a product, and where notions of the common good and of the well being of community institutions take precedence over individual self-interest...

(2001 Vol. 25, No. 4)

Significantly, Grace later observes:

Catholic schools may continue to score successes in the new culture of schooling in England but this may be at the price of fidelity to the poor or those who are deprived of family help and affection or those who are far from the faith.

(2002: 8-9)

Likewise, certain subjects are becoming de-valued, and therefore teachers of these subjects are also beginning to feel undervalued. This is despite the fact that, for example, ‘Art... [is] in the business of ‘revelation’... as self-expressive, intensely personal, profoundly creative... It is a privileged form of communion with the world and we simply must protect its curricular place.’ Walsh (1993). As Burn & McQuoid (1995) also assert:

Education is not about indoctrination nor is it about driving young minds into attitudes which have not been thought through. Man's true education is surely more to do with coming to a sense of identity, purpose, worth, direction and future. The search for Truth is more than simply the search for what the examiner marks as being correct.

All school leadership teams therefore need to align attitudes more favourably towards the non-academic subjects if they are to really value all.

However, pupils have this magic ‘C’ grade (soon to change to ‘5’ Grade) drummed into them by employers, colleges, society – how does one escape? Yes, it goes against the principle that ‘Every Learner has the right to be regarded as having equal value and worth’ but with so many external pressures, it has been impossible to fight. And yes, when pupils were deemed to be too far away from this magic grade, in the recent past they did not receive the same intervention, as tragic as this is, with an unrelenting focus on the C/D borderline.

Although all members of the Catholic community – pupils and staff – should be valued as having ‘God-given gifts’, the introduction of the English Baccalaureate, Progress 8 measures and linear exams does undervalue this somewhat. It appears that the Arts is being devalued and pupils with ‘talents’ are being side-lined in favour of ‘academics’. This may be the great tragedy of the current system. Pupils who are not academic may be side-lined.

As part of this, in their aim to tackle poor behaviour and improve reputations within the community in which they serve, some schools have become immovable on their policy of excluding pupils, seeming to make less and less effort to try and prevent these exclusions from taking place. This leaves us reflecting on the following:

Jesus came to call those on the margins of society. He spent time with ordinary people, many of whom made errors and sinned against God and humankind. We are all made in the image and likeness of the Father who loves us as we are. By permanently excluding pupils with challenging behaviour was the message they were receiving ‘I am not good enough to stay in a Catholic school’? Might we not have been accused of failing to fulfil the inclusivity of Jesus’ Gospel teaching?

(Healy, 2002)

Burn & McQuoid (1995) quite rightly state: ‘Families and schools are not, and indeed cannot be, neutral.’ Therefore, in building a Catholic community, with collaborations with the parish and parents, Catholic school leaders must bear witness to the values of the Gospel; be a role model of Christian living; lead as Jesus led – no matter what the tensions; build capacity for spiritual development high in emotional intelligence and the official moral teaching of the Catholic church with no ambiguities (this provides security and stability) following Jesus’ example of service to one another without behaving in an authoritarian fashion. In other words, it needs to pervade all aspects of Catholic school teaching and leadership.

If I had one wish for all our institutions, and the institution called school in particular, it is that we dedicate ourselves to allowing them to be what they would naturally become, which is human communities, not machines. Living beings who continually ask the questions: Why am I here? What is going on in my world? How might I and we best contribute?

(Senge et al, 2000:58)

Unfortunately, this is disparate with the current educational climate of examination results and league tables:

Traditionally, for example, one of the defining values of Catholic education has been to support the poor and marginalised in society, but today this appears to have been compromised by society's demand to measure schools with 'shallow indicators of approval', such as performance in league tables.

(Murphy Issue 5:2009)

As Arthur (2013:83) says: 'the secularisation process in Catholic schools proceeds at a dramatic pace with policy and practice consequently more distant than ever from the educational principles of Church teaching.' Arguably, the simple word 'performance' can present the greatest challenge for the church school leader. If these leaders remain true to a value central to Catholic education – 'commitment to the poor' – they may find it very difficult to demonstrate 'excellence' when it is defined in the limited way that has gained acceptance in recent years. It needs to be remembered:

Thus the Catholic school should be able to offer young people the means to acquire the knowledge they need in order to find a place in a society which is strongly characterised by technical and scientific skills. But, at the same time, it should be able, above all, to impart a solid Christian formation.

(Congregation for Catholic Education.1998: para.8)

Also:

The central point remains that a school cannot be truly Catholic unless Catholicism and its values are diffused into the entire curriculum, methods, organisation and ethos of the school. If Catholicism is a comprehensive way of life, it would seem logical that it would animate every aspect of the curriculum.

(Arthur, 2013:87)

Catholic schools need to be inclusive and their mission needs to be a commitment to the 'poor'. The poor are those who are materially poor, but also poverty in terms of moral poverty and emotional poverty – all are applicable.

Using 'The Emmaus Story' (Luke 24:13-35) as a model, Catholic education should start from where students are and encourage people to make their own decisions, by considering the correct information – exploring the morality of a situation. Any decisions made need to be within the Christian faith and therefore made in the correct context. Staff must first 'ask what *to believe* means... as [they] search for the ultimate meaning of [their] lives'

(Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith 1994: Paragraph 26) – so they need, as Catholic school leaders, to be able to respond to that faith, in the pattern of the catechism to search, in revelation and in response, because:

When a school encourages its pupils and staff to perform to the best of their ability for their own sake, its aim is to enable them to fulfil their God-given potential. If competition sets one school against another, if success in one institution is achieved deliberately at the expense of another, it is morally unacceptable.

(CES 1997:13)

The key word here is ‘encourage’ and any staff development must hold this at its core.

Otherwise, schools run the risk of being hypocritical in expecting teachers to model this with their pupils if their leaders do not model this with their own staff.

We must remember servant leadership:

Serving the needs of others is liberating. It implies recognizing their needs (without judging them), and then doing what can be done, in line with the higher purpose of serving God first, to help satisfy that need.

(Grahm 2011)

3. METHODOLOGY.

a) INTRODUCTION:

The aim of this research is to examine the extent to which Catholic School principles are upheld whilst raising standards of teaching & learning within a school deemed to have 'serious weaknesses'. Literature has been reviewed focusing on the main areas of Catholic educational principles, quality in secular terms, and tensions for Catholic school leaders.

Within this context, I plan to investigate and evaluate current practices in the case study school, and carry out an analysis using a Catholic ethos staff questionnaire, citing the changing teaching grades between April 2013 and July 2015. The research will begin by focusing on said questionnaire, with references made to applicable Ofsted Section 5 and 8 inspection reports from the period 2013 to 2014. An element of qualitative research will be evaluated through the option of allowing survey participants to make further comments after each question, should they so wish.

The Catholic ethos questionnaire will be used to explore how much impact staff believe the Ofsted monitoring process has impacted on specific Catholic school principles. There will be an element of comparison by looking at how the teaching staff from the English department, with the close focus placed on this department during the monitoring process, felt about the maintaining of Catholic school principles, compared to a selection of staff from other departmental areas (taken from other core and non-core subject areas). This is in order to consider whether responses may be impacted upon depending on how much a subject was 'under scrutiny' for improvement.

The benefits to the case study school will be a series of recommendations about how Catholic school principles can be maintained more effectively, if necessary, whilst upholding the search for excellence.

b) DEFINITIONS AND RATIONALE:

i) Research

The Oxford dictionary (2015) defines 'research' as 'the systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions.' It is derived from the late 16th century: from obsolete French *recherche* (noun), *rechercher* (verb), from Old French *re-* (expressing intensive force) + *cerchier*

'to search'. The main semantic strands are 'explore thoroughly' (search the premises) and 'try to find' (search out the truth).

Lawrence Stenhouse's offers the classical definition and views research as 'a disposition to examine one's own practice critically and systematically.' (1975:162-3) Richard Pring (2004:7) gives reference to this definition and states that the term 'research' is used to refer to 'any systematic, critical and self-critical enquiry that aims to contribute to the advancement of knowledge.' Therefore, this links to qualitative and quantitative paradigms, in that research is both externally verified but is also interpreted internally.

ii) Qualitative and Quantitative Research

Different styles, traditions or approaches use different methods of collecting data, but no approach automatically prescribes nor rejects any particular method. The main features of quantitative research are observation, measurement and comparison of resulting data. Quantitative researchers collect facts and study the relationship between sets of facts and work towards producing general conclusions.

Therefore, the decision in this particular research study about raising standards whilst maintaining Catholic school principles to use a survey providing a range of responses to a given question or statement (e.g. strong positive impact... strong negative impact) will allow for considerable objectivity and for a statistical analysis. However, had the questionnaire been structured to only allow for such pre-coded responses, it may have been restricting and frustrating. In fact, a trusted colleague practised answering the original questionnaire that was purely in this format and explained that she felt she wanted the chance to expand on her thoughts after each question, rather than just have the opportunity to do so right at the end (where an 'explain further if you wish' section had been included). Therefore, the questionnaire was adapted to allow for this, thereby allowing both quantitative and qualitative responses, which are still easy to collate and analyse, due to the option of respondents being able to share their views more openly and less restrictively in the 'explain further if you wish' sections after each question. Otherwise, the survey would not have allowed for the depth of engagement required to articulate, explore and reflect upon the views of the impact of the inspection regime on the Catholic ethos within the case study school. As it now stands, this will allow a more in-depth analysis of individual teachers' perceptions of

current practice within the school, thereby enabling it to be used as a primary research instrument for this study.

This method has been adopted because researchers deploying a qualitative perspective are more concerned with these individual perceptions, rather than just be measuring data. As Bell states:

They doubt whether social ‘facts’ exist and question whether a ‘scientific’ approach can be used when dealing with human beings [...] Yet there are occasions when qualitative researchers draw on quantitative techniques, and vice versa. It will all depend on what data the researcher requires.

(Bell 2010: 5-6)

Morrison suggests that qualitative research provides contexts for description and interpretation. Researchers, she argues ask, ‘What is going on here?’ and can only make sense of the data collected if they are able to understand it in a broader historical or educational context. (2007:27)

Briggs and Coleman support this: ‘In qualitative research, detailed consideration is given to the holistic picture in which the research topic is embedded.’ (2007:27)

In the context of this research, the literature reviewed has been relied upon and used/quoted within the survey questions in order to facilitate the researcher to create a framework around which to explore the extent to which negative Ofsted accreditation impacts on Catholic school distinctiveness. Their comments will contribute to this, therefore consideration of the qualitative paradigm recognises that the world of educational research is unique, as it is focusing exclusively on verifiable data, and is therefore grounded in the experience of the practitioner.

iii) Educational Research:

A popular research approach within education is action research, a practical approach to professional inquiry in any social situation. These examples relate to education and are therefore of particular relevance to teachers engaged in their daily contact with pupils.

Action research did not arise in education, but was applied to the development of teaching as its potential was identified. Of particular influence was the work of

Lawrence Stenhouse, who famously advocated that ‘curriculum research and development ought to belong to the teacher’ (1975:142). He was most adamant that ‘it is not enough that teachers’ work should be studied: they need to study it themselves.’ (1975:143)

However, educational research through action research does not produce understanding that has universal truth; it is about the person in the here and now understanding what they can do to ensure their values and intentions are realised in their situation. If their deliberations produce an understanding which helps them, then they can offer it to others to try.

Richard Pring (2004:7) refers to Stenhouse’s definition and states that the term ‘research’ is used to refer to ‘any systematic, critical and self-critical enquiry that aims to contribute to the advancement of knowledge,’ whilst Michael Bassey develops Pring’s views and sees educational research as:

Critical enquiry aimed at informing educational judgements and decisions in order to improve educational action. This is the kind of value-laden research that should have immediate relevance to teachers and policy makers, and is itself educational because of its stated intention to ‘inform.’ It is the kind of research in education that is carried out by educationalists. (1999:39)

He goes on to make a distinction between action-oriented research, with its purpose of bringing about change of action in a particular educational setting and what he describes as ‘discipline research’, which is primarily concerned with understanding educational phenomena.

Although there is nothing new about practitioners operating as researchers, difficulties can arise if dearly held views and practices are challenged – especially within a Case Study. This particular research is based upon a case study school, so care needs to be taken when making recommendations, particularly if radical changes are suggested.

Denscombe reminds us that:

Because the activity of action research almost inevitably affects others, it is important to have a clear idea of when and where the action research necessarily steps outside the bounds of collecting information which is purely personal and relating to the practitioners alone. Where it does so, the usual standard of ethics must be observed: permissions obtained, confidentiality maintained, identities protected. (Denscombe 2007: 128-9)

Within this case study, interviews could have been used in order to allow for in-depth analysis because, as Bell states, ‘the interview can yield rich material and can often put flesh on the bones of questionnaire responses’ (2010:157). However, there are a number of potential disadvantages in employing interviews as a method of obtaining information in the context of this study. Open questions can often produce vast amounts of information that can be problematic when analysing responses. The skill of the researcher is to gather unbiased data that is reliable. The interviewer can influence the responses by their body language or facial expression and can also bring pre-formed opinions to the interview process. Therefore, in this particular research study, it was decided for more ease of analysis and more unbiased responses to choose the ‘explain further if you wish’ fields within the questionnaire in order to collate some more in-depth responses this way.

Questionnaires are a commonly used tool for research as it allows for the acquisition of a large number of both quantitative and qualitative responses, which are easy to collate and analyse. Dr Thomas F Burgess advises on ensuring that attention is carefully paid to the design of the questionnaire, stating:

A crucial part of good research design concerns making sure that the questionnaire design addresses the needs of the research. To put this another way; somehow we need to ensure that the questions asked are the right ones. (2001:1)

With this in mind, the first ‘pilot’ questionnaire that was designed as part of this research was disregarded. The beginning of the questionnaire was too leading, hinting that an Ofsted category of ‘serious weaknesses’ had a negative impact on staff well-being and motivation. Respondents were to provide a range of responses to a given question or statement (e.g. strongly agree... strongly disagree). On examining the responses, it was realised that not only were the findings limited with no real in-depth conclusions to be drawn, but it was apparent that some respondents were using it as an opportunity to air their grievances, which was not the purpose of the research. Instead, the survey needed more close links to the Literature reviewed for effective analysis, with more focus on the Ofsted monitoring process rather than the management of the school in order to allow for more objectivity. This original was also a paper questionnaire, which allowed for some respondents to miss questions out or to rush without any due thought or consideration, and anonymity was not guaranteed (some had written their name across the top).

Therefore, the questionnaire was redesigned to be much more focused on how respondents perceived the Ofsted monitoring regime to have impacted (or not) on the Catholic ethos of the school, with questions carefully worded and chosen to allow for objective responses, with direct references to relevant Literature cited in the questions. It was decided to utilise the website [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com) to administer the survey, to allow for absolute anonymity and honesty, and for ease of analysis.

The advantages of using questionnaires are that they can be brief, easy to understand and reasonably quick to complete, if designed appropriately. This redesign allows for that, so that the data collected will be less likely to be affected by interpersonal factors given the answers are supplied.

Because response rates to questionnaires can be low, as they can be seen as unimportant when time is precious, especially in the current educational climate, this could produce a distortion in the response group, as those with possibly more free time, or those who are more comfortable in expressing their opinion will be more likely to complete the questionnaire. To increase the likelihood of participation, participants need to be informed of the purpose of the research, consent obtained and confidentiality assured.

iv) Case Study Approach:

Case study researchers aim to identify an organisation's common and unique features to identify or attempt to identify the influences on how said organisation functions. Yin (cited in Bell 2010:8) reminds us that 'the more a study contains specific propositions, the more it will stay within reasonable limits' (Yin 1994:137). In this study, Ofsted reports will be used in order to provide such context.

Critics of the case study approach draw attention to a number of problems and/or disadvantages, most notably that generalization is not always possible, though Denscombe makes the point that 'the extent to which findings from the case study can be generalised to other examples in the class depends on how far the case study example is similar to others of its type' (2007: 43). Again, by using the Ofsted reports to provide context, these similarities can be easily made.

Bell (2010:39) cites that Bassey prefers the term 'relatability'. In his 1981 paper, he states his opinion that:

An important criterion for judging the merit of a case study is the extent to which the details are sufficient and appropriate for a teacher working in a similar situation to relate his decision making to that described in the case study. The relatability of a case study is more important than its generalizability. (1981:85)

He considers that if case studies:

are carried out systematically and critically, if they are aimed at the improvement of education, if they are relatable, and if by publication of the findings they extend the boundaries of existing knowledge, then they are valid forms of educational research. (1981:86)

Therefore, it is apparent that there are numerous pros and cons to the case study approach. It is suitable in the context of this research due to allowing the researcher an opportunity to study the impact of the programme of Ofsted monitoring in order to raise standards on the upholding of Catholic school principles within that case study school. The research can then be 'relatable' by others working in Catholic schools and facing a grade 4 category, in order for them to consider if they are in danger of losing sight of their Catholic ethos, and if they are keeping their Catholic school principles central in all their dealings with their teaching staff in their search for rapid improvement.

v) Survey questions and rationale:

Within the created questionnaire, direct quotes from the Literature reviewed are cited so that all teachers are able to access the questions. It needed to be borne in mind that due to falling numbers of practising Catholics within Catholic schools, not all participants would be aware of the principles behind Catholic schooling. Therefore, to allow for equitable accessibility to the questions, and also to allow for ease of analysis afterwards, it is important to include this information. Questions 1 to 7 are focused on the first key research question: 'The extent to which Catholic School principles are upheld and fostered whilst searching for excellence in secular terms'; questions 8 to 13 are focused on the second key research question: 'The extent to which staff well-being and morale is upheld in its search for Ofsted quality – how much is Christ at the centre of this?' Each question has an 'explain further if you

wish' box in order for participants to expand and explain in more detail if they so wish. Question 14 is for free comments.

The questionnaire was first shared with the head teacher of the case study school in order to receive feedback and consent. He responded via email, stating, 'The questionnaire looks excellent – as does the plan for the dissertation. For me, this tension is always at the heart of the work of leaders in a Catholic school – the secular demands are relentless and there is no doubt that parents and our wider community want to judge the success of a school in largely secular terms.'

The full questionnaire with detailed questions can be found in Appendix 1 on page 79:

Question 1's purpose is to explore whether being in the category has impacted on the spirituality within the Case Study School, in the respondents' opinions.

Question 2 is to explore the spirituality element in more depth, in order to ascertain if there is a belief that academia has taken a higher priority to spirituality within the case study school.

Question 3 seeks to establish whether there is a belief that the category has impacted on the core principles of Catholic education. It is also important to include because there is often a misconception amongst some staff that a Catholic school is more concerned with the pastoral care of a pupil, rather than their academic performance, which is not true. It is important for this question to be early on in the survey in order to ensure there are no misconceptions about this issue as the survey progresses.

Question 4 refers to the duty of care for the poor, which is a huge topic – it could be a dissertation research project alone! However, this question is included in order to ascertain whether there is a belief that an Ofsted category has impacted upon this, with a possible focus on the C/D borderline or whether progress measures and pupil premium foci, for example, has ensured this as a priority.

Question 5 has been included to gauge whether there is a feeling that the case study school has been seduced by shallow indicators of approval and market forces, thereby beginning to compromise the integrity of the special mission of Catholic schooling.

Question 6 links to *Question 5* in that market forces and materialism are beginning to dominate within our society. Therefore, this question seeks to consider if there is a sense of materialism overtaking spirituality/morality within the Case Study School, thereby undermining the notion of the common good.

Question 7 seeks to discover, with a culture of focus on examinations and how to gain marks from the examiner, if there is a feeling that examinations are the be-all and end-all at the detriment to deeper learning – are young people being indoctrinated to regurgitate information for an examination, rather than looking for their own Truth?

Question 8 moves the focus onto staff well-being and morale and begins to explore whether the inspection process has had an impact on this; whether teaching staff feel that they have been treated humanely and positively with support, respect, trust, dignity and encouragement throughout the monitoring process in the search for excellence.

Question 9 develops *Question 8* in more detail, focusing on whether respondents believe they have been treated equally in the sight of God, whether they have been developed with their individual needs met, had their opinions sought and valued, and treated honourably throughout the monitoring process.

Question 10 again enables a reflection to be made about whether the search for excellence within the case study school is linked to Gospel Values and the common good, or whether it is too focused on examination results and league tables.

Question 11 is included to judge whether the respondents believe the Ofsted process has created a culture of fear where they feel the need to hide their mistakes, or whether it has been seen as an opportunity to develop themselves and learn from their mistakes, sharing and reflecting upon them.

Question 12, rather than being linked to any Literature on Catholic School principles, has been included in order to allow respondents to develop their responses to *Question 11* and explicitly indicate whether their well-being, morale, development and confidence has been directly impacted upon during the programme of monitoring.

Question 13 could be seen as being dual edged, exploring the notion of two aspects – whether respondents feel valued OR whether they have time to ‘feed’ their spirit. However, it has been included in the same question so that respondents can reflect on how much God is at the centre of them feeling valued; their well-being and motivation. This will enable an interpretation to be made about how much they feel their ‘voices’ are heard and how often they are given opportunity to ‘speak’ to God and allow for their quiet reflection within this notion.

Question 14 gives respondents the chance to share any final thoughts or reflections – positive or negative – about how the Ofsted category has impacted on Catholic School principles.

vi) Ofsted reports:

In order to contextualise this study, and to enable a cross referencing of analysis of results, Ofsted reports will be used to aid interpretation and to provide a more enriching and ‘relatable’ study. A triangulation will be made against the measure of teaching grades in the Summer Terms of 2013, 2014 and 2015, to see what the impact this monitoring and development has had on these grades, therefore ultimately on the quality of teaching provided to the pupils of the school in this search for excellence.

vii) Ethical considerations:

Ethical considerations need to be deliberated relating to undertaking research and many institutions have formalised procedures to include ethical guidelines, research contracts, codes of practice and protocols, deception concerning the purpose of investigations, encroachment on privacy, confidentiality, safety and many others.

Bell says that:

All researchers will be aiming at the principle of ‘informed consent’, which requires careful preparation involving explanation and consultation before any data collecting begins. (2008:3)

Using a fictitious name will conceal the identity of the case study school.

Also, this was considered in deciding the following approach to the recruitment of volunteers:

- The four members of staff from the English department who were in post whilst the school was in its category will be approached and recruited.
- A selection of other core subject teachers (from Maths, Science and RE) will be recruited, as well as a random selection of non-core subject teachers, in order to allow for a comparative response between English and other subject areas. These will be chosen by sending out an email to all staff with an explanation of the research and asking for volunteers.
- Teachers can only take part if they were in post for the whole of the time period from April 2013 to July 2015.
- All participating staff will be given a letter explaining the research, assuring confidentiality, and will be offered a copy of the results after completion if they wish to see them – this will be offered both as an incentive and for ethical reasons. They will sign an agreement form, as well as being fully informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time.
- For ethical reasons, an age category is included in the survey questionnaire (although all respondents will be qualified Teachers, thereby all adults)
- A letter of consent from the Head teacher of the case study school has been sought and obtained.

c) CONCLUSION:

Appropriate methodology relevant to this research study has been explored, alongside the range of research tools that have been chosen linked to ethical considerations, as are relevant to considering the impact of raising standards of teaching & learning in the Case Study School that was placed into a ‘serious weaknesses’ category by Ofsted. The parameters of this research dissertation are those of a small scale project conducted to MA standard.

4. CLASSIFICATION OF RESEARCH.

a) INTRODUCTION:

The hypothesis is as follows:

Historically, Catholic schools have provided, and will continue to provide, a quality education of the whole person, rather than simply prioritising the outcome of their attainment in exams. How does being in a case study school that was recently deemed to have ‘serious weaknesses’ and now ‘requires improvement’ impact on the upholding of Catholic school principles in both the search for excellence and staff morale and motivation?

The key research questions are:

- To what extent are Catholic school principles upheld and fostered whilst searching for excellence in secular terms?
- To what extent is staff well-being and morale upheld in its search for Ofsted quality?
How much is Christ at the centre of this?

b) SURVEY RESULTS:

The initial reporting will be on the summarised data of all questions from all 14 survey participants of the case study school, alongside their supporting comments. This will be followed by a focus of the survey results of the English department in comparison to a selection of staff from other departmental areas (taken from other core and non-core subject areas) to the staff well-being and motivation questions of 8 to 13. The intention here is to enable observations to be made about if participants feel any differently with regards to their well-being and motivation depending on how much their subject was ‘under scrutiny’ for improvement.

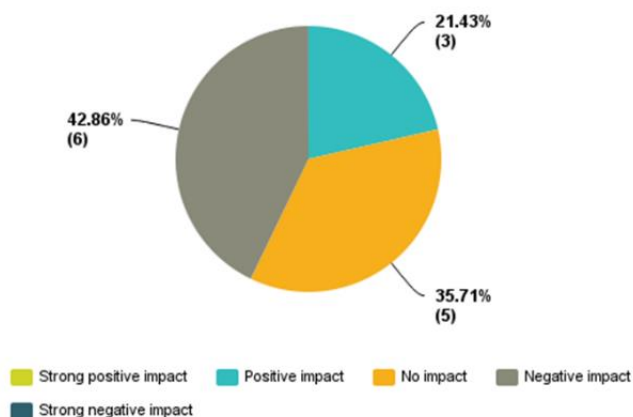
i) Whole School Results:

The subject teacher split undertaking this survey was 28.57% English (4 participants), 42.86% core subject other than English (2 participants of each of Maths, English and RE) and 28.57% non-core subject teachers (4 participants).

Questions 1 to 7 focus on the first research question – To what extent are Catholic school principles upheld and fostered whilst searching for excellence in secular terms?

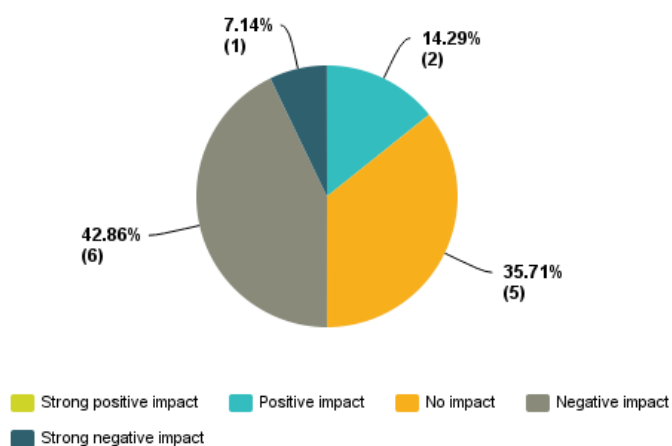
Refer to Appendix 1 on page 78 for full questions:

Question 1.

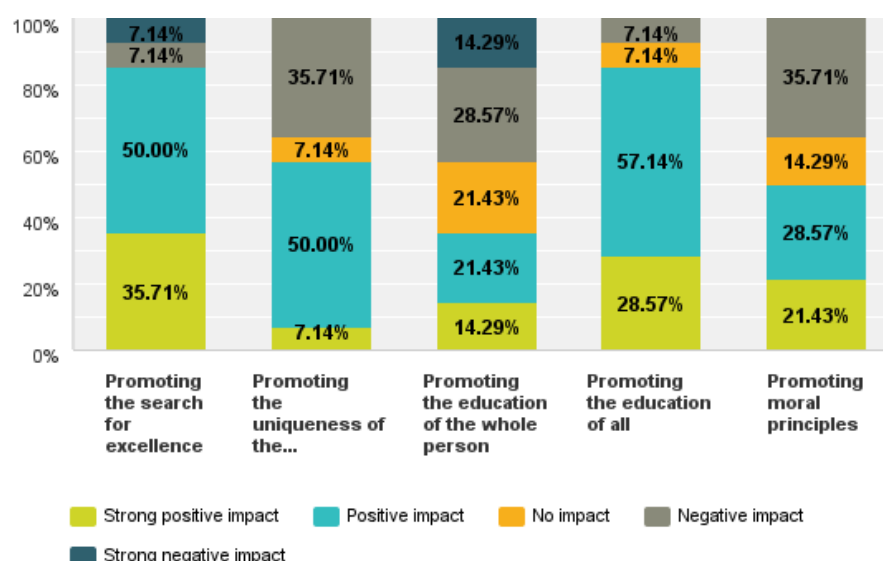


There is quite a mixed response to ‘spirituality’ here, with a very slight majority – 42.86%, believing this has had a negative impact (none strongly), whereas 35.71% believe there has been no impact. The final 21.43% believe there has been a positive impact (none strongly).

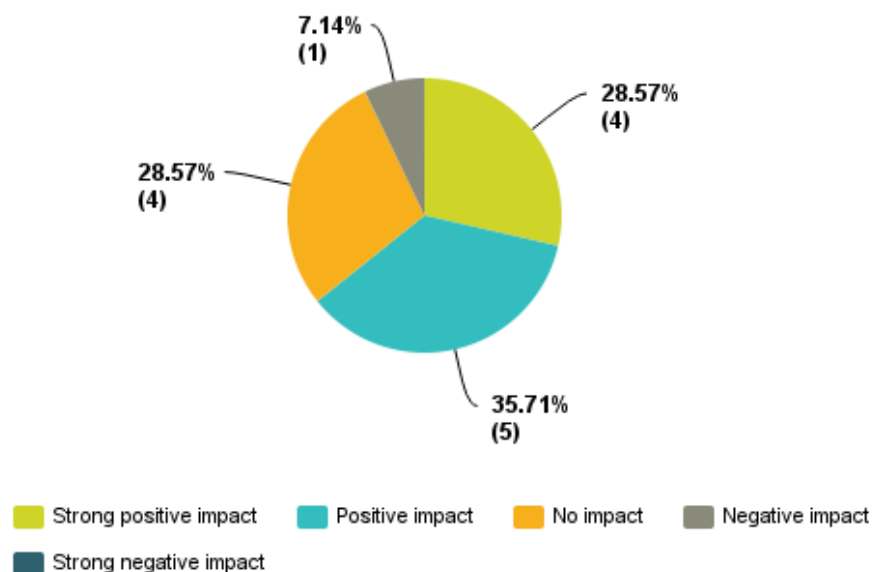
Question 2.



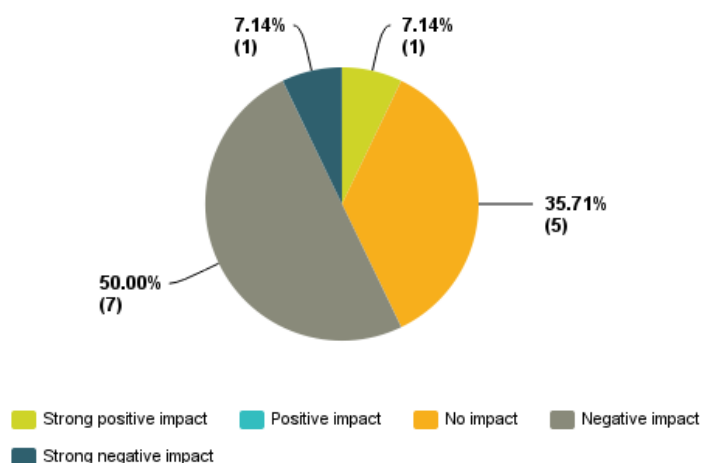
50% believe there has been a negative impact on ‘spirituality v. academia’ – 7.14% strongly so – whilst 35.71% believe there has been no impact. 14.29% believe there has been a positive impact (none strongly so).

Question 3.

- a) 85.71% believe that there has been a positive impact on the ‘search for excellence’, divided as 50% thinking positive; 35.71% thinking strong positive. 14.28% believe there has been a negative impact, split evenly between having a negative and strong negative impact at 7.14% each.
- b) A somewhat mixed response, with 57.14% believing there has been a positive impact on ‘promoting the uniqueness of the individual’ – 7.14% strongly so. 7.14% believe there has had no impact, whereas 35.71% believe there has been a negative impact (none strongly so).
- c) There is a completely mixed response here about ‘promoting the education of the whole person’, with 35.72% believing there has been a positive response – 14.29% strongly. 21.43% believe there has been no impact. 42.86% believe there has been a negative response – 14.29% strongly so.
- d) 85.71% believe there has been a positive impact on ‘promoting the education of all’ – 28.57% strongly. 7.14% believe there has been no impact, with 7.14% believing there has been a negative impact (none strongly so).
- e) A mixed response towards the impact of ‘promoting moral principles’ with half believing there has been a positive impact – 21.45% so. 14.29% believe there has been no impact, and 35.71% believe there has been a negative impact (none strongly so).

Question 4.

64.28% believe there has been a positive impact on the duty of care for the poor and disadvantaged – 28.75% strongly so. 28.57% believe there has been no impact, whereas 7.14% believe there has been a negative impact (none strongly so).

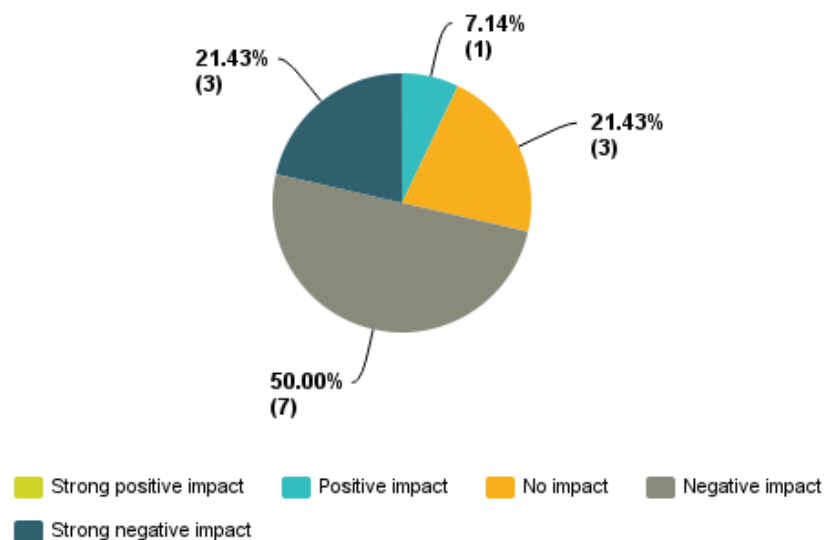
Question 5.

Only

7.14% (none strongly so) believe there has been a positive impact on the mission of a Catholic learning community, whereas 35.71% believe there has been no impact,

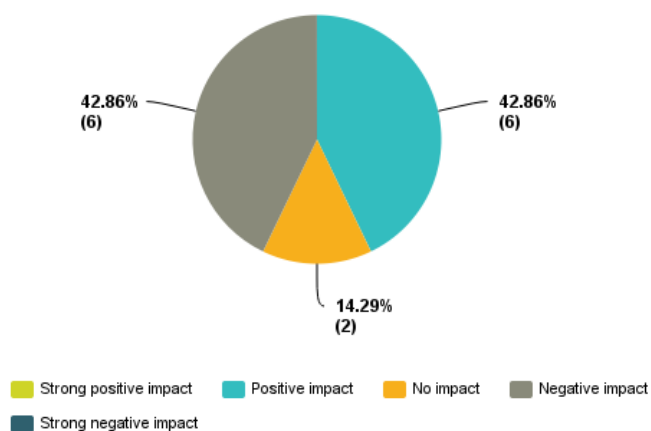
whilst more than half – 57.14% believe there has been a negative impact. 7.14% of these think strongly so.

Question 6.



The majority of participants – 71.43% – believe there has been a negative impact on spiritual and moral culture – 21.43% strongly so. 21.43% believe there has been no impact, whereas only 7.14% believe there has been a positive impact (none strongly so).

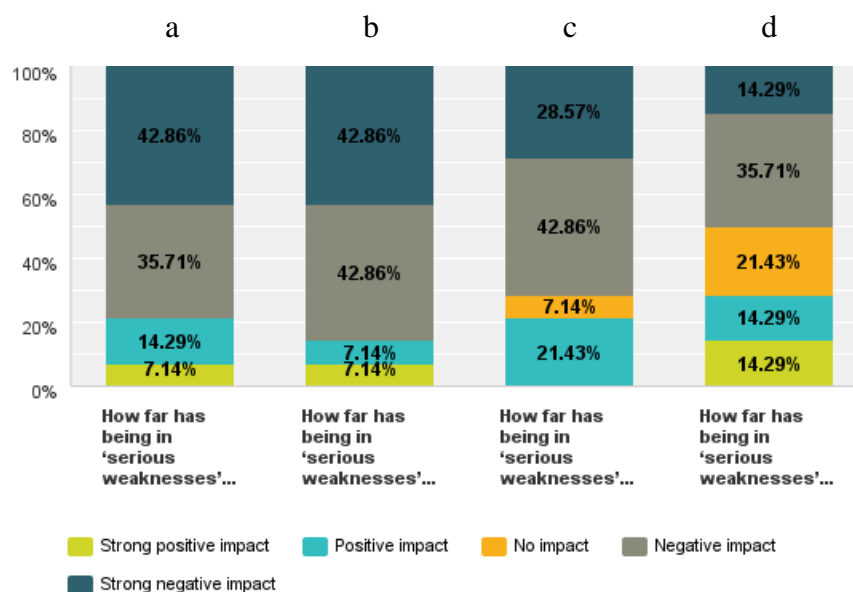
Question 7.



A complete split response here to the impact on identity, worth, etc. 42.86% believe there has been a negative impact (none strongly so), 14.29% no impact and 42.86% a positive impact (none strongly so).

Questions 8 to 13 are focused on the second research question – To what extent is staff well-being and morale upheld in its search for Ofsted quality? How much is Christ at the centre of this?

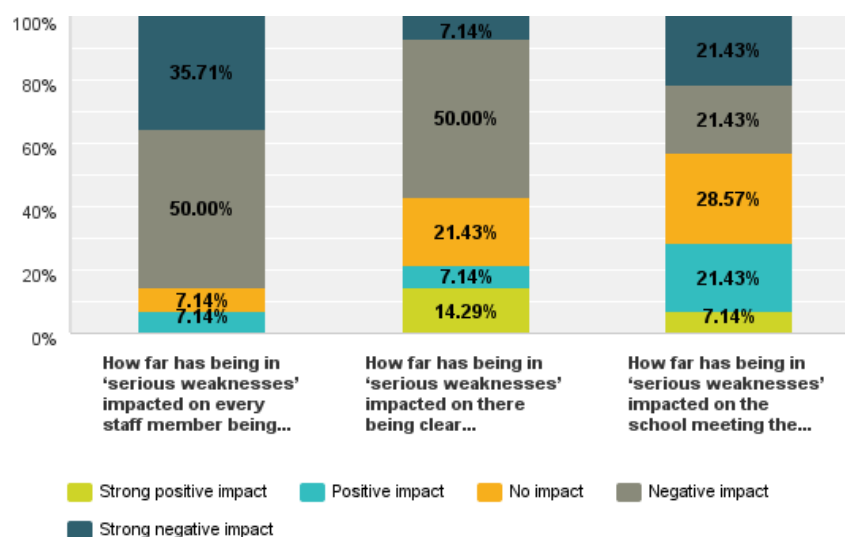
Question 8.



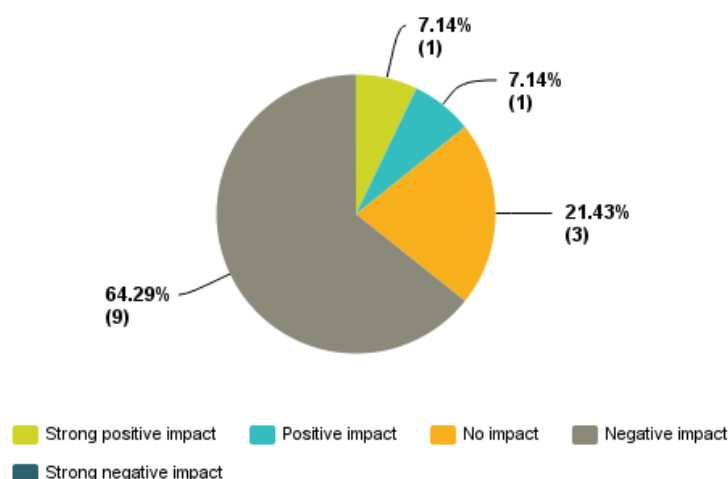
- The majority of participants – 78.57% – believe there has been a negative impact on value, respect and trust of staff – 42.86% believing strongly so, and 35.71% negative. This compares to 21.43% believing there has been a positive impact – 7.14% strongly and 7.14% positive. (None believe no impact).
- The majority of participants – 85.72% – believe there has been a negative impact on a happy atmosphere – 42.86% believing strongly so, and 42.86% negative. Only 14.28% believe there has been a positive impact – 7.14% each strongly and positive. (None believe no impact).
- A slightly lower majority – 71.43% – believe there has been a negative impact on celebrating achievement. 28.57% believe strongly so and 42.86% negative. 7.14% think there has been no impact, and 21.43% think there has been a positive impact (none strongly so).
- There is a more mixed response to reaching out for excellence in every sphere, with 50% believing there has been a negative response – 14.29% strongly and

35.71% negative. 21.43% believe there has been no impact, whilst 28.58% believe positive impact – 14.29% each strongly and positive.

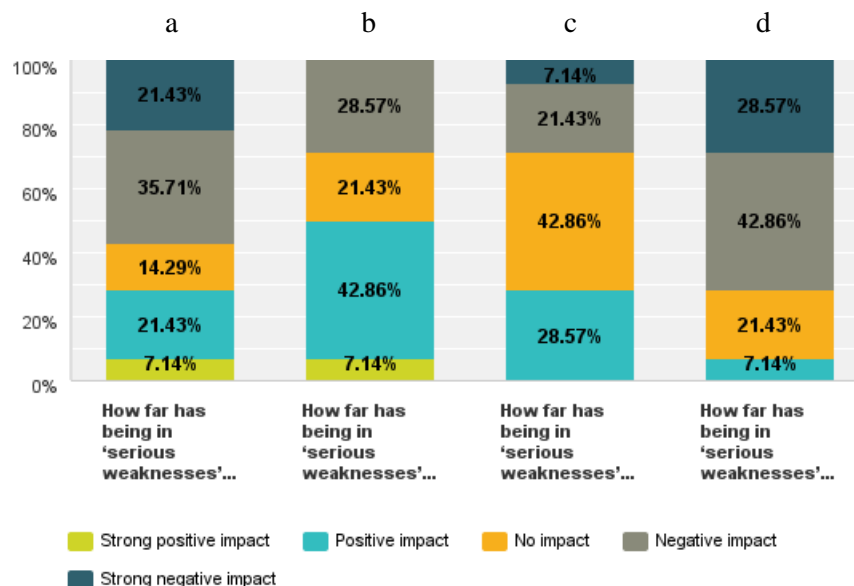
Question 9.



- a) The majority of participants – 85.71% – believe that there has been a negative impact on staff being valued. 35.71% of these believe strongly so. 7.14% believe there has been no impact, whilst 7.14% believe there has been a positive impact (with none strong positive).
- b) Guidelines being implemented with honesty, justice, etc. is believed to have been impacted negatively by 57.14% of participants – 7.14% strongly so. 21.43% believe there to have been no impact, whereas 28.57% believe there to have been a positive impact – 7.14% strongly.
- c) 42.86% believe that there has been a negative impact on meeting the needs of individuals; of these 21.43% believe strongly. 28.57% believe no impact, whilst 28.57% think there has been a positive impact – 7.14% strongly so.

Question 10.

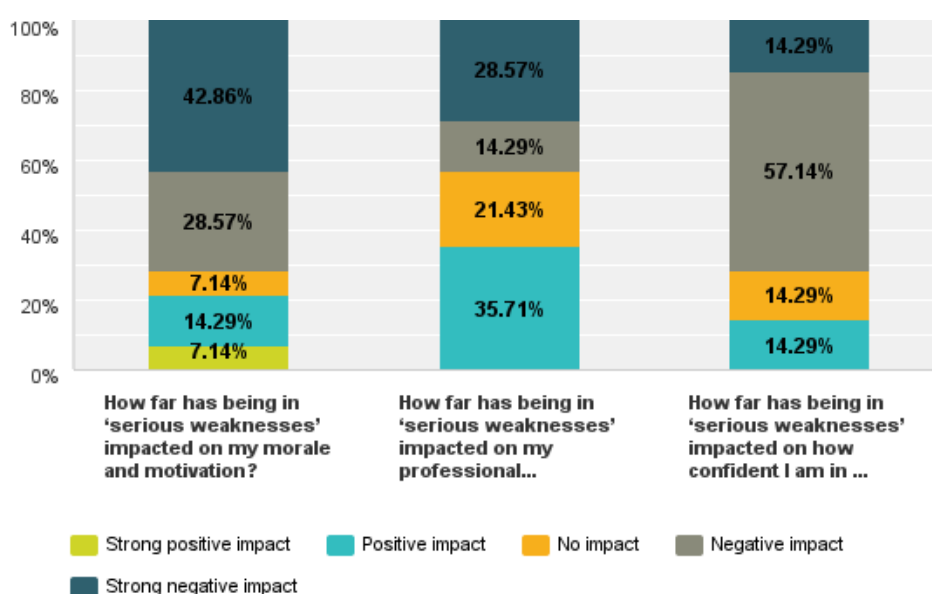
64.29% believe that there has been a negative impact on the gospel values of love and the pursuit of the common good (none strongly so), whilst 21.43% believe there has been no impact. 14.28% believe there has been a positive impact – 7.14% strongly so.

Question 11.

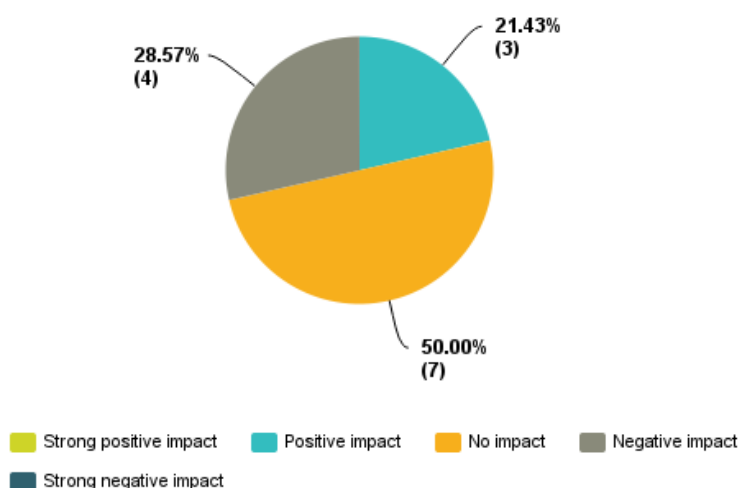
- a) 57.14% believe that the inspection process has had a negative impact on them feeling that mistakes are part of the learning curve – 21.43% strongly so. 14.29% believe there has been no impact, whereas 28.57% – 7.14% strongly – believing there has been a positive impact.

- b) Conversely, 50% believe there has been a positive impact (7.14% strongly) on them being encouraged to learn from their mistakes, with 21.43% believing in impact, and 28.57% believe there has been a negative impact (none strongly).
- c) 42.86% believe there has been no impact upon admitting mistakes, whilst 28.57% believe there has been a positive impact on this (none strongly). As for a negative impact, 28.57% believe this has been the case – 7.14% strongly so.
- d) 71.43% believe there has been a negative impact on feeling ashamed about mistakes – 28.57% strongly so. 21.43% believe there has been no impact, whereas only 7.14% believe there to have been a positive impact (none strongly so).

Question 12.



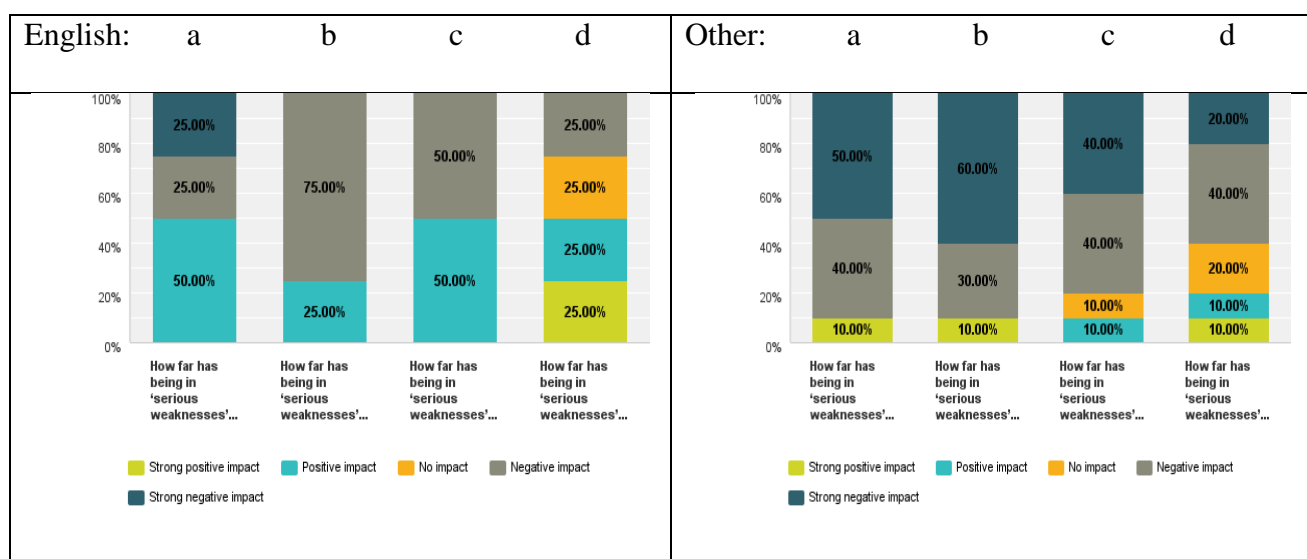
- a) 71.43% of participants believe there has been a negative impact on their morale and motivation – 42.86% strongly so. Just 7.14% believe there has been no impact, whereas 21.43% believe a positive impact – 7.14% strongly so.
- b) A much more mixed response to the impact on CPD, with 42.86% believing there to have been a negative impact – 28.57% strongly so. 21.43% chose no impact, whereas 35.71% chose positive impact (none strongly).
- c) As for confidence in teaching, 71.43% believe there has been a negative impact on this – 14.29% strongly so, whilst 14.29% believe there has been no impact. Likewise, 14.29% believe there has been a positive impact (none strongly so).

Question 13.

50% of participants believe there has been no impact on having time to 'speak to God', whereas 28.57% believe there has been a negative impact (none strongly) and 21.43% believe there has been a positive impact (none strongly).

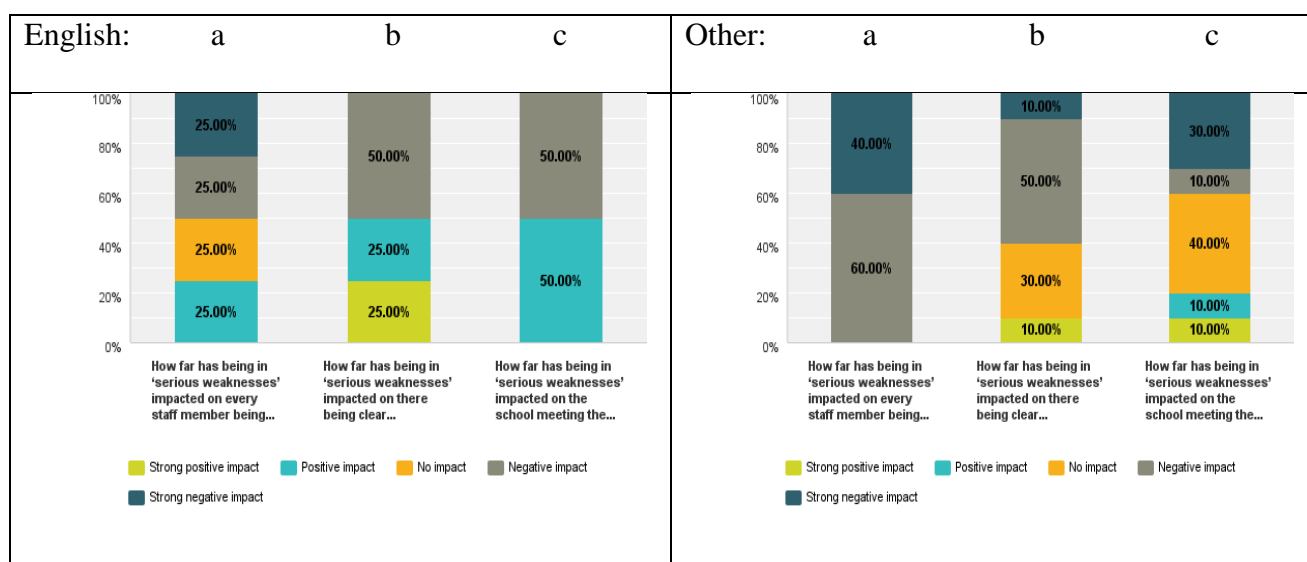
ii) A comparison of English department with other department responses:

The reason for this comparison is to ascertain whether the particular close focus on the English department during the Ofsted monitoring process impacted differently to their perceptions of their staff morale and well-being in comparison to the rest of the school. Therefore, the following comparisons have been made:

Question 8.

- a) 50% of English thought that there has been a negative impact, compared to 90% of other departments, whereas 50% of English chose a positive impact compared to none of others. No impact was chosen by none of English compared to 10% of others.
- b) 75% of English thought that there has been a negative impact, compared to 90% of other departments, whereas 25% of English chose a positive impact compared to none of others. No impact was chosen by none of English compared to 10% of others.
- c) 50% of English thought that there has been a negative impact, compared to 80% of other departments, whereas 50% of English chose a positive impact compared to 10% of others. No impact was chosen none of English compared to 10% of others.
- d) 25% of English thought that there has been a negative impact, compared to 60% of other departments, whereas 50% of English chose a positive impact compared to 20% of others. No impact was chosen by 25% of English compared to 20% of others.

Question 9.

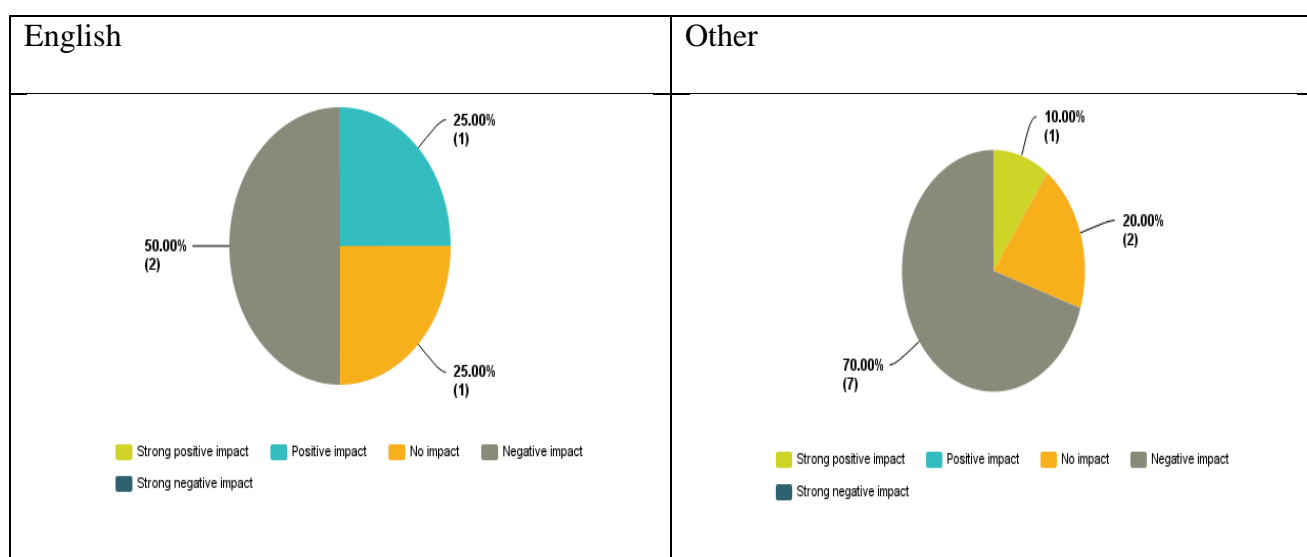


- a) 50% of English thought that there has been a negative impact, compared to 100% of other departments, whereas 25% of English chose a positive impact compared

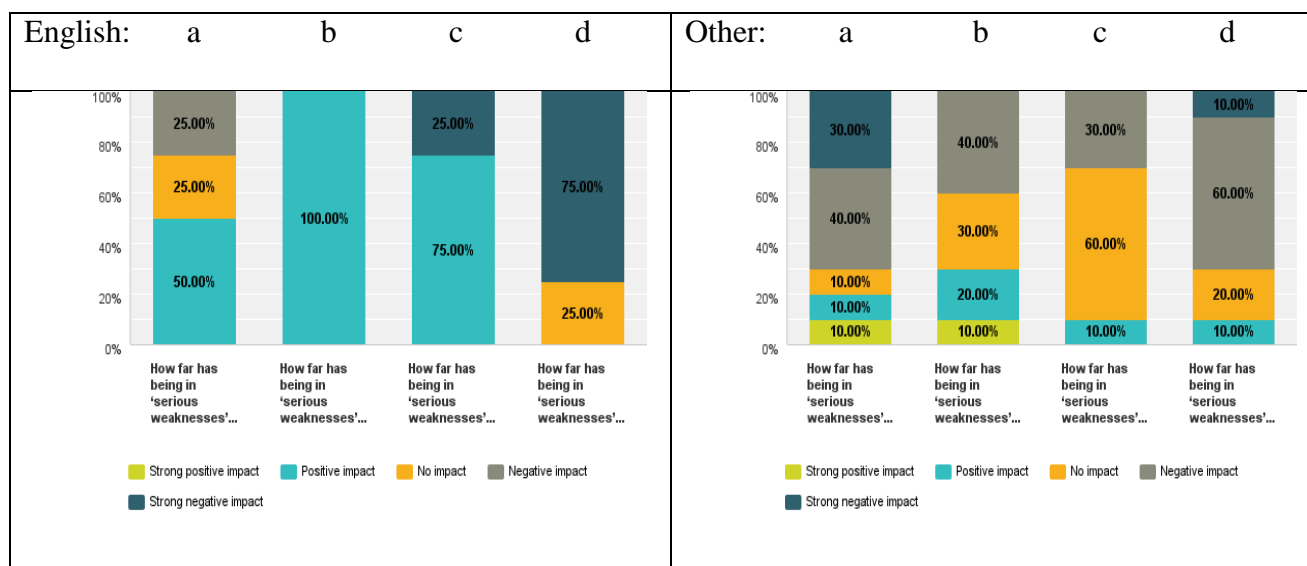
to none of others. No impact was chosen by 25% of English compared to none of others.

- b) 50% of English thought that there has been a negative impact, compared to 60% of other departments, whereas 50% of English chose a positive impact compared to 10% of others. No impact was chosen by none of English compared to 30% of others.
- c) 50% of English thought that there has been a negative impact, compared to 40% of other departments, whereas 50% of English chose a positive impact compared to 20% of others. No impact was chosen by none of English compared to 40% of others.

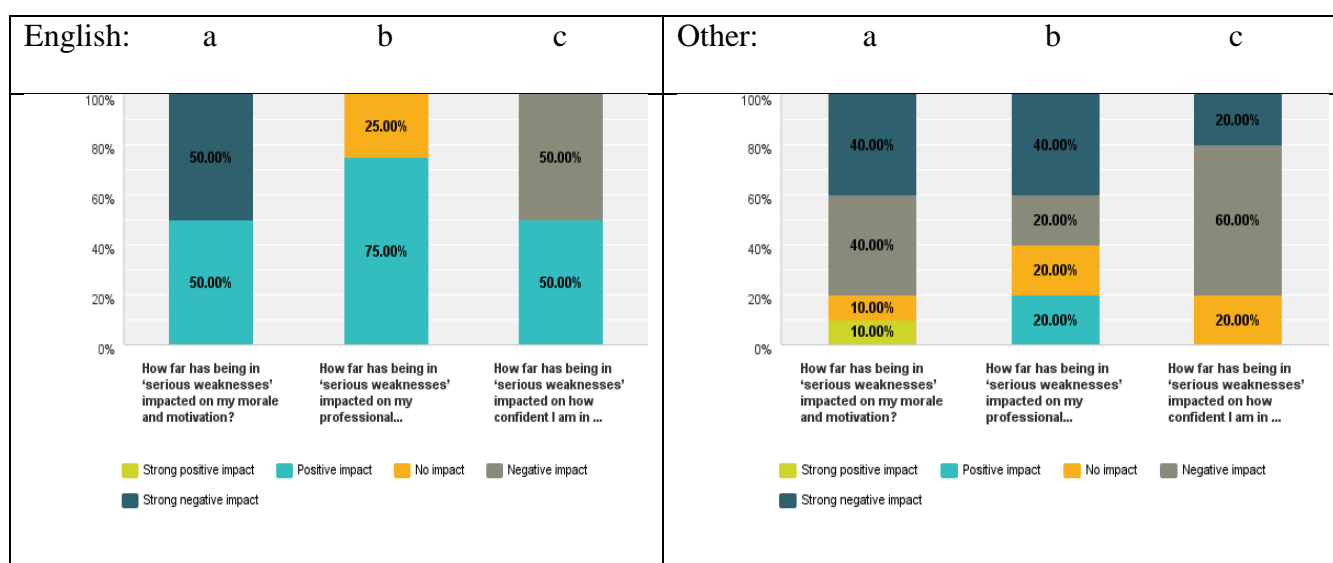
Question 10.



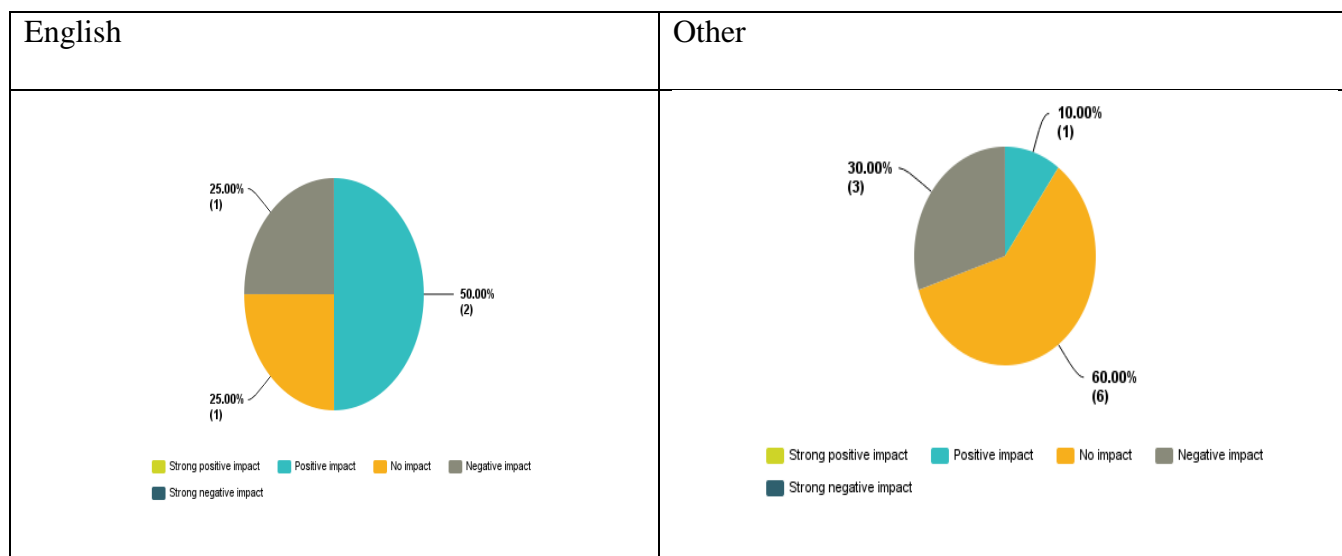
50% of English thought that there has been a negative impact, compared to 70% of other departments, whereas 25% of English chose a positive impact compared to 10% of others. No impact was chosen by 25% of English compared to 20% of others.

Question 11.

- a) 25% of English thought that there has been a negative impact, compared to 70% of other departments, whereas 50% of English chose a positive impact compared to 20% of others. No impact was chosen by 25% of English compared to 10% of others.
- b) None of English thought that there has been a negative impact, compared to 40% of other departments, whereas 100% of English chose a positive impact compared to 30% of others. No impact was chosen by none of English compared to 30% of others.
- c) 25% of English thought that there has been a negative impact, compared to 30% of other departments, whereas 75% of English chose a positive impact compared to 10% of others. No impact was chosen by none of English compared to 60% of others.
- d) 75% of English thought that there has been a negative impact, compared to 70% of other departments, whereas none of English chose a positive impact compared to 10% of others. No impact was chosen by 25% of English compared to 20% of others.

Question 12.

- a) 50% of English thought that there has been a negative impact, compared to 80% of other departments, whereas 50% of English chose a positive impact compared to 10% of others. No impact was chosen by none of English compared to 10% of others.
- b) None of English thought that there has been a negative impact, compared to 60% of other departments, whereas 75% of English chose a positive impact compared to 20% of others. No impact was chosen by 25% of English compared to 20% of others.
- c) 50% of English thought that there has been a negative impact, compared to 80% of other departments, whereas 50% of English chose a positive impact compared to none of others. No impact was chosen by none of English compared to 20% of others.

Question 13.

25% of English thought that there has been a negative impact, compared to 30% of other departments, whereas 50% of English chose a positive impact compared to 10% of others. No impact was chosen by 25% of English compared to 60% of others.

5. INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS.

a) INTRODUCTION:

The aim of this research is to critically evaluate the tensions faced by Catholic school leaders in ensuring that quality education is provided in secular terms, whilst still upholding Catholic educational principles in the aim for excellence. The key research questions are:

- To what extent are Catholic School principles upheld and fostered whilst searching for excellence in secular terms?
- To what extent is staff well-being and morale upheld in its search for Ofsted quality? How much is Christ at the centre of this?

Therefore, the Catholic ethos questionnaire will firstly be analysed to explore how raising the quality of teaching & learning has impacted on the case study school that was previously judged as having ‘serious weaknesses’, followed by an evaluation of the impact of the programme of monitoring on staff well-being and motivation. A comparison will be made between the English department versus other subject areas in order to explore whether teaching in the English department versus other subject areas has impacted differently on their staff well-being and motivation;

To contextualise the results, in light of some of the comments made, it is important to note that the headteacher was only in post for two days prior to the inspection that judged the school as having ‘serious weaknesses’ taking place. In spite of this, the report states:

The headteacher worked closely with senior leaders before he formally took up his post and actions taken, for example to improve teaching, have begun to take effect. Many staff commented positively in their questionnaire about the impact of the headteacher’s leadership which they felt had already raised expectations for students.
(17–18 April 2013)

The subsequent Section 8 monitoring inspection of July 2013, went on to say:

The headteacher started at the school two days before the inspection in April 2013. In the short time he has been at the school he has made a very positive impact on staff and students. His clarity of vision, high expectations and drive to improve the school are tangible. Staff are upbeat and their morale is good.
(8 July 2013)

Therefore, the results will be analysed in light of these and subsequent reported comments.

It must be remembered that those who are in charge of Catholic schools are to ensure that the formation given in them is, in its academic standards, at least as outstanding as that in other schools in the area, and that there is an emphasis on teaching and learning in successful and improving schools.

b) How has raising the quality of teaching & learning impacted on the Catholic school principles of the case study school?

Quality of teaching & learning at St Mary's Catholic High School has undoubtedly improved during the period under scrutiny. Results from lesson observations (that were undertaken as part of the school's own monitoring cycles) showed good or better judgements improved from 31% in summer 2013 to 65% in summer 2014; with a further improvement to 76% in summer 2015. These improvements were necessary, because, as stated in the Section 5 Ofsted inspection in April 2013: 'Teaching overall [was] inadequate. Not enough teaching [was] of a good enough quality to enable students to overcome previous underachievement.'

This links with Catholic school principles because in the 'search for excellence', the quality of teaching needs to improve in order to overcome student underachievement. However, how do staff perceive other aspects of Catholic school principles to have been impacted upon during this period of improvement? As one respondent to the survey in Q.14 interestingly reflects, 'In an ideal situation, the unique ethos and values of a Catholic school should underpin any drive for improvement, not least the challenge to escape from a category or a period of difficulty.'

With regards to the development of spirituality within the case study school, around half of participants perceive the inspection monitoring process to have had a negative impact, with 'forming a spirituality' in Q.1 at 42.86% and pupils' 'spiritual development' versus their 'academic development' in Q.2 at 50%, whereas just under a third believe there has been no impact. The vast majority of 'negative impact' comments state that with the focus on pupil attainment and progress, they feel that at times a focus on spirituality has been lost because 'focus shifts to a more attainment driven ethos,' and 'teachers are often very focused on progress and behaviour for learning routines'.

Although the ‘no impact’ comments also support this, these felt that the change of leadership in the school has actually provided a greater focus on spirituality because ‘there have been changes to the leadership culture which have respected teachers’ contributions to spirituality more’ as, ‘the headteacher has worked hard to implement spirituality in the school in the past 2 years.’ They explain that they have chosen ‘no impact’, however, because the headteacher ‘arrived at the same time as the Ofsted decision’, so these changes ‘are to do with changes in leadership culture, and only tangentially related to being in serious weaknesses.’ Therefore, it appears participants believe the arrival of the new headteacher has brought a positive focus on this area, yet the ‘serious weaknesses’ category has negated this somewhat.

There seems to be a misconception from the majority of participants’ responses, however, that the development of spirituality is only linked to collective worship. They seem to fail to see that in sharing their love for their subject, this can inspire pupils in a love for learning, just as Jesus was a teacher; thereby developing them spiritually within Christ’s teaching.

As for the impact on the provision of Catholic core principles (CBEW 1996), there seems to be a much more positive picture portrayed with a greater understanding in Q.3. The vast majority of respondents – 85.71% of them – recognise that in raising pupil attainment, this directly links to the ‘search for excellence’ and the ‘education of all’ in enabling pupils to achieve of their best in whichever area they excel in – helping them to overcome whatever barriers to learning or life they face (just as Jesus encouraged in his teachings), inevitably having a positive impact on league tables, etc. One respondent explains that, ‘the importance of academic progress for all promotes the importance for education for all and a desire to unleash potential in all pupils.’

However, there is a real mixed response to promoting ‘the uniqueness of the individual’, ‘the education of the whole person’ and ‘moral principles’. Although over half (57.14%) feel there has been a positive impact on ‘promoting uniqueness’ (one commenting that ‘changes to marking policies and accountability for them have had a strong impact [and] lessons regularly contain pupils responding in detail to directed, personal targets.’) and half a positive impact on ‘moral principles’, in contrast nearly half (42.86%) feel there has been a negative impact on ‘the whole person’. Comments explaining reasons for this state that the whole nature of focusing on examination results means that pupils are not ‘given the time or teaching necessary to prepare themselves for the wider world’ and so

‘certain aspects become self-serving at the detriment of moral values.’ This could certainly be argued as being the case whilst studying for GCSEs, and there does seem to be an implication that pupils are in danger of being seen as a statistic rather than as a young person, but one wonders if teachers are missing real opportunities, for example, in the choices of topics for exploration within their subject areas that would really enable pupils to focus and reflect upon Gospel values and aspects of SMSC in order for pupils to develop their own morality, leading them to develop their ideas and conscience with Christ at the centre. Are some teachers losing sight of ‘deeper learning’ in order to focus on the correct examination answer? Is this what close monitoring as a result of the inspection regime causes? It could be argued so from the perceptions of these survey participants.

Encouragingly, the focus on the progress and attainment of students entitled to the pupil premium funding ascribes with the principle that Catholic schools have a duty of care for the poor. It is therefore unsurprising that in Q.4 the majority of respondents – 64.28% – believe there has been a positive impact on this, as they recognise that the school previously ‘did not have high expectations... [and]... too many “exceptions” were made’ because ‘being “poor” and “underprivileged” was used as an excuse for poor attainment, but being under such scrutiny... led all teachers having to re-evaluate this view.’ This prior attitude links to the misconception some people have that a Catholic school is more concerned with the pastoral care of a pupil, rather than their academic performance, which is not true, so it is a positive that the category forced those people to re-evaluate this misconception, particularly as Ofsted stated in their November 2013 Section 8 monitoring inspection that:

The numbers of students in Year 11 at the end of summer 2013 making the nationally expected rates of progress in English and mathematics were worryingly low.
(8 November 2013)

A surprising result is that 28.57% believe the category has had no impact on this area, which is difficult to assimilate with the current culture of education. Maybe they think it is the focus on those entitled to the pupil premium from the Government rather than being in a category that has impacted on this. It is not possible to substantiate this, however, because the only ‘no impact’ comment seems purely to focus on SEN pupils as the only disadvantaged, rather than poverty, which is a misconception. Despite this, it is reassuring to read in the 2014 Section 5 inspection report that:

The gap between disadvantaged students and others nationally is closing for attainment and progress both in English and mathematics. In 2014 disadvantaged students remained around one GCSE grade behind others nationally in English and in mathematics. When considering the gap between disadvantaged students and those who are not, within the school, this gap too is closing, but disadvantaged students were still over half a GCSE grade behind others. Pupil premium funding is being used effectively to support these students and their families.

(30 September – 1 October 2014)

There quite clearly is still a way to go in this area in order to really fulfil this central element of the Catholic Church's understanding of its educative mission.

The survey then enabled participants to explore the impact being in 'serious weaknesses' has had on the tensions between quality in secular terms and the Catholic school mission. With the explicit focus of Q.5 gauging whether there is a feeling that the case study school has been seduced by the 'shallow indicators of approval' of national targets and market forces (thereby beginning to compromise the integrity of the special mission of Catholic schooling), the result that the majority think the category has had a negative impact on this, at 57.14%, may not be surprising, with one participant explaining, 'Pupils have been placed under a lot of pressure to get the results and improve the school,' and that, 'Pressure from SLT to improve grades and ensure progression has also hindered teaching and the exploration side of learning...' It seems worth reflecting that there seems to be a failure here to see that 'getting the result' will also benefit the pupil as well as the school, but the perceived hindering of the 'exploration' of learning is a worry.

However, it is quite surprising to discover that over a third of respondents believe there has been no impact in this area. As further explanations have not been given, it is impossible to ascertain why.

This issue is addressed again in Q.6 where a greater majority this time – at 71.43% – believe that there has been a negative impact on the spiritual and moral culture as a result of such a close focus on attainment. Therefore, this seems to imply that there is a sense that academic results are more important than the development of spirituality/morality with Christ at the centre within the case study school, thereby undermining the notion of the common good. In fact, one respondent reflects, 'If the value expressed in this question is that there is a difference between secular education and Catholic education in terms of which outcomes it values most, there is very little evidence of that here,' whilst another states, 'I believe pupils are continued to be seen as an end product and that their results are the most important.' It is recognised, however, that this is as a direct result of

the Ofsted category rather than the leadership of the school, as one respondent says in Q.7, 'Senior Leaders are forced into focusing on this.'

Returning to the notion of teachers losing sight of 'deeper learning' in order to focus on the correct examination answer, Q.7 reveals a split response about how respondents perceive the category to have had an impact on this area. Whilst 42.86% believe there has been a positive impact on 'driving young minds' into the 'search for Truth' (Burn & McQuaid 1995), likewise, the exact amount believe there has been a negative impact, whilst 14.29% state no impact. As the case study school was in the process of reviewing its KS3 curriculum at the time the survey was undertaken (as part of their reviews, departments were asked to make the curriculum much more engaging and challenging with a development of skills and independent thinking), maybe this has affected this result, because, as one respondent comments, 'Reviews of the curriculum are currently underway, and therefore we hope to support SMSC much more, and this should include the Catholic mission with much more clarity and distinctiveness than it has previously,' whilst another states, 'The catholicity of our community is a platform that can lift pupil/teacher performance and give us a direction and hope for the future.' However, as stated, views are divided on this, especially the following comment: 'Absolutely not. There is no Catholic aspect to any of the curriculum changes brought in over the last few years... We have made very strong improvements to the Catholic aspects of our pastoral care; there has been no matching improvement to the Catholic flavour of our curriculum, and the focus has only become more narrow on the exam success measure.'

It is a shame that this respondent does not see the opportunity a curriculum review gives them to address this, but quite possibly this comment is linked to the KS4 examination syllabus changes. There has been so much change in recent years that it could be argued that the GCSE examination content at the end of Year 11 drives the content of the curriculum in all years from Year 7 onwards, therefore only searching for and developing the skills the examiner marks as being correct. This needs to be avoided as much as possible, because, as one respondent perceptively states in the general comments of Q.14: 'We need to make a clear link between our Catholic nature and the task ahead. Pupils need to have opportunity to link their academic journey to spiritual.' They absolutely do!

The rest of the questionnaire is focused on the subject of staff morale and well-being within a Catholic ethos.

c) The impact of the programme of monitoring on teaching staff well-being and motivation

In the 2014 Section 5 Ofsted inspection report, it cited that:

Teaching is improving because staff have undertaken well-focused professional development and individuals receive the support that they need to improve the impact of their teaching on students' progress.

(30 September – 1 October 2014)

Therefore, it is clear that teaching standards have improved in the case study school, but continued improvement is still dependent upon improving the quality and consistency of teaching that is taking place. Within this, Thorsten Grahm (2011) reminds us that servant leadership implies a recognition of staff needs without being judgemental 'in line with the higher purpose of serving God first, to help satisfy that need.' The Ofsted quote above suggests that this has been taking place. Is staff perception, as revealed in the survey, supportive of this?

The Section 8 monitoring report of July 2013 revealed that 'staff are upbeat and their morale is good'. This was at the start of the monitoring process. However, the results of the survey two years later portray staff perception differently, with the vast majority of respondents believing the 'serious weaknesses' category to have had a negative impact. In response to Q.8, 78.57% believe there has been a negative impact on value, respect and trust of staff, whereas an even higher 85.72% believe there has been a negative impact on a happy atmosphere where staff are recognised, developed and safeguarded. It seems the comments in support of this state that the inevitable focus 'on what is needed to improve or simple failures rather than achievement' (71.43% believe there has been a negative impact on celebrating achievement) means that 'pressure in this category has inadvertently resulted in staff feeling undervalued [with] low morale' because of a 'fear of culpability and blame.'

Not everyone feels this way, however, with around a quarter believing there has been a positive impact on support and celebrating achievement, but even here there seems to be a recognition that these improvements are due to a change of 'leadership/culture rather than as a result of 'serious weaknesses', saying they feel 'more individually valued, and have more support than ever before' and that it is 'a much better place than when [they] first arrived.'

However, this perception does suggest that the ‘dignity of the person’ (Grace, 1998) within ‘a learning culture which is also a humane culture’ seems to be being lost somewhat, although ‘reaching out for excellence in every sphere of academic, pastoral, social, moral, physical and spiritual activity’ has produced a more mixed response, where only half believe there has been a negative impact. There seems to be a juxtapositioning of the need to make rapid improvements where strong leaders and governors routinely challenge low expectations and mediocre teaching, with a community founded on Gospel values, when in fact these improved standards assimilate with Catholic school educational principles.

This is further exemplified in participant responses to Q.9 whereby 85.71% believe there has been a negative impact on them being treated equally in the sight of God (with equal value), with one response being, ‘There is a distinct “if your face fits” atmosphere.’ This could be as a result of whatever is the current improvement focus, suggested by the comment, ‘The value of an individual appears to change dependent on the focus, often very quickly.’ Another feels that the need for change means people make ‘sweeping responses which totally devalue all aspects of previous work, and occasionally previous people.’ Leaders do need to have the courage, however, to decide what the priority is for improving teaching & learning and what would have the most impact. Conversely, if it seems to have had no impact, SLT should be brave enough to scrap the initiative and try something different, as long as it has been managed properly and both middle and senior leaders can honestly say that the initiative has been well-led.

It should be remembered, however, that Collaborative ministry encourages school leaders to reflect on the messages in the Gospels and the actions of Jesus. The leaders are asked to include and encourage all members of their school community to ‘work together’ through their words and actions. Paul reminds us that, ‘no one person has all the gifts necessary to build the Church.’ (Romans 12:3-8:1). This applies to leaders of schools; they need the help of all staff when ‘building’ their school. From the comments above, the perception is that the sight of this is being lost, at times, in the search for rapid school improvement.

This is not necessarily so in meeting the needs of individual members of staff, as less than half (42.86%) feel that this has been negatively impacted upon, these stating there is a focus on ‘whole school rather than individual staff’. This perception seems to be in contrast to both the Section 8 Ofsted monitoring reports of July 2013, where it stated,

‘each individual teacher has been made aware of the strengths and weaknesses in their teaching and all are to receive well-considered support to improve the quality of their teaching,’ and November 2013: ‘The school is unfolding a relentless programme of training and support for teachers.’ Or maybe it isn’t in contrast – maybe, it is the very fact that teachers have found this individual scrutiny and subsequent support very difficult, making them doubt their ability with the close focus on, as said earlier, what needs improving in the school, rather than on any successes. This could be supported by the Section 8 Ofsted monitoring report of May 2014, where it states: ‘the number of teachers judged to be teaching lessons that are less than good has halved, reflecting the effectiveness of the support teachers have if their teaching is not good enough.’ (The phrase ‘not good enough’ is paramount here, as Ofsted are explicitly saying that if your teaching ‘requires improvement’ you are therefore ‘not good enough’!) Although in support of a positive impact in this area, one participant comments: ‘Some staff, who have struggled with their teaching, have been given more directed support to improve, but you only seem to ‘qualify’ for such support when you are graded RI/inadequate, not if you are Good and want to be Outstanding.’ A very pertinent point that seems to suggest that the case study school has directed the majority of their support to those teachers whom Ofsted, in their own words, deem to be ‘not good enough’, rather than building upon the successful practice of those good/outstanding practitioners.

It may be no surprise, therefore, that these teaching staff felt they were not treated honourably throughout the monitoring process, exemplified by their response to Q.10 whereby 64.29% of survey participants believe there has also been a negative impact upon the balance of gospel values of love and the pursuit of the common good, explaining, ‘Ofsted override the Gospel values in our school – it is very rare that our school vision is related to achieving the common good and drive by our Catholic ethos. It is evident, but not a prevalent force.’ Another goes on, ‘We try to do this but we have to prioritise what Ofsted wants and this is paramount to us continuing to survive.’ Despite this impact from Ofsted, however, there is a belief that the ‘Headteacher embeds gospel values into leadership of the school.’ It seems from this comment that the Ofsted influence is overriding the school leadership’s attempts to prioritise Gospel values by the very nature of their focus on market forces. One is reminded again of Grace’s question in Hayes & Gearon (2002:7):

Can a legitimate balance be found between Catholic values and market values or will market forces in education begin to compromise the integrity of the special mission of Catholic schooling?

If the respondents to the survey are representative of the whole workforce within the case study school, it would appear that they have, especially when examining responses from Q.11 regarding learning from mistakes, where the Catholic school should provide a supportive environment without being ashamed of fallibility. Students are encouraged to learn from mistakes all the time within the classroom – teachers encourage this and ask them to have faith and risk failure in order to learn from them. Yet despite this, 57.14% of respondents believe that the ‘serious weaknesses’ category has had a negative impact on them feeling that mistakes are part of the learning curve, despite the fact that the Christian leader, as modelled on Christ, is expected to suffer. Conversely, 50% believe there has been a positive impact on them being encouraged to learn from their mistakes, whilst 42.48% believe there has been no impact on admitting their mistakes; yet the greatest majority from this question – 71.43% – believe there has been a negative impact on feeling ashamed about their mistakes. This may be directly linked to the accountability regime, as mentioned in the 2014 Section 5 Ofsted report:

Leaders have developed very rigorous means to check on all aspects of the school, so that they have a clear understanding of the school’s priorities. Actions are tightly focused on priorities. Rigorous checks make sure that any actions taken do make a difference to students. Leaders, staff and students are held closely to account for their work. The management of staff performance is rigorous and salary progression is linked closely to students’ progress and the school’s priorities.

(30 September – 1 October 2014)

The link to Performance Related Pay is very pertinent here. This again is market values impacting on the Catholic school mission. One respondent comments, ‘No one likes to make mistakes, especially when you feel it labels you as a poor teacher/leader.’ This links to a respondent’s earlier response of, ‘If it were about spiritual and moral gain, why would teachers now have their financial and professional security being directly dependent on measures like GCSE success and Ofsted lesson observation criteria, which cannot possibly reflect those things?’ whilst another states that ‘many staff feel under pressure due to performance related pay.’ This is much too big a topic to explore in any more detail here – it is a whole research project in itself, but one is left wondering how much of this issue is actually impacted from the issue of PRP, thereby market forces, which has been introduced at the very time the school was in this category. Is this undermining the Catholic school mission where teaching is a vocation? If in a

competitive market place, according to Grace (2001: 7), success is ‘measured, visible and cost effective’, this does not articulate easily with Catholic values where spiritual and moral culture is given precedence over material success.

Therefore, when exploring the impact of ‘serious weaknesses’ on teachers’ confidence in their own teaching in Q.12 (as well as on their motivation and morale), it may come as no surprise that 71.43% of survey participants believe there has been a negative impact. If the thread is followed from previous question analysis, it could be argued that the constant focus on what is ‘weak’ in a school undoubtedly makes teachers feel a lack of confidence in their ability, just as a focus on weaknesses in a student’s work would undermine their confidence, although one respondent asserts: ‘The category has not affected my morale; the way in which the category has made people approach my teaching has negatively affected my morale and motivation.’ Again, the suggestion here is the focus on weakness rather than success.

With all the focus on what is negative within a school with a ‘serious weaknesses’ category, it is even more important that teachers have time to speak to God during prayer and quiet reflection. The fact half of respondents believe the category has had no impact on this, with the other half split between a positive and negative impact, is perhaps reassuring and may be because participants believe they have always had time put aside within the staff briefing calendar in order to do this, as stated: ‘We regularly pray and take part in staff liturgy, so I feel this is something we have always had in school. We are encouraged to feed our spirit and reflect during these times.’ This is reassuring because lack of time is often seen as a barrier and SLT could just as easily have taken away the time for this in the drive for secular improvement. This is substantiated even by a ‘negative impact’ comment: ‘More time has been spent to enable prayer and quiet reflection,’ but they include a note of caution that ‘morale building via personal reflection does not always boost self-confidence, it often enables more self-doubt and feelings of isolation.’ However, as already stated, the fact the case study school provides opportunity for just this at least once a fortnight encourages a school community that is a human community and not a school of machines, as Senge (2000:58) wished for, so that we can be: ‘Living beings who continually ask the questions: Why am I here? What is going on in my world? How might I and we best contribute?’

It appears there is a perception from the survey participants that in the search for excellence in secular terms in terms of raising standards of teaching & learning in the case study school, there has been a negative impact on the Catholic mission in most areas other than the core principle of 'search for excellence'. It is difficult to fully ascertain whether influences here come from Ofsted, the senior leadership of the school, or whether they are due to the middle managers. There is certainly a suggestion from the May 2014 Section 8 Ofsted monitoring report that some of this may be due to inexperienced middle leaders, citing that: 'the school has become more evaluative. Senior staff are monitoring their areas of responsibility effectively. Middle leaders are not as advanced in their evaluative abilities but are beginning to move forward.' This is further exemplified in the 2015 Section inspection report, which cites, 'Some subject leaders have not developed the skills they need to drive forward improvements in teaching and achievement quickly.'

This is also supported by some survey comments, where one respondent hints that some middle leaders (or maybe they are inferring senior leaders) 'only help you because they are partially accountable or won't help because that's not their accountability and might reduce time or resources for something they are accountable for', which is in direct contrast to servant leadership. Another also hints that middle leaders are lagging behind senior leaders in their improvement because things are 'much better than before' and they hope that 'with stronger middle leadership and a 'true' performance management process, I am sure everyone would feel the same!' In their final reflection, one respondent notes: 'I believe it is variable even with a school. The pressure applied by the category affects individuals very differently and as such, even if the head maintains a moral level, this is not always displayed further down.' Quite clearly 'further down' here means middle leaders, so perhaps this is where the greatest development is needed within the case study school in order to counteract the – what appears to be – prevalent negativity.

Does this vary when looking at a department that was under particular scrutiny to improve, therefore was particularly closely monitored?

d) Did teaching in the English department versus other subject areas impact on staff well-being and motivation?

As already mentioned, the Section 5 inspection of April 2013 report made several critical comments about the English department, including, '[The school needs to] improve teaching so that it is good or better across all year groups, and particularly in English, and hence raise students' attainment.' Therefore, this department was placed under particular scrutiny, whereby each staff member had their lessons closely observed by both senior leaders and school advisors. As a result, the subsequent Section 8 monitoring letter of May 2014 stated: 'Improvements in the quality of teaching in English have been significant reflecting the high level of support it has received.' Does this mean that the teaching staff of this department feel any differently about how their well-being and motivation was impacted upon in comparison to the response from the other departments within this survey? It appears they do, but maybe not in the way expected.

On interpreting the comparative responses, it seems that the staff teaching in the English department feel that aspects of their well-being and motivation has been less negatively and more positively impacted upon in comparison to other departments. For example, in Q.8, only half believe their 'value' has been negatively impacted upon, compared to 90% of other departments; likewise, half believe 'celebrating success' has been negatively impacted, in comparison to 80% of others. Only 25% feel that 'reaching out for excellence' has been negatively impacted upon, unlike 60% of others. This creates quite a striking difference.

Moving on to being valued 'equally' as answered in Q.9, just half of English participants believe the category has had a negative impact on this, compared to 100% of other departments, whilst 50% of English believe that there has been a positive impact to having 'their individual needs' met, in contrast to 20% of others. Again, there is quite a difference here.

Looking at how far the category has impacted on how they view making mistakes, there is again a huge contrast in the English department responses compared to others. The English Teachers seem to view making mistakes much more positively, with 50% choosing that there has been a positive impact on this compared to 20% of others;

whereas a massive 100% of the English staff felt that the category has encouraged them to learn from their mistakes, compared to 30% of others. This is exemplified further in how 75% of English believe there has been a positive impact on them admitting their mistakes, compared to 10% of others, although there seems to be more agreement about how the category has had a negative impact on them feeling ashamed about their mistakes, with 75% choosing this, which is similar to 70% of other departments.

There are also major differences between how the respondents from English view the impact on morale, motivation, confidence and CPD in Q.12, with another much more positive response from them in comparison with other departments in the school.

English were split 50-50 in how much they believe morale and motivation, as well as confidence, has been impacted upon, but this is in contrast to 80% of the others believing there has been a negative impact here. Another huge contrast is in how much they believe the category has impacted upon their professional development, whereby 75% of English believe there has been a positive impact on this, compared to only 20% of others believing the same and, instead, 60% of those others believe it has had a negative impact.

A final difference is revealed in Q.13, about how much impact there has been on them being able to 'feed' their spirit in order to prioritise their well-being and motivation, whereby 60% of the other respondents believe there has been no impact on this area compared to 25% of English, where in fact half of them believe there has been a positive impact on this.

Therefore, quite clearly the teaching staff of the English department DO feel differently about how their well-being and motivation has been impacted upon in comparison to the response from the other departments within this survey. So, despite initial impressions gleaned from the mood within staff of the English department when I commenced employment at the case study school where they expressed that they had felt unduly criticised and under the spotlight during the 2013-14 academic year, feeling that constant monitoring had left them exhausted and stressed, this appears to be no longer the case. It seems clear that improving their own practice, and therefore the attainment of the pupils in this subject, has impacted positively on them overall and they seem to have moved on and are more positive than the rest of the school.

More research could be done here to ascertain why, but it does appear to demonstrate that when staff are encouraged to perform to the best of their ability, 'its aim is to enable them to fulfil their God-given potential,' (CES 1997:13) and this has a positive impact on their feelings of well-being.

It could be argued that they feel they are more valued due to teaching a core subject that has such a huge impact on school league tables in comparison to non-core subjects. Perhaps the other teachers are feeling their value of less worth due to the Government viewing their subject area with less worth with the introduction of such measures as the English Baccalaureate, which is in contrast to valuing everyone's 'God-given gifts' (CBCEW 1997:16). However, this would be the subject of another research study, whereby comparisons of E-Bacc versus non-E-Bacc subjects (for example) would need to be analysed.

6. CONCLUSIONS.

a) INTRODUCTION:

The hypothesis this research worked towards is as follows:

Historically, Catholic schools have provided, and will continue to provide, a quality education for all, rather than simply prioritising the outcome of their attainment in exams. How does being in a school that was recently deemed to have ‘serious weaknesses’ and now ‘requires improvement’ impact on the upholding of Catholic school principles in both the search for excellence and staff morale and motivation?

The expected conclusion was that despite the best intentions of the headteacher in promoting a spiritual and reflective school, the unavoidable focus on improved examination results would have left some staff feeling demoralized and under pressure. The research has revealed this to be the case. However, the majority of participants from the English department, who were under particular scrutiny and pressure to rapidly improve, seem to have a different perception, and as a whole they feel that the process has had a more positive impact upon them where they feel more valued – this is a surprising and unexpected outcome.

b) CONCLUSIONS DRAWN:

Although Michael Wilshaw reminds us that:

In the best schools, strong leaders and governors routinely challenge low expectations and mediocre teaching. They recruit and retain good teachers, including by ensuring effective support for new teachers in their first years of teaching. They create a culture in which good teaching can flourish – orderly and welcoming schools that insist on high standards, where teachers routinely challenge children to do better. These leaders reward good performance and tolerate neither inconsistent teaching nor poor behaviour...

(OFSTED 2012/13:5)

the key words here are ‘support’, ‘flourish’, ‘reward’ and these need to be the main focus of any School Leadership Team in leading their staff to improving standards; standards that would assimilate with Catholic School educational principles.

From analysis of the staff Catholic ethos questionnaire, it would appear that this has been lost sight of at times in St Mary’s search for improvement in secular terms – or at least that is the

perception of many of the survey participants. It seems that Kevin Treston's (1995:46) warnings have become somewhat a reality, in that:

Leaders can become so immersed in the rapidity of change and urgency of immediate tasks that the colours of the covenant rainbow of creation fade into the dull grey of monotonous toil.

And there needs to be a reminder, as was quoted right at the start of this study, that:

The Catholic vision is that our journey is one of growing into whatever role God intends us to play. This role is not just for our own flourishing but for the growth and happiness of others.

(Bollan, 2007: 81)

This is not just for the growth and happiness of the students, but of the whole school community. Although during a period of Ofsted monitoring and close scrutiny, teachers may feel attacked by them – school leadership need to ensure teachers do not also feel attacked by the school. Instead, as John Sullivan (2015) reflected, ‘we are all part of each other’s problems and solutions – there is no them and us,’ and as he went on to say, we need to find the good and reinforce it, not find the bad and expose it, nor judge as pure or pernicious. Using his metaphor of the ‘lighthouse versus the torch’, we need the Catholic church as the ‘lighthouse’, providing a strong light and standing above the rocks (of the inspection regime) to shine the light ahead, but the leadership team need to be the ‘torch’ who shine the steps ahead looking for the small steps to take towards that lighthouse. Whilst doing this, they need to be checking the reception – how people are receiving and interpreting it, whilst keeping in mind that education isn’t about measuring; it’s about lighting that fire, because the vocation of teaching in a Catholic school sublates profession and the professional tasks.

Therefore, there follows a series of recommendations that build upon the strengths and move the case study school towards an ideal in terms of aiming for excellence in the quality of teaching & learning, whilst still upholding Catholic educational principles.

c) RECOMMENDATIONS:

In light of the literature reviewed and research undertaken, the following series of recommendations could be considered:

- i) Provide staff 'In Service Training' (INSET) dedicated to Catholic Education
- ii) Review the whole school curriculum content in order to embed Gospel values (and therefore British Values)
- iii) Be aware of the danger of being seduced by indicators of approval
- iv) Focus on a development from 'Good' to 'outstanding' teaching practice and 'Staff Champions'
- v) Provide Catholic focused CPD for Middle leaders

i) Provide staff INSET dedicated to Catholic Education

From the survey results, there seemed to be some misconceptions and lack of understanding regarding the Catholic school mission as a whole, beyond collective worship/prayer and pastoral care. Therefore, planned INSET dedicated to Catholic education is important to the maintenance of the Catholic educational vision within the school community. School leaders need to explicitly link any improvement to their mission statement based on core Catholic school principles. This would create more solidarity towards the school's mission because, as Jay Conger (1989) says, when leaders are building up a community of commitment, they are creating a bond between them and their staff, which reflects how Jesus called his first disciples 'to be with him.' (Mark 3:14)

This would create a reminder to the whole school community of what the school is aiming to do for the young people it serves, so that Christ is at the centre of all actions. It is also an opportunity to inform those who are not of the Catholic faith about Catholic education and its distinctiveness.

- ii) Review the whole school curriculum content in order to embed Gospel values (and therefore British Values)

Another survey outcome revealed that many participants believe there is not a Catholic focus on curriculum development, unlike the focus on pastoral development, bringing us back to Arthur's reflection (2001:3): 'If we believe that Christ is at the centre of our world view, what would we expect to be included in topics within teaching and learning?' The concept of 'British Values' is also a huge driving force behind current practice, but within the Catholic school, by embedding Gospel values within the curriculum, therefore 'British Values' will be embedded by default.

This should go much deeper into the meaning of what it means to live a good life, within a framework of Catholic values and should provide a framework for understanding drawing on the example of Jesus and his welcome and inclusion of all, which is developed in Catholic social teaching. This will allow a focus on the formation of 'the whole person' and on their vocation and purpose in life, guided by the Gospel values of honourable purpose (that is, vocation and service), respect, compassion, co-operation and stewardship as they reflect on their place and purpose in the world.

This should also allow significant emphasis on the celebration of individuality and difference within both school and outside communities and the calling to work for the Common Good, in the service of others. Within this framework it would then be possible to embed the Government's view of 'British values' expressed as 'democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs.'

- iii) Be aware of the danger of being seduced by indicators of approval

If Catholic school leaders should measure their schools they lead against the Six Characteristics of Church Schools, cited in the Literature review, in particular ensuring they are 'characterized by always keeping in mind the end for which they were established' (Arthur 2001:4-5), then pupils must never be viewed as a statistic. Unfortunately, the view of some survey participants is such that with a close focus on raising attainment, this is exactly what is happening.

Although achieving excellence is a key feature in Catholic education, over-emphasis on targets and league tables can sometimes distort the mission of Catholic education. These indicators can also highlight the underachievement of some pupils, who in many cases face additional barriers to their peers. Leaders have to remember that for such students to receive any grade is an achievement. Just because it does not reflect well in results tables, it is still something that must be celebrated, as the true purpose of Catholic education is about 'developing the whole person'. Therefore, SLT must not just be driven by what Grace describes as:

...the ultimate aim of the whole enterprise to achieve a maximum value added product which keeps a school as near to the top of the league table of success as possible.

(1995:21)

Instead, they should always be driven by the Catholic school mission.

- iv) Focus on a development from 'Good' to 'outstanding' teaching practice and 'Staff Champions'.

Rather pertinent points were made that the focus of staff support and development within the case study school had been towards helping those whose teaching was judged as 'Requires improvement'/'inadequate' towards 'Good', whilst there is a feeling that others would like to aim for excellence by trying to develop their practice from 'Good' to 'Outstanding'.

Therefore, the school should provide a development programme with this as its focus that would enable those excellent practitioners to develop themselves further. This would also have the positive side-effect of those teachers feeling more valued and appreciated with the view they are all recognised and developed. Within this, an award for 'staff champions' could be introduced on a monthly/half termly basis, whereby teachers' achievement could be celebrated more routinely. This would help to counteract the view of 71.43% of survey participants, who believe that the celebration of achievement has been negatively impacted at the case study school.

v) Provide Catholic focused CPD for Middle leaders

Because there is an inference in the survey results that there is a lack of experience of managing staff within the parameters of Catholic school principles, CPD should be sought and provided to these staff members, so that they can more efficiently model the mission and faith life of the school. They must never lose sight of the larger questions regarding the purpose of Catholic education and its moral and social purpose; these are areas that are often overlooked in the business of managerial tasks and results/league tables. This would enable more middle leaders within the school to appreciate the importance of spiritual values within their role, promoting ‘the dignity of every member of staff’; ‘supporting the quality of relationships that demonstrate commitment to gospel values’ and ‘ensuring that priority is given to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and staff.’ CES (1999:A7)

d) OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH:

The case study school has had a series of changes happen at the same time as it was placed into the ‘Serious Weaknesses’ category. A new headteacher had only started 2 days prior to the inspection, and there have been a number of Government policy changes and initiatives along the way, not to mention the introduction of Performance Related Pay. Therefore, at times, it has been difficult to quantify the biggest influence of the reasons behind some of the responses in the Catholic ethos survey and some new questions have been raised in the process of interpretation. Also, only a selection of staff from the case study school undertook the questionnaire, and although it was ensured that there was a wide range of subjects represented within the responses, the fact that not all teachers were surveyed may have coloured the results, so therefore may not be truly representative of all teaching staff in the case study school and these factors have limited the research.

Therefore, the following could clarify some areas and would create further research opportunities:

- Widen the scope of the survey to all teaching staff who have taught at the school for the time-frame;

- Undertake more comparative perceptions between different departments (for example, core versus non-core; E-bacc versus non-Ebacc), with a link made to how different departments are reported in school league tables;
- Undertake comparative perceptions between different ‘levels’ of staff ;
- Undertake comparative perceptions between practising versus non-practising/non Catholics;
- Undertake a student survey to analyse their perceptions of the Catholic ethos of the school; and
- An investigation into the impact of Performance Related Pay.

e) FINAL REFLECTION:

Michael Holman (2002:77-78) maintains:

Teachers...do not just do jobs, they fulfil a ministry... It is a ministry founded upon a vocation from God and one that is vital to the future welfare of the community of believers in this country.

Catholic school leaders need to consider that interpretations of success prescribed by Ofsted need to be balanced by gospel values of love and the pursuit of the common good. They need to always prioritise Christian soteriology over materialist soteriology, without being seduced by Ofsted grades and examination outcomes, always embracing aspects such as spiritual and moral awareness; the dignity of the person; social bonding and justice. This will not only ensure that Christ is kept central to all areas of pupil experiences within their Catholic schooling, but also that Christ is central to all dealings with every staff member, so that there is a community based on love and justice for all.

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APPENDIX 1

Staff Catholic Ethos Questionnaire

This questionnaire is completely confidential. It is to enable me to complete my MA dissertation with the following title: 'Raising standards of Teaching & Learning whilst maintaining Catholic School principles.'

The purpose of it is to focus on whether raising the quality of Teaching & Learning in secular terms (Ofsted, exam results, etc.) in a school judged to have 'serious weaknesses' has an impact on maintaining a Catholic ethos within that school.

For each question, please circle your choice from 1 to 5, as follows:

1. Strong positive impact
2. Positive impact
3. No impact
4. Negative impact
5. Strong negative impact

1. Teaching in a Catholic school is a vocation and helps students to 'find meaning in their lives through forming a spirituality based on a mature relationship with Almighty God' (Stock, Rev M, 2005).

In your opinion, how far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on this?

2. The Vatican II declaration: 'True education aims to give people a formation which is directed towards their final end and the good of the society to which they belong' reminds us that it is not just about academic development, but spiritual development also.

In your opinion, how far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on this?

3. A statement from the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales in 1996 listed five principles that Catholic schools should be committed to promoting: the search for excellence; the uniqueness of the individual; the education of the whole person; the education of all; and moral principles.

In your opinion, how far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on each of the following:

- a) Promoting the search for excellence
- b) Promoting the uniqueness of the individual
- c) Promoting the education of the whole person
- d) Promoting the education of all
- e) Promoting moral principles

4. In committing to an education for all, Catholic schools have a duty of care for the poor and to educate those who are socially, academically, physically or emotionally disadvantaged. As Morris states in *Diversity, Deprivation and the Common Good*: ‘concern for the poor and underprivileged is not new but rather formed a central element of the Church’s understanding of its educative missions for over 150 years’ (Morris, A. 2005:3)

In your opinion, how far has being in ‘serious weaknesses’ impacted on this?

5. Catholic school leaders should keep in mind that national targets and the measurement of progress towards achieving these is not their only challenge. They must also ensure that the curriculum arises from the distinctive mission of the school as a Catholic learning community.

In your opinion, how far has being in ‘serious weaknesses’ impacted on this?

6. Catholic values in education are that spiritual and moral culture is given precedence over material success, education is seen as a service and not a product, and notions of the common good and of the well-being of community institutions take precedence over individual self-interest.

In your opinion, how far has being in ‘serious weaknesses’ impacted on this?

7. Catholic educational principles are not about indoctrination nor are they about driving young minds into attitudes which have not been thought through. Man's true education is more to do with coming to a sense of identity, purpose, worth, direction and future. The search for Truth is more than simply the search for what the examiner marks as being correct. (Burn.J., McQuoid, N.J. 1995)

In your opinion, how far has being in ‘serious weaknesses’ impacted on this?

8. Catholic school principles focus on the 'dignity of the person' as an aim for schooling and includes measures of academic and personal achievement. However, it places these in a more complex and sensitive matrix of respect and justice for all school members, i.e. a learning culture which is also a humane culture.

In light of this, respond to the following:

- a) How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on the school being a place where staff feel valued, are given individual support and there is respect and trust for all?
- b) How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on the school being a happy atmosphere in which the dignity and worth of every member of staff is recognised, developed and safeguarded?
- c) How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on the school encouraging, promoting, recognising and celebrating all aspects of staff achievement?
- d) How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on the school creating an environment which enables and encourages all staff members of the community to reach out for excellence in every sphere of academic, pastoral, social, moral, physical and spiritual activity?

9. Those schools genuinely seeking to support a Christian ethos must follow Christ's own perfect example of valuing every individual as equal in the sight of God. They must give clear guidelines and implement them with proper justice and mercy, speaking honestly, honourably and without hypocrisy and meeting people where they are, at their point of need, and pointing them towards their true potential.

In light of this, respond to the following:

- a) How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on every staff member being valued equally at this school?
- b) How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on there being clear guidelines that are implemented with proper justice and mercy, speaking honestly, honourably and without hypocrisy at this school?
- c) How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on the school meeting the needs of individual members of staff and pointing them towards their true potential?

- 10.** Catholic school leaders need to consider that interpretations of success prescribed by Ofsted must be balanced by gospel values of love and the pursuit of the common good.

In your opinion, how far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on this?

- 11.** Mistakes and errors are part of the learning curve: we identify them and move on with that little bit of experiential wisdom to strengthen our understanding and influence how we do things in the future. We should not be ashamed of our fallibility. The real cause for shame is to be so terrified of being found out that we adopt a paranoid mind-set around our colleagues and students. The Catholic school should rise above this and be places where people can be weak together. It is vitally important that we do not try and hide from mistakes because it is seldom that we get to see powerful people suffer, yet the Christian leader, modelled on Christ, is expected to suffer.

In light of this, respond to the following:

- a)** How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on me viewing my mistakes and errors as part of the learning curve?
- b)** How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on encouraging me to learn from my mistakes?
- c)** How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on me admitting my mistakes?
- d)** How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on whether I feel ashamed about my mistakes and getting things wrong?

- 12.** Focusing on staff morale and development, please respond to the following statements:

- a)** How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on my morale and motivation?
- b)** How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on my professional development and CPD?
- c)** How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on how confident I am in my teaching ability?

- 13.** Teachers need to be reconciled with God and made to feel that their contributions are valued; they also need time to speak to God during prayer and quiet reflection; they need to ‘feed’ their spirit in order to prioritise staff well-being and motivation. In your opinion, how far has being in ‘serious weaknesses’ impacted on this?
- 14.** Are there any further comments you would like to make about how much being in a school with ‘serious weaknesses’ impacts on Catholic School principles?

APPENDIX 2

Respondents' full comments made in the Staff Catholic Ethos questionnaire:

Question 1. *Teaching in a Catholic school is a vocation and helps students to 'find meaning in their lives through forming a spirituality based on a mature relationship with Almighty God' (Stock, Rev M, 2005). In your opinion, how far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on this?*

Comments:

No impact: 'There have been positive and negative aspects to this: positive because there have been changes to the leadership culture which have respected teachers' contributions to spirituality more; negative because whilst the accountability has focused entirely on secular aspects to our work, in many ways it has become possible to 'tick the box' for spirituality by reading a provided prayer and being finished. For example, now that leading whole-year collective worship is voluntary on the part of form teachers, many forms have no input on this whatsoever. Some teachers choose not to volunteer because they feel uncomfortable with leading this; others because they have so many pressing responsibilities that the practicalities of preparing and delivering whole-year worship put them off it.'

No impact: 'I did not see a difference in the way pupils' relationship with God was formed or developed.'

No impact: 'The headteacher has worked hard to implement spirituality in the school in the past 2 years. He arrived at the same time as the Ofsted decision.'

Negative impact: 'When in 'serious weakness', emphasis for the school's plan for improvement was not on upholding the Catholic values, but on improving pupil attainment and progress. Whilst the spiritual ethos was not lost or ignored, it did not come across as a 'priority' in regards to the schools move to RI/ Good.'

Negative impact: 'From a religious educator's point of view, the demands of working in this environment means that I have become much more focused on academic progress rather than holistic progress. It is hard to find that essential balance when you are in a school currently judged as 'serious weakness'.'

Negative impact: 'Focus shifts to a more attainment driven ethos.'

Negative impact: 'With a strong drive for results, staff have less time to provide significant opportunities to develop faith with pupils.'

Negative impact: 'Too much emphasis on results and the pupil's work rate and not their personal development and wellbeing. Too many pupils feeling overworked, overburdened and ground down by stress.'

Question 2. *The Vatican II declaration: 'True education aims to give people a formation which is directed towards their final end and the good of the society to which they belong' reminds us that it is not just about academic development, but spiritual development also. In your opinion, how far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on this?*

Comments:

No impact: 'Impact in this sense has been limited and has been neither positive nor negative. However, Ofsted did note that the school needed to do more to support "British values" which I think encompasses the need to promote spiritual, as well as cultural development.'

No impact: 'There have been improvements in this focus, with grace and afternoon prayers being introduced and the focus on personal prayer rather than simply reading a script. However, I have selected 'no impact' as I think these are to do with changes in leadership culture, and only tangentially related to being in serious weaknesses.'

Negative impact: 'CPSHE and the instillation of critical Christian and Catholic values take second place.'

Negative impact: 'I felt being in "serious weaknesses" spiritual development was overshadowed for results and impact and encouraged further scrutiny.'

Negative impact: 'I would say that whole school worship has been positively affected by this category because this has meant stronger B4L and routines. This has enhanced the experience of pupils during group worship as the environment has become prayerful and focused. But, I would say that form/ end of day prayer has been negatively impacted as teachers are often very focused on progress and B4L routines. Again, RE has prioritised B4L, progress and T and L, meaning that the spiritual aspect of the subject is often lost. This is something that we are resolving as we become comfortable with the constraints and routines of this category.'

Strong negative impact: 'Although we all try to be educators of the whole person, the focus on Ofsted means that there has to be a great focus on what Ofsted requires for improvement to be achieved, this has had a negative impact on staff, many of whom are struggling to keep up with the demands of working as a teacher at St Mary's and the constant 'list' of things to be done. One teacher described it to me as like 'being on a rollercoaster' - you get on top of things and feel on a high then you are suddenly bombarded with more things to do and tight deadlines to meet and you plunge back to the bottom.'

Question 3. *A statement from the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales in 1996 listed five principles that Catholic schools should be committed to promoting: the search for excellence; the uniqueness of the individual; the education of the whole person; the education of all; and moral principles. In your opinion, how far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on each of the following:*

- a) *Promoting the search for excellence*
- b) *Promoting the uniqueness of the individual*
- c) *Promoting the education of the whole person*
- d) *Promoting the education of all*
- e) *Promoting moral principles*

Comments:

Positive impact: 'I think the changes to marking policies and accountability for them have had a strong impact on 'promoting the uniqueness of the individual'; lessons regularly contain pupils responding in detail to directed, personal targets. This makes lessons across the school more tailored to pupils and means they are regularly working on different tasks to their peers at the same table.'

Negative impact: 'I would say that the treatment of staff whilst in "serious weaknesses" did not promote moral principles. Students were aware of the low staff morale.'

Negative impact: 'The importance of academic progress for all promotes the importance for education for all and a desire to unleash potential in all pupils. However certain aspects become self-serving at the detriment of moral values and a promotion of educating the whole person.'

Strong negative impact: 'Excellence' in a serious weakness school, in my view, has translated as an 'excellence in academic achievement' not excellence in moral, social or spiritual values - hence a strong negative impact. The promotion of education of the 'whole person' was also lost. The pupils were not given the time or teaching necessarily to prepare themselves for the wider world - the school focused mainly on the acquisition of qualifications instead, due to pressures to "get results".'

Question 4. *In committing to an education for all, Catholic schools have a duty of care for the poor and to educate those who are socially, academically, physically or emotionally disadvantaged. As Morris states in Diversity, Deprivation and the Common Good: 'concern for the poor and underprivileged is not new but rather formed a central element of the Church's understanding of its educative missions for over 150 years' (Morris, A. 2005:3) In your opinion, how far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on this?*

Comments:

Strong positive impact: 'Previously, this school did not have high expectations of pupils. Too many 'exceptions' were made, therefore pupils left the school (and some still do) without a rounded education. E.g. behavioural issues overlooked, poor performance allowed and a lack of values ignored and put down to social situation. A catholic school should strive to ensure each child exceeds their God given potential and the whole person should be nurtured through gospel value, both academically and spiritually.'

Positive impact: 'Pupils, no matter what their socio-economic status, were pushed to achieve and this was positive. In the past, being "poor" or "underprivileged" was used as an excuse for poor attainment, but being under such scrutiny in 'serious weakness' led to all teachers having to re-evaluate this view - which is positive as all pupils deserve equal opportunities in all elements of their school education.'

Positive impact: 'I think the headteacher has had a strong impact on this and that this would have been strengthened anyway.'

No impact: 'I have seen no effect on the treatment of those disadvantaged. We have an excellent SEN department and they continue to work well and pupils make good progress.'

Negative impact: 'Being brutally honest I would say a very slight negative impact, but only in so far as the focus has moved away from pupils' backgrounds. Physical/emotional needs DO seem to have moved up the agenda slightly, but I honestly feel that we focus less on raising pupils from poverty of circumstance, aspiration and spirituality than we used to.'

Question 5. *Catholic school leaders should keep in mind that national targets and the measurement of progress towards achieving these is not their only challenge. They must also ensure that the curriculum arises from the distinctive mission of the school as a Catholic learning community. In your opinion, how far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on this?*

Comments:

No impact: 'I feel that we all still strive for this for our young people and certainly I tell the pupils that I want them to get a good GCSE grade but that I hope that they leave able to consider and make important decisions for themselves and that what they have done in school will help them to do this.'

Negative impact: 'As a school, we have struggled to allow pupils to 'find themselves' and it seems we have often felt we need to 'tell' pupils what is good/ right, instead of letting them discover it for themselves.'

Strong negative impact: 'Pupils have been placed under a lot of pressure to get the results and improve the school. Several pupils have expressed concern about the pressure they feel. Pressure from SLT to improve grades and ensure progression has also hindered teaching, and the exploration side of learning has been badly affected.'

Question 6. *Catholic values in education are that spiritual and moral culture is given precedence over material success, education is seen as a service and not a product, and notions of the common good and of the well-being of community institutions take precedence over individual self-interest. In your opinion, how far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on this?*

Comments:

Negative impact: 'Education is absolutely not a service. Pupils are given a set of GCSEs, and education is the selection process we go through to decide how shiny they are. If it were about spiritual and moral gain, why would teachers now have their financial and professional security being directly dependent on measures like GCSE success and Ofsted lesson observation criteria which cannot possibly reflect those things? If the value expressed in this question is that there is a difference between secular education and Catholic education in terms of which outcomes it values most, there is very little evidence of that here.'

Negative impact: 'I believe pupils are continued to be seen as an end product and that their results are the most important.'

Strong negative impact: 'Focus on "accountability" breeds individual self-interest. Some only help you because they are partially accountable or won't help because that's not their accountability and might reduce time or resources for something they are accountable for attitude has increased. Also why are you doing/helping with this, you're not the person accountable.'

Strong negative impact: 'This statement speaks for its self. A school could only meet the criteria of this statement once academic and 'material success' is achieved. Although the idea of education as a service alone would be 'strong positive impact'. I would say at the moment, we are asking pupils to put their own personal success first.'

Strong negative impact: 'I feel that this is the case with Ofsted rather than with the school and what it would like to do.'

Question 7. *Catholic educational principles are not about indoctrination nor are they about driving young minds into attitudes which have not been thought through. Man's true education is more to do with coming to a sense of identity, purpose, worth, direction and future. The search for Truth is more than simply the search for what the examiner marks as being correct. (Burn., McQuoid, N.J. 1995) In your opinion, how far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on this?*

Comments:

Positive impact: 'It is through a focus on progress and results that a moral, spiritual and social code has been instilled within our community. The catholicity of our community is a platform that can lift pupil/ teacher performance and give us direction and hope for the future.'

Positive impact: 'Reviews of the curriculum are currently under-way, and therefore we hope to support SMSC much more, and this should include the Catholic mission with much more clarity and distinctiveness than it has previously.'

Negative impact: 'Absolutely not. There is no Catholic aspect to any of the curriculum changes brought in over the last few years. I don't tick 'strong negative aspect' simply because there was little Catholic aspect to the curriculum in the first case. We have made very strong improvements to the Catholic aspects of our pastoral care; there has been no matching improvement to the Catholic flavour of our curriculum, and the focus has only become more narrow on the exam success measure.'

Negative impact: 'I feel that although Ofsted might try to say that they care about the whole person, the only real focus is that 5 A* to C inc. Eng. & Maths % is all they really care about – not how it is achieved – and Senior Leaders are forced into focusing on this.'

Question 8. *Catholic school principles focus on the 'dignity of the person' as an aim for schooling and includes measures of academic and personal achievement. However, it places these in a more complex and sensitive matrix of respect and justice for all school members, i.e. a learning culture which is also a humane culture. In light of this, respond to the following:*

- a) *How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on the school being a place where staff feel valued, are given individual support and there is respect and trust for all?*
- b) *How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on the school being a happy atmosphere in which the dignity and worth of every member of staff is recognised, developed and safeguarded?*
- c) *How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on the school encouraging, promoting, recognising and celebrating all aspects of staff achievement?*
- d) *How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on the school creating an environment which enables and encourages all staff members of the community to reach out for excellence in every sphere of academic, pastoral, social, moral, physical and spiritual activity?*

Comments:

Question a:

Positive impact: 'I think the experience of individuals will have been different depending on their personal progress.'

Positive impact: 'I feel more individually valued, and have more support than ever before.'

Strong negative impact: 'Pressure in this category has inadvertently resulted in staff feeling undervalued, low morale and low levels of staff support.'

Strong negative impact: 'Whether it is intended or not, many staff feel under pressure due to performance relate pay.'

Strong negative impact: 'Referred to earlier – staff morale is very low at the moment and this is a worry both for staff themselves and for the school.'

Question b:

Strong positive impact: 'I think it is a much better place than when I first arrived. People seem optimistic and enthusiastic.'

Positive impact: 'I felt that there has even a positive impact, but I do know that other colleagues have experienced this negatively.'

Negative impact: 'Fear of culpability and blame.'

Negative impact: 'Staff have become fragmented and departments rarely come together to improve morale.'

Question c:

Positive impact: 'There have been improvements, but these are again culture/leadership rather than a result of SW, I feel.'

Negative impact: 'Celebration of success only seems to occur after a HMI visit or inspection/monitoring visit. Plus, 'celebration' often seems to be a generic "well done" to the whole staff, and cakes at break time; not individual recognition for each member of staff's contributions or work towards improvement. Some praise is given individually, which I have experienced, but it is not engrained in the culture of the school.'

Negative impact: 'There is a lot more focus on what is needed to improve or simple failures rather than achievement.'

Negative impact: 'Not all staff, key areas are developed, others ignored.'

Strong negative impact: 'Many staff have commented to me that they feel that they are told off or put under pressure when there is any sort of issue, but not praised or rewarded when they do something well.'

Question d:

Positive impact: 'General raising of expectations.'

Strong positive impact: '[Headteacher]'s high expectations has had such a positive effect. Staff are quickly understanding the high expectations that they should have for themselves and their pupils.'

Strong negative impact: 'Staff are drained and exhausted.'

Question 9. *Those schools genuinely seeking to support a Christian ethos must follow Christ's own perfect example of valuing every individual as equal in the sight of God. They must give clear*

guidelines and implement them with proper justice and mercy, speaking honestly, honourably and without hypocrisy and meeting people where they are, at their point of need, and pointing them towards their true potential. In light of this, respond to the following:

a) How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on every staff member being valued equally at this school?

b) How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on there being clear guidelines that are implemented with proper justice and mercy, speaking honestly, honourably and without hypocrisy at this school?

c) How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on the school meeting the needs of individual members of staff and pointing them towards their true potential?

Comments:

Question a:

Negative impact: 'There is a distinct "if your face fits" atmosphere.'

Negative impact: 'Although I feel valued I do feel that some staff do not.'

Strong negative impact: 'The value of an individual appears to change dependent of the focus, often very quickly.'

Strong negative impact: 'Grumbling that staff are not valued and that observations are not on a par with other schools e.g. It is much harder to be good/ outstanding at St Mary's; this has caused upset especially as it is now linked to pay.'

Strong negative impact: 'Sweeping responses which totally devalue all aspects of previous work, and occasionally previous people.'

Question b:

Positive impact: 'Improved, although this is a side-effect of the guidelines for individual accountability being sharpened up; they have, but for blame purposes rather than anything noble.'

No impact: 'Clear guidelines implemented but not always with mercy or without hypocrisy.'

Question c:

Strong positive impact: 'Much better than before! With stronger middle leadership and a 'true' performance management process I am sure everyone would feel the same!'

Positive impact: 'Some staff who have struggled with their teaching have been given more directed support to improve, but you only seem to 'qualify' for such support when you are graded RI/inadequate, not if you are Good and want to be outstanding.'

No impact: 'It has worked positively for some and damaged others.'

Negative impact: 'Individual'- some certainly have found this to be a great opportunity. Only some, though. For many others this has been a blame-apportioning process.'

Strong negative impact: 'Focus on whole school rather than individual staff.'

Question 10. *Catholic school leaders need to consider that interpretations of success prescribed by Ofsted must be balanced by gospel values of love and the pursuit of the common good. In your opinion, how far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on this?*

Comments:

Strong positive impact: 'Headteacher embeds gospel values into leadership of school.'

Negative impact: 'Too much emphasis on meeting Ofsted criteria.'

Negative impact: 'We try to do this but we have to prioritise what Ofsted wants and this is paramount to us continuing to survive.'

Negative impact: 'Ofsted override the Gospel values in our school - it is very rare that our school vision is related to achieving the common good and drive by our Catholic ethos. It is evident, but not a prevalent force.'

Question 11. *Mistakes and errors are part of the learning curve: we identify them and move on with that little bit of experiential wisdom to strengthen our understanding and influence how we do things in the future. We should not be ashamed of our fallibility. The real cause for shame is to be so terrified of being found out that we adopt a paranoid mind-set around our colleagues and students. The Catholic school should rise above this and be places where people can be weak together. It is vitally important that we do not try and hide from mistakes because it is seldom that we get to see powerful people suffer, yet the Christian leader, modelled on Christ, is expected to suffer. In light of this, respond to the following:*

- a) *How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on me viewing my mistakes and errors as part of the learning curve?*
- b) *How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on encouraging me to learn from my mistakes?*
- c) *How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on me admitting my mistakes?*
- d) *How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on whether I feel ashamed about my mistakes and getting things wrong?*

Comments:

Question a:

Strong positive impact: 'It is like a boot camp for teachers!'

Negative impact: 'I have become very critical and negative towards myself. Unable to see strengths.'

Question b:

Positive impact: 'On a personal level, I have needed to become much more reflective and learn from my mistakes in order to 'keep up' with the changes and demands of our emerging school.'

Negative impact: 'With the negative response to failure it has created an apathetic atmosphere; I often think why try when I'm just going to fail again.'

Question c:

Positive impact: 'As I have grown over these few years in 'serious weakness', I have learned to adopt humility much more and admit my mistakes as/if they happen. I do not think that this is a common thread amongst the school though.'

Negative impact: 'I feel I admit more mistakes; I create mistakes to cement my feelings of failure.'

Question d:

Negative impact: 'I feel extremely ashamed, but turn the feelings inward and make mistakes personal, a fault within myself rather than mistakes to improve in my teaching.'

Strong negative impact: 'No one likes to make mistakes, especially when you feel it labels you as a poor teacher/leader. Mistakes are very negative, and not seen as stepping stones to success in our school.'

Strong negative impact: 'I think about mistakes constantly, worry about making them, dwell on their impact, remain awake thinking about them, and feel guilty when I am not working.'

Question 12. *Focusing on staff morale and development, please respond to the following statements:*

- a) *How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on my morale and motivation?*
- b) *How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on my professional development and CPD?*
- c) *How far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on how confident I am in my teaching ability?*

Comments:

Question a:

Strong positive impact: 'This school had a goal to get out of this category, but where are we going now? What is our objective?'

Negative impact: 'The category has not affected my morale; the way in which the category has made people approach my teaching has negatively affected my morale and motivation.'

Strong negative impact: 'Destroyed morale.'

Question b:

Positive impact: 'Actually had access to CPD.'

No impact: 'CPD was limited beforehand and continues to be after.'

No impact: 'Not enough opportunity for inset.'

No impact: 'The school has clear priorities, which don't align with mine. I have had no CPD chosen for my own purposes since we entered serious weaknesses, only being the person selected to take and cascade CPD on one occasion.'

Negative impact: 'School CPD provided in development time but varies in quality and working in a 'category' school could affect promotion to other schools.'

Question c:

Positive impact: 'Paired observations are a very, very good development.'

Negative impact: 'I lack confidence in my teaching, whether that be as a direct result of serious weaknesses, or whether the serious weaknesses category has affected the management of teaching, rendering me void of confidence.'

Negative impact: 'Initially very negative but has improved and I believe it will continue. Ask the same question next year and I could think it is positive.'

Negative impact: 'It was much easier to be outstanding in my last school - half the effort and it was a much 'harder' school to be in.'

Negative impact: 'Always got outstanding or good with outstanding, although I now get good with some outstanding features I wonder if I can maintain this due to the fact of Ofsted 'moving the goalposts' constantly and also that we seem to be 'judged' very strictly.'

Question 13. *Teachers need to be reconciled with God and made to feel that their contributions are valued; they also need time to speak to God during prayer and quiet reflection; they need to 'feed' their spirit in order to prioritise staff well-being and motivation. In your opinion, how far has being in 'serious weaknesses' impacted on this?*

Comments:

No impact: 'We regularly pray and take part in staff liturgy, so I feel this is something we have always had in school. We are encouraged to feed our spirit and reflect during these times.'

No impact: 'This occurs in Friday am staff time but there are few other real opportunities.'

Negative impact: 'I continue to believe that staff morale has been pushed aside. More time has been spent to enable prayer and quiet reflection, but no time spent building morale through team activities. Morale building via personal reflection does not always boost self-confidence, it often enables more self-doubt and feelings of isolation.'

Negative impact: 'I often do not find the time and peace of mind to pray, except when in Church or the Chapel. I find myself fitting these aspects of my life in and the extra workload brought about by the recent situation has contributed substantially to this.'

Question 14. *Are there any further comments you would like to make about how much being in a school with 'serious weaknesses' impacts on Catholic School principles?*

Comments:

'The drive to raise standards is what we all want but my concern is the negative impact on staff morale and that we are losing good staff to other schools and then struggling to replace them or fill vacancies.'

'We need to make a clear link between our Catholic nature and the task ahead. Pupils need to have opportunity to link their academic journey to spiritual. Teachers need to feel that faith is connected to policy, strategy and procedure. We need to draw confidence from our faith as a community. A more

pastoral approach, where teachers could confidentially voice worries and concerns, would lead to an open, positive environment. There are teachers in this school feeling very down and as Christians we should strive to ensure that they do not become negatively impacted by the category that we are in. Not everyone can deal with work issues and as Christians we should show compassion to those who are struggling.'

'I believe it is variable even with a school. The pressure applied by the category affect individuals very differently and as such, even if the head maintains a moral level, this is not always displayed further down. I also think it is more difficult to maintain if the head is new to the school when entering the category as they do not know the character of the staff they are managing.'

'From a personal view, whether it be due to the 'serious weaknesses label' or simply choices made from the management, whilst being in this category I feel that morale has dropped. I feel that in several cases issues have not been dealt with using a Catholic ethos and some people have felt isolated, victimised and targeted.'

'In an ideal situation, the unique ethos and values of a Catholic school should underpin any drive for improvement, not least the challenge to escape from a category or a period of difficulty. However, in my experience, this has not always been the case, and the pursuit of essential progress and grades has been sacrosanct.'