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Catholic School Inspections: A Necessary Evil or a Force for Good?

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Catholic School Inspections: A Necessary Evil or a Force for Good?

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Abstract

This dissertation sets out to explore the Catholic life of the school in relation to Section 50 inspection reports. It involves discussions on the nature and purpose of Section 50 inspections and how they serve the Catholic community, and makes links to relevant literature which explains what is meant by the term 'Catholic life.'

By using documentary research I will analyse the Section 50 inspection reports that have been written relating to primary schools within the Archdiocese of Cardiff. In doing so I will bring to light some of the strengths and weaknesses of the Archdiocese in relation to creating a positive Catholic life within a primary school. This will be discussed in light of the literature reviewed that promotes a Christ-centred, Gospel focused mission and ethos which drives all aspects of school life.

The strengths and weaknesses of the Archdiocese will be summarised and recommendations made for improved practice relating to the Catholic life of the school. This will include the recommendation that best practice is shared, that inspections follow a more supportive cycle, that quality inset focuses on ethos and mission and that schools within the Archdiocese draw together to support the Common Good.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Rationale

The main focus of this research project is to support other Catholic primary schools as they journey through the inspection cycle. It will consider some of the challenges schools face relating to school inspections and ways in which school inspections can be used to support the improvement of schools. It will look at ways schools can be used to support each other in their goal to achieve excellence.

The focus of the study will be on the Section 50 inspection of Catholic primary schools and within this, more specifically, the inspection of the Catholic life of the school. It will focus on a specific Archdiocese within Wales.

All schools within Wales are routinely inspected by Estyn to ensure that they are fulfilling their purpose within the education sphere. In addition to this, Catholic schools also received a Section 50 inspection to specifically evaluate the Catholic aspects within the school. This is in keeping with Canon Law which states:

> 'The formation and education in the Catholic religion provided in any school / college is subject to the authority of the Church....the diocesan Bishop has the right to watch over and inspect the Catholic schools /

colleges situated in his territory, even those established or directed by members of the Religious Institutes.' (Canons 804, 806, CCL).

This is reflected in the Education Act of 2005 which supports the arrangement for Section 50 inspections. The 'Archdiocese of Cardiff Section 48/50 Inspection Framework 2010' states that the purpose of the inspection process is:

> '...an opportunity to acknowledge the dedication and commitment of the staff, governors, parents, pupils / students and parish communities that work in and for our schools and colleges. It also provides us with an opportunity to assist them to continue to make progress and improvement where that has been identified as necessary.' (Archbishop Peter Smith, 2010, p. 3)

The current school inspection framework that is in place covers three key questions that support the assessment of the Catholic schools:

Key Question 1 – How good are outcomes?

Key Question 2 – How good is provision?

Key Question 3 – How good are leadership and management?

It is through these key questions that Section 50 inspectors will be able to evaluate the provision and standards achieved in curriculum religious education. However, the nature of the Catholic school means that its success is not solely rooted in academic achievement:

> 'Catholic education endeavours to make the person of Jesus Christ known and loved, and to place Him and the teachings of the Catholic Church at the centre of the educational enterprise.' (CES, 2014,p.2)

Therefore the Section 50 inspector also has a duty to evaluate the Catholic nature of the school and its role within the shared mission of the Church to bring the person of Jesus Christ into the lives of others.

Although there isn't a key question within the current Section 50 inspection framework relating to the Catholic life of the school, it is highlighted throughout the other key questions. The following questions are more specifically linked to the evidencing of the Catholic life of the school:

1.3 The extent to which pupils / students contribute to, and benefit from, the Catholic life of the school / college.

2.3 The extent to which Religious Education and the wider life of the school / college meets pupils' / students' needs.

3.1 The extent to which the governing body promotes the strategic development of the Catholic life of the school / college and curriculum Religious Education.

3.2 How well leaders and managers promote, monitor, evaluate and review the provision for the Catholic life of the school / college and plan improvement to outcomes for pupils / students.

However, as the Catholic life of the school is integral to the achievement of its mission statement, evidence can be sought from other areas also.

I think that one of the challenges that leaders within schools face regarding the evidencing of the Catholic life of the school is that such a wide evidence base

needs to be consulted to meet the inspection criteria. Unlike an area such as prayer and worship, which can be more easily placed within one neat box of evidence, to evidence the Catholic life of the school requires dipping in and out of other areas of evidence. Following our school inspection I have been visited by several other RE coordinators and also had conversations regarding school inspection at RE coordinator meetings. This area is one that causes the most concern as RE coordinators are often unsure about how to ensure their school is successful in this area and how they can prove they are doing what they say they do. It is with a view to this that I have chosen to focus on this particular area of the Section 50 inspection.

Furthermore, I have chosen to look at Section 50 inspections as a way to support the work that has recently been discussed and begun within my local archdiocese. School inspections are here to stay, unpleasant as they may be, but there have been discussions as to how a more supportive cycle of monitoring and support can be developed so that schools are prepared for a successful and positive inspection experience.

One of the proposals that has been put forward and is currently being developed is a best practice guide within the archdiocese. This will be in the form of a directory which lists schools that are particularly successful within a specific area of the inspection framework. Schools will be able to refer to this directory if there is a particular area they are struggling with or if they would like to

polish their existing good practice. There is an expectation that school be prepared to showcase their good practice and are proactive in sharing what has been deemed as excellent within the inspection framework.

By looking at local primary school's Section 50 inspection reports I will hope to tease out how other schools have been successful in developing the Catholic life of the school. Having recently been through an Estyn and Section 50 inspection I also appreciate the stress and strain the process can place schools under and believe that schools supporting each other can be a way to relieve some of this stress and strain. Furthermore, it is in the best interest of all stakeholders within Catholic education to ensure that every child who attends a Catholic school receives a positive experience relating to what it means to live as a Catholic in the world. If the best practice directory works well within the Archdiocese it could perhaps have wider implications in terms of casting a wider net and developing networks of best practice between different dioceses.

Context

I am currently a Year 1 teacher in St. Non's primary school (fictional name given for ethical reasons) and am in my sixth year of teaching. I am also the joint RE coordinator with the headteacher, a position I have held for four years. I have recently been involved in a Section 50 inspection of our school.

St. Non's 225 pupils cover the full socio-economic spectrum and their ability on entry to the school also covers a wide range. Some 71% of pupils are baptised Catholics, 20% are of other Christian denominations, 1% are of other faiths and 9% are of no faith.

The school has identified 16% of its pupils as having additional learning needs, 11% have English as an Additional Language and 5% are from ethnic minorities. Five pupils are currently 'looked after' by the Local Authority and 17% of pupils are entitled to free school meals.

The school serves the Parish of St Non's and is situated in a well populated town in a community that is classed as neither advantaged nor disadvantaged. The school has good links with the local Parish and teachers are involved in running the Sunday Children's Liturgy Group, First Holy Communion classes and Baptism preparation classes. The RE link governor and the Chair of Governors both sit on the parish council.

The headteacher is supported in her role by a deputy head and another experienced teacher, who forms the third member of the senior management team. A recent inspection report has described the headteacher as 'an excellent role model for all the school community' who is 'deeply committed to the Faith'.

Regarding my role, the inspection team states:

> 'The joint Curriculum Leader is an excellent practitioner. She too has a strong commitment to her role. Her work has already contributed significantly to the raising of standards.' (Archdiocese of Cardiff Inspection Report, 2014, p. 7)

The inspectors also comment that the Governors 'have the necessary drive and an impressive 'visible' approach' which supports school improvement.

The dissertation will largely involve drawing on evidence from Section 50 inspection reports of primary schools from the Archdiocese of Cardiff. On their website, the Archdiocese of Cardiff gives the following description of itself:

> 'The Roman Catholic Diocese of Cardiff serves the South East area of Wales and the Herefordshire region of England in the United Kingdom. The diocese serves as the Metropolitan diocese for the Province of Wales and Herefordshire, therefore holding the status of 'Archdiocese'.' (www.rcadc.co.uk, 2014)

There are 44 primary schools within the Archdiocese, three of which are situated in England with the remaining within Wales. The schools serve a wide range of social-economic backgrounds. The current Director of RE is Father Bernard Sixtus and the Archdiocese has a primary inspection team of eight, all of whom headteachers of primary schools within the Archdiocese. The Department for Religious Education states that is mission is:

> 'To assist schools and colleges in the Archdiocese of Cardiff to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ.' (www.rcadc.co.uk /school-director-home.html (2014)

Aims and Objectives

Aim

The aim of this research dissertation is to use Section 50 inspection reports from one Archdiocese to discover what makes a primary school successful in developing the Catholic life of the school with a view to providing supportive ideas for other primary schools.

Objectives

- To explore the nature and purpose of Section 50 inspections, especially relating to the need to ensure that a school is fulfilling its mission as a Catholic school.

- To explain why the Catholic life of the school is important within the mission of the Catholic Church.

- To discuss the opinions of others regarding what makes a school successful in developing its Catholicity, with special regard for the role of leadership and management.

- To research primary school Section 50 reports within the local Archdiocese and focus on what the common strengths and weaknesses are within Catholic primary schools in relation to the inspection of the Catholic life of the school.

- To support others in managing the pressures and anxieties of school inspections, particularly relating to Section 50.

- To evaluate the research evidence and recommend improvements that will support other primary schools during their Section 50 inspections.

Methodology

In order to achieve my aims and objectives I will firstly carry out a literature review which will consider the nature and purpose of inspections with a particular focus on Section 50, what do we mean by 'Catholic life of the school' and why it is important, the role that leadership and management play in supporting the Catholic life of the school, how wider links support the Catholic life of the school (eg the role of the parish), how schools have the capacity to both improve from within and support each other to improve as a community of educators.

The type of research chosen for this dissertation is documentary research. I will be reading and analysing the Section 50 inspection reports from the Welsh Catholic primary schools within the Archdiocese of Cardiff. Within these I will specifically focus on information relating to the evaluation of the Catholic life of the school, both strengths and weaknesses. From this analysis I hope to draw on some common strengths and weaknesses within the Archdiocese, as well as identifying any particular pockets of excellence. These will be read with

experience of having recently been through a Section 50 inspection. This research will allow action points to be developed to support primary schools within the Archdiocese relating to this area.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

With a view to exploring the need for Section 50 inspections and deducing what use they can be to schools I will firstly look at the question of why we have school inspections, with particular reference to the Archdiocesan inspections and also what purpose they serve both to the Catholic community and to the schools themselves. Inspections are often very stressful for the school community and a lot of work goes into the preparation for an inspection. There can be positive and negative implications for this sort of process and it is important that the whole school community understands the nature and purpose of inspections and what the benefits are for them in order to ensure there is a level of motivation and a desire to use inspections as a tool for driving school improvement.

One of the most important areas that is looked at during a Catholic school inspection is the Catholic life of the school. I will unpick what we mean by the 'Catholic life' of a school and why it is necessary for the mission of the school

and the wider church. Terms such as 'ethos' 'mission' and 'gospel values' need to be carefully reflected upon and put into practice in every aspect of school life if a Catholic school is to live up to its overarching aims as part of the universal church. I will also consider the commitment of the Catholic Church towards the poor and marginalised as part of its mission and how Catholic education supports the development of the whole person by striving for excellence.

I will focus on the specific role that leadership and management play within the development of the Catholic life of the school and the attributes that create a leader who can succeed in this area alongside some of the challenges that may counteract this. I will consider some of the different models of leadership that are on offer, the role model of Jesus Christ as a leader and how personal formation is vital to achieving a positive leadership role.

The word 'evidence' can create a shudder amongst many a school team and I will look at what the tangible signs are that a school has a strong Catholic life and some of the challenges that might affect this achievement. These will include the physical environment of the school, the prayer and worship life of the school including the development of spirituality and the importance of relationships both within and beyond the school.

Finally I will discuss how inspections are not the be-all and end-all of school improvement as educational communities already contain all they require for improvement. I will look at some key Christian ideas supporting the idea of the

strength of community. I will discuss how improving from within and creating a collegial community can drive schools towards excellence. I will look at different models of structure available to schools and determine which will support a Gospel based community. Lastly I will consider the notion of 'the common good' and how educational institutions can support each other.

Why school inspections?

A good generic explanation of the purpose of inspections is offered by OFSTED in their updated Framework for School Inspection which was published in January 2014:

> The inspection of a school provides an independent external evaluation of its effectiveness and a diagnosis of what it should do to improve. It is based on a range of evidence available to inspectors that is evaluated against a national framework. (OFSTED, 2014)

All schools within Wales are inspected by the OFSTED equivalent, ESTYN, to achieve this aim. As previously discussed within the introduction, under Canon Law Catholic schools are also inspected separately to specifically evaluate their Catholic nature. This is known as a Section 50 inspection within Wales.

Inspections can be incredibly stressful for schools. Having recently undergone an Estyn inspection and a Section 50 inspection within my own school during the previous academic year, I can attest to the intensity of scrutiny, the rush to prove you are doing what you say you are doing and that awful sickening feeling when your classroom door opens and the inspector walks in with their

clipboard. I am sure many teachers would feel delighted and relieved if inspections were to be pushed into the proverbial 'room 101'. However, because of the nature of the business we are in, inspections, unpleasant though they may be, do serve a vital part of the life of our schools.

The nature of schools means that they become little communities within themselves. It can be easy to consider this community a 'gated community' and think of it as 'our school' or 'our classroom'. Whilst it is certainly important to develop a sense of pride and belonging, the hard fact is that schools do not belong to the people who work in them, no matter how much of themselves they pour into their school community. Schools exist to serve *the* community at large and so are answerable to that community. Put bluntly, 'We serve the community and in return we must be effective and efficient.' (Murphy, 2001, p.1).

One way of looking at it is to reassess how we view our attitude towards our role within our school community. Sullivan (2002) offers a useful suggestion by swapping the term 'ownership' for 'stewardship'. As stewards we are held accountable for that which we look after on behalf of others:

> 'The school, the curriculum, the department, the staff, the resources, the budget – none of these are ours; we hold them in trust on behalf of others and in due course, we must be ready to give an account of our use, our stewardship.' (Sullivan, 2002, p.2)

So who are the 'others' of whom we are accountable to? Murphy (2001) reminds us that Catholic schools are answerable to the state that provide

salaries, equipment and support with building costs. In addition to this, the

Catholic community has a lot invested in its schools:

> 'Catholic schools are an integral part of the Catholic community, which contributes funding and the use of assets worth many millions of pounds annually to enable Catholic schools to operate as part of the state funded sector as a contribution towards the common good of society.' (CES, 2014, p.5)

Catholic schools are heavily invested in by the Catholic community as their

ultimate purpose is to become part of the salvific nature of the Catholic Church

in proclaiming the Gospel and making know the person of Jesus Christ. To this

aim the Section 50 report allows the Catholic community to find out how

successful this mission is.

Furthermore, parents who make the decision to send their children to a Catholic

school often do so because of the unique Catholic character of the school and as

stakeholders are interested in the Catholic life of the school and how successful

it is. Estyn inspections look at particular aspects of the school's life but they do

not evaluate the school's Catholic nature. The Section 50 inspection rigorously

reassures parents and the Catholic community about the school's unique

Catholic characteristics.

Grace (2002) discusses how inspections are not just about finding fault and

error (which I suspect many teachers view them as) but rather they are a

genuine evaluation of the value of what is being offered to the participant, in

this case the pupils. Grace speaks specifically about the evaluation of worship in schools but his summary proves true to all areas of school life in that external observations can support improvements to quality and offer a sense of direction to these improvements.

Later I will be discussing how schools can improve from within and strive for excellence through their own community development. Drawing on internal gifts can be a powerful tool for the change and development of schools and ensuring that schools remain true to what they consider to be their core aims and objectives. The Catholic Education Service notes that 'external inspection will contribute to the process of improvement.' (CES, 1999). The idea of inspections is not for them to be an 'us versus them' experience but rather a 'we're in this together' experience. Thus external and internal parties work together for the common good of the school. It is important that we continue to monitor and develop ways in which self-evaluation and external evaluation work together.

Catholic life in schools

As discussed, the Section 50 inspection hones in specifically on the Catholic nature of the school and a key part of this evaluation is what is known as 'the Catholic life' of the school. I would next like to discuss what we mean when we say 'Catholic life' and in doing so why it is such a key element of the role the Catholic school plays within the Catholic community at large.

Christ at the centre

In terms of its ultimate mission, the most important thing for a Catholic school is to ensure that the person of Jesus Christ lies at the very heart of the school. Archbishop Vincent Nichols explains that Christ is at the very centre of what it means to be human and so should be at the very centre of our schools. (Nichols, 2009). In this respect the Catholic school does not act as an individual, independent entity but is bound up within the Universal Church and forms an important part of the Church's mission to make know the person of Jesus Christ to the world. Mgr Marcus Stock (2012) writes that in order for schools to be at the centre of the evangelising mission of the church, Christ must be at the heart and, in fact, if this is not the case then the school cannot call itself a Catholic school.

The place where we hear the words of Christ is in the Gospels and the term 'Gospel values' is one that is readily bandied about in Catholic schools. This means that Catholic schools are not just serving others just be to kind and caring, noble as this is, but rather doing so based on the values that are portrayed by Christ within the Gospels. The term 'Gospel values' does come with a hazard warning. If used without true understanding, Gospel values can become little more than lists of things that would be nice to see in a school setting. For Gospel values to be truly real there must be an unpicking of the term based on the words of Jesus Christ. (Stock, 2012).

There are plenty of examples within the Gospels of values upon which a Catholic school can build itself. These are not randomly selected pieces of information but are based on the teachings of Jesus. These include the core commandment to love one another (Matthew 22:37-40) , forgiveness (Matthew 18: 21-22), servitude (John 13: 12-17)and the need to develop a loving relationship with God the Father (Luke 11: 1-13). The prayer 'Our Father' (Luke 11: 2-4) and the 'Beatitudes' (Matthew 5:1-12) all serve as excellent starting points for unpicking what Gospel values mean on a more practical basis.

Mission Statement and Ethos

Mission Statement: a formal statement of the policies, aims, values. etc. of a company or other organization.

Ethos: the distinguishing character or guiding beliefs of a person, institution etc.

The above definitions taken from 'The New Penguin English Dictionary' (2000) give a generic description of what is meant by the terms 'Mission Statement' and 'ethos'. In order for a school to be Catholic these must be rooted in the person of Jesus Christ and inspired by the values set out in the Gospels. The Mission Statement tells us what the aims of the school are and the ethos is the climate which shows if these aims are being met.

Gallagher(2008, p.10) writes:

> 'Every school has its mission statement which seeks to express the core of its vision of sound education and the spirit which should permeate every aspect of the life of the school. In a Catholic school this will be expressed in the light of our Christian belief in the dignity, worth and uniqueness of each individual.'

The mission statement is not to be something that is just written down, put up and never considered but should form the focal point for everything that the school does. (CES, 1999).

Stock (2012,) describes the Catholic ethos as the 'outward signs' that a school's mission is being lived out. Archbishop Vincent Nichols (2009, p.6) believes that this ethos should be instantly tangible:

> 'From the first moment that any person sets foot in a Catholic school he or she ought to have the impression of entering a new environment, one that has its own unique characteristics.'

So, to tie some of these important terms up, we know that the person of Christ lies at the heart of every Catholic school and we seek our inspiration through his words and actions in the Gospels. Our Mission Statement proclaims our desire to achieve this and our ethos is the way in which we actively live this out within our school community.

A commitment towards the poor and marginalised

The Vatican document *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* pays tribute to Catholic education's commitment to the poor and marginalised. It describes this commitment as 'invaluable' for the 'spiritual and material development of less fortunate people.' (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997, p.5). It also alerts us to the fact that there are many forms of poverty, not just financial:

> '...those who have lost all sense of meaning in life and lack any type of inspiring ideal, those to whom no values are proposed and who do not know the beauty of faith, who come from families which are broken and incapable of love, often living in situations of material and spiritual poverty, slaves to the new idols of a society, which, not infrequently, promises them only a future of unemployment and marginalization.'

The Catholic Education Service challenges us to see the presence of Christ in all those around us but particularly '...the neighbour who suffers or who lacks what is essential to human flourishing.' (CES, 1997, p.4). It continues to state that educating the poor and the marginalised should be our primary concern.

Search for excellence

To strive for excellence is not a unique characteristic held by Catholic schools but what is unique is the motivation behind the drive for excellence. The Catholic Bishops of England and Wales characterised this call for excellence within the framework of Catholic education when they stated:

> 'The search for excellence is seen as an integral part of the spiritual quest. Christians are called to seek perfection in all aspects of their lives. In Catholic education, pupils and students are therefore given every opportunity to develop their talents to the full.' (The Catholic Bishops of England and Wales, 1996, p.3).

We understand from this that a Catholic school's drive to achieve excellence is not just motivated by a desire for children to do well. To provide an atmosphere where excellence thrives contributes to the personal spiritual quest of each individual in their search for perfection.

The search for excellence is based on the fundamental belief that everyone is made in the image of God, that everyone is precious in the sight of God and that everyone is called into a loving relationship with God the Father through his Son Jesus Christ. Gallagher (2008, p.38) writes:

> 'Underpinning and motivating all that we do in the mission of Catholic education is a faith perspective about what it means to be human and how best we can educate children and young people to fulfil their human potential. This is a distinctive feature of Catholic schools. While other schools may show the same care and concern for pupils, their motivation for doing so may be different. Our philosophy of education grows out of our Christian faith and understanding of the human person.'

We are also reminded by Pope Benedict in his address to pupils in Twickenham in 2010 that the search for excellence in education should educate the whole person at the very basic level and, moving beyond what is measurable, should aim to help all its students become saints. In seeking to hit targets and crunch data it is important that Catholic schools do not forget this overarching mission which is being worked out every day and contributing to the history of salvation.

Having discussed the theory of these ideas I will later explore how we can evidence that all this is going on in our schools and what can challenge these aims. Next, I would like to focus more explicitly on the specific role that leadership and management play in developing the Catholic life of the school.

Leadership and Management

The development of ethos and mission are not possible unless leaders and managers themselves are personally true to the Catholic mission of the school. They need to not just 'talk the talk' but also 'walk the walk' and become the embodiment of what they hope to achieve.

Mission integrity and leadership

John Sullivan states that Catholic leaders should seek every opportunity to draw things back to the central mission of the Church and Catholic education's role within it, thus showing their personal belief in the mission integrity of the school:

> 'School leaders must be ready to use every opportunity to articulate the 'story' of Catholic education, its purpose and mission, its central features and constituent elements, its living tradition and culture, its leading principles and how these guide decisions, policies, priorities and practices.' (Sullivan, 2002, p.103)

In his article, "Living Logos: A Challenge for Catholic School Leadership", Sullivan takes this idea further and suggests that leaders within Catholic schools should become a living logo of the Catholic faith which they seek to promote. In the course of seeking to ensure mission integrity they become integral to the mission and become a means through which God seeks to achieve his mission of salvation for the world:

> '....we have to make within ourselves a home for scripture, to be at home with God's word and to see ourselves as one among many home bases that God uses to evangelise others.'(Sullivan, 2002, p.2).

To take a liberty with a well-known quote by Pope Paul VI, the importance of personal faithfulness to the mission integrity of the school can be seen if you consider 'Modern man listens more readily to witnesses than to leaders and managers, and if he does listen to leaders and managers it is because they are witnesses.'

To lead as Jesus led

Headteachers of Catholic primary schools are placed under the same pressure to perform as headteachers of non Catholic primary schools. Just like all other headteachers they are also striving for excellence, though perhaps in a different sense of the word. There is a conflict between the style of leadership that is deemed necessary to achieve 'excellence' within an increasingly competitive marketplace and the style that is required of Catholic school leaders. Fincham (2010, p.65) notes that schools have concerns over which style of leadership is most suitable. For example, should they consider themselves a 'ruthless business leader whose main aim is to increase profits' or model themselves on 'compassionate leadership that is based explicitly on the example of Jesus Christ.'

Nuzzi (1999) believes that through the Gospels we see Jesus as a positive role model for leaders. O'Malley (2007) agrees that we need to look to the patterns

within the life of Jesus contained within the Gospel stories which he believes are not just historical but rather a sort of blue print which can support the work in every school.

O'Malley uses the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd to discuss how leaders and managers can draw inspiration from the Gospel in order to maintain their mission integrity. He describes how leaders, as the 'Good Shepherd', know their 'sheep' by name and have a personable approach towards those they lead, how they keep watch for 'wolves' or threats that might affect their 'sheep', how they create an environment that is a safe 'sheepfold' to allow their community to flourish and how they move their 'flock' on 'to new pastures' by growing and developing within the gospel spirit.

The idea of 'servant leadership' has its roots in the teachings and actions of Jesus:

> 'But this is not the way it is with you; rather, the greatest one among you must be like the youngest, and the leader must be like the servant.' (Luke 21-24-26)

This also recalls to mind the powerful image of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples at the Last Supper (John 13:14). Considering this section of the Gospel, Nuzzi (1999, p.265) reminds us that to lead as Jesus led 'involves a use of power that is orientated to service to others rather than responsibility over others.'

Personal formation

Pamela Hayes (1995, p. 161) writes that we cannot expect to transform the world around us by our love alone as such a mission can only be achieved by tapping into a greater power that goes beyond our capacity. This she calls 'the Spirit of love that was God's own.' Engagement with the words of Christ through the Gospels is one of the ways that Catholic school leaders can remain tapped into this powerful source. Bollan (2007) believes that the relationship with the living word of God should develop in a way that Christ's words become their words.

There needs to be a conscious effort on behalf of the Catholic school leader to open their heart, mind and soul to the grace of God. O'Malley (2007, p.17) states that spiritual leadership requires 'time for reflection, self-knowledge and a deeper level of awareness of mystery in everyday patterns.' One of the ways to achieve this is through prayer. Within the Gospels there are many references to Jesus spending quiet time in prayer (Mark 1:35, Matthew 14:23, Luke 6:12) and Jesus also encourages others to spend time alone in prayer, 'But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father.' (Matthew 6:6).

Evidence, evidence, evidence!

Having discussed a lot of the theories behind the expectations placed on Catholic schools I would now like to turn some attention towards what all of this might look like on a more practical level. I can remember in the build up to my first school inspection supporting the headteacher in gathering all the evidence that would be required to prove we were doing what we said we were doing. I have found some of the ideas that follow very useful in thinking about how we evidence the Catholic life of our school.

Developing Mission and Ethos

A Mission Statement and a proposed shared ethos alone do not make for a successful Catholic school. Firstly, we cannot assume that everyone within the school community comes from a practising Catholic background and we cannot presuppose that everyone understands what is meant by 'Gospel values' and becoming 'Christ-like'. Stock (2012, p.17) believes that if we are to create a community that is truly based on Gospel values then these values need to be explored:

> 'For this to be possible, these Gospel values need to be explicitly named, their meaning unpacked and pupils helped to understand how they relate to their lives both at school, at home and in society.'

I would extend this to also include all other stakeholders within the school – teachers, support staff, other staff, governors, parents and members of the Church community. We would need to consider what opportunities we have

provided for the school community to reflect upon and develop their understanding of the shared aims of the school.

The school environment also offers many opportunities to develop and understand mission and ethos in practical ways. Some of these will be born out of a desire to create a shared ethos and some of these will support and sustain a shared ethos. O'Malley (2007) notes that the thousands of hidden choices that individuals make on a daily basis are what really count towards the mission of the school. This point is reiterated by the Catholic Education Service:

> 'A school's mission and character do not develop by themselves; they are formed through daily action, not by discussion alone, and every member of the school or college community can contribute to their development and enrichment.' (CES, 1999, p.11).

External signs

The external environment of the school is the first impression a visitor will have. Also, external environments can have a big impact on the way you feel within a space and they speak a lot about what the community feels is important to them. It can make non-verbal statements about 'the mission of the school, its values and priorities.' (CES, 1999, p.27). Stock (2012, p.21) believes that buildings should be developed in order to make visitors aware that they are entering a unique and sacred learning environment:

> 'The primary considerations in the design, construction and maintenance of Catholic school buildings and their premises should be the educational

and spiritual needs, physical accessibility and the health and safety of the teacher and learner. Symbols and Icons of the Catholic faith which are well-crafted and maintained should be manifest externally and internally on the school premises.'

He goes on to say that the effectiveness of outward signs show the influence of the personal and shared faith of the school community.

Healy (1999) believes that communities are symbolically constructed and that there is importance attached to symbols, myths and rituals within the community as they contribute towards the shared identity of that community. Speaking of the school as a Christian community, Healy states that some external symbols have great power in terms of creating identity and these include the symbol of the cross, the school badge, displayed mottoes or mission statements, the school handbook and the school website. These symbols are a means of expressing and celebrating commonly held beliefs. They help to develop a sense of belonging as part of the school community.

Prayer and worship

Prayer and worship is important as evidence of the Catholic life of the school. It should not be seen as a 'bolt on' but rather as the heart of school life as it is through prayer and worship that we are truly connected to God and through the power of the Holy Spirit become a Gospel community that is truly alive and growing. The Catholic Education Service believes that it is through prayer and worship that the Catholic life of the school becomes most prevalent:

'The opportunities provided by a Catholic school for pupils to deepen their personal relationship with Christ in personal prayer, public liturgy and the celebration of the sacraments bring the spiritual life of the school to its most explicit expression.' (CES, 1995, p.16).

Grace (2002) believes that the true meaning of the faith will only be uncovered through the liturgy and especially the Eucharist. The prayer and worship life of the school, he states, should develop from a real desire to build a deeper relationship with God, to thank God for his goodness and to seek his help and guidance.

It is important to remember when developing prayer and worship within a Catholic school that the spiritual life of the school is part of the spiritual life of the wider Church and should reflect this. O'Malley (2007) suggests that the shape which this spirituality takes should be Gospel focused, should use the symbols and stories of the Gospels to help the community to understand the inner world, should offer clear Gospel based values based on a common spiritual bond of belonging to God and show that the Gospel offers a worldwide vision and supports people through all of their lives.

Julie McCann, author of *Spiritual Garments: A handbook for preparing liturgical assemblies in schools* stresses that it is important that children do not view the prayer and worship life in their school as 'child-like' and something that does not at all resemble what they experience in their parish as this can affect their ongoing Christian formation and the ability to make links between school and parish. In the prayer and worship life of the school there should be

synthesis between the signs, seasons and symbols of the Church which McCann believes supports the unity of us all in Christ:

> 'By introducing children to the rituals, prayers, language, symbols, colours, songs and seasons of the church we are connecting them to a body far wider than the school boundary: in fact, the Body of Christ.'(McCann, 2006, p.15).

Although public prayer and worship in the form of whole school and class worship is important, there also needs to be space provided for pupils and staff to develop their spiritual connection with God. By coming together as a community in prayer and worship pupils are given the vocabulary and the skills to independently develop their prayer life. Spaces within classrooms or around the school, reflecting the liturgical year or a specific aspect of the Catholic faith, support this.

Relationships

Relationships within the school community can be evidence that Gospel values are truly being lived out. Archbishop Vincent Nichols (2009, p.6) states that '...all relationships in which the school is engaged have to be based on a deep respect between persons involved, without exception.' This supports that belief that every individual is unique and created by God. This should be evident in the pastoral care of staff, the way staff are appreciated and cared for (CES, 1996) and also the way that staff offer care and support to pupils which is not

just focused on the 'intellectual dimensions' but also on 'the cultural, emotional, spiritual, religious dimensions.' (Gallagher, 2008, p.39).

O'Malley (2007) comments that many of the actions made by the adults in the school speak to pupils about the value that adults within the community place on the pupils' spiritual life. This includes planning, discipline and evaluation. Healy (1999) places importance on the ways that schools choose to celebrate individual's successes and reward and sanction pupils as he believes this is evidence of its values and ethos. A school needs to consider how it makes use of these and if they support the belief in the dignity of each individual, especially when it comes to sanctions and disciplinary matters.

Relationships in the school community also encompasses other stakeholders such as the parish and the home. In fact, the ideal Catholic community involves the partnership of these three in support of one another in order to develop the fullness of the child:

> 'Each of the partners – home, school and parish – need to try to show as much of the life of the Church which is appropriate to their situation. As we speak of a partnership, no one part has the monopoly of the faith and all are needed for a rounded experience of the Church.' (Grace, 2002, p.80).

Schools must consider how they reach out to and develop positive relationships with these important partners in their educational mission.

Challenges

Developing the Catholic life within the school is not without its challenges as often the values and ethos of the Catholic faith come into conflict with other forces that are acting within education. This includes the tightening link between the economic market place and education (Grace 2002). Grace (2002, p.7) describes the new culture of education as being one in which education has become a commodity and schools are measured competitively against each other, which contradicts the aims of Catholic education:

> 'These developments do 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.'

The Catholic Education Service had previously heralded a warning for Catholic schools about the impact of pursuing excellence simply in terms of academic results and their desire to do well against other schools in league tables. It reminded schools that '...the pursuit of excellence should be part of a larger spiritual quest and not just driven by league tables.'(CES, 1997).

The drive for achievement in terms of league tables also threatens the Catholic school's mission to support the poor and marginalised within society. These might seem less desirable to a school that wishes to only attract the academic best. Grace (2002) states that this is a fact that is being recognised by Catholic headteachers.

Another challenge for schools comes from operating within an educational sphere that is becoming increasingly secularised. Although secular education seeks to be value free or neutral it is in fact neither and can be indifferent or even hostile towards Catholic education. (Arthur, 2009). In fact, Arthur notes that secularisation can go as far as to penetrate 'the thinking and practices of Catholics and Catholic schools'. Catholic schools should ensure that they offer a true alternative to secular styles of education.

Improving from within

Although external advice is helpful for school improvement, the biggest support for the drive for excellence actually lies in schools. This fits in with the Catholic belief that each individual plays an important part in building up the body of the whole and is also supported outside Catholic education by educational theorists such as Roland S. Barth. Furthermore, Catholic schools have a duty towards the common good by getting involved with the wider educational community and supporting a community of learning and development of good practice.

Building up the body of Christ

One of the ways that the Catholic life of the school is evident is through the structure of the school team. Sergiovanni(2001) suggests that there are lots of

different models that are on offer. These include a pyramid structure which takes a hierarchical approach with a leader at the top being in control with some level of control passed down to smaller managers, the railroad structure in which everything is totally standardised and people are trained to follow a specific route to achieve a specific outcome and the high performance model where the results expected to be achieved are set in stone but the route the team takes to arrive there are flexible (so long as they achieve what is expected!).

However, Sergiovanni considers the most successful structure to be that of moral leadership based on stewardship and service and this is the style of leadership that would most readily lend itself towards developing a Gospel based community. In this model every person is deemed important and this fits in well with the message given in 1Corinthians:

> 'The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body.' (1 Corinthians 12:12).

Holman (2002, p.74) believes that one of the challenges for Catholic school leaders '..is to identify how an individual can contribute from his or her talents to the ministry of the church in the school.' Pope Paul VI , in *Lumen Gentium*, also highlights the importance of each individual contributing to the whole:

'Each person must walk unhesitatingly according to his own personal gifts and duties in the path of living faith, which arouses hope and works through charity.' (Pope Paul VI, 1964.)

In this respect we should pay attention to the phrase 'leadership and management.' Sergiovanni reminds us that leaders should also be able to manage and in this case they must successfully manage the talents that lie within their school.

Healy (1999) states that it is important that school's develop and practice the notion that we are all one in the community of God or there will be a tendency towards individualism which will destroy the Christian ethos. Jones & Barrie (2015, p.120) develop this idea of community even further and believe that the Catholic school should be a 'communion' or 'an expression of the Church.' As a Catholic school is not an 'accidental gathering of people' but rather 'a community gathered explicitly in the name of Christ.' It becomes a 'communion'.

What comes across in the development of these ideas is the importance of the collective whole in achieving this 'communion.' In order for this to be actualised it is important to develop collegiality within a school.

Collegiality

Barth (1990) believes that a sense of community is essential if a school is to improve from within. He advocates a school where there is a 'community of leaders' and all stakeholders share in the responsibility of decision making. 'Collegiality', Barth argues, may be seen as something that is a soft and fuzzy notion at a time when many are calling for rigor and clarity (written in 1990 I believe this is all too true of the current climate of schools in the UK). However, Barth states that when put into action collegiality can have a really positive impact on standards in a school.

Within his book, Barth discusses Judith Warren Little's specific indicators that demonstrate that collegiality is present. These are that adults in a school talk about practice, adults in school watch each other engage in practice, adults engage together in work on curriculum and adults teach each other what they know. Within a Catholic school we can use this model to support the Catholic life of the school whereby adults talk about the Catholic life of the school, adults observe each other developing the Catholic life of the school and note moments where the ethos is lived out, adults engage together and work on developing the Catholic life of the school and adults teach each other what they know about fostering a strong Catholic life.

The Common Good

Developing an internal collegial spirit is important for Catholic schools but beyond this they are also called to extend this spirit beyond their own settings. This call is born out of the mission of the church to create a Common Good in society:

> 'Beside the good of the individual, there is a good that is linked to living in society: the common good. It is the good of "all of us", made up of individuals, families and intermediate groups who together constitute society.' (Pope Benedict XVI, 2009.)

The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education (1997, p.35) reminds educators of the importance of building relationships within their profession and entering into dialogue with others:

> 'It is also through their formational journey that educators are called on to build relationships at professional, personal and spiritual levels according to the logic of communion. For each one this involves being open, welcoming, disposed to a deep exchange of ideas, convivial and living a fraternal life within the educational community itself.'

Indeed, in terms of developing all aspects of school life it is important that schools look outside their own community in order to keep up to date with current educational pedagogies and practices. In terms of secularisation, Catholic voices have their own opinions to add to future educational developments and it is important that their opinions are heard and taken into account.

In terms of the Common Good, Catholic schools have much good practice that can be shared with others in order to raise educational standards for all. In *The*

Common Good in Education (1997) the Catholic Education Service discusses the role Catholic schools play in supporting others. Due to power being taken from the Local Education Authorities and being placed more into the hands of individual schools, schools have a responsibility towards the Common Good of all in their area. This means not making decision, for example,that will have a detrimental effect of other neighbouring schools and supporting schools that require it. Rather than competing with others for excellence (which league tables might encourage) we should support each other in developing excellence for all.

Having reviewed and discussed the literature available regarding the Catholic life of the school I would now like to move on to looking at research methodology and the means by which I will be analysing how effective the Catholic life on the school in within my chosen sample.

Chapter Three
Methodology and Research

Introduction

During this chapter I will be exploring the topic of research and the different methodologies which are on offer for carrying out a research project. This will include looking at some of the positive and negative aspects of each type of research methodology. I will briefly discuss some specific theories surrounding social research and its relationship to scientific research. Based on this exploration I will justify which methodology I have chosen for my research into the Catholic life of the school and explain why other methods have been discarded.

Following on from this I will hone in more specifically on the research I have undertaken in terms of how I applied my chosen methodology to the research. I will discuss the sample taken and how and why this sample was chosen and I will talk about how I approached analysing the information available.

No research methodology is perfect and so I will consider the reliability of the data available and the validity of the data gathered. This will include a scrutiny of my own ability to carry out the research in the light of some of the criticism that are levelled at empirical theology. I will conclude by briefly discussing any ethical issues which may be involved in the research.

Research Methodologies

What is research?

Broadly speaking, research is described in The New Penguin English Dictionary (2000) as:

> '**1** scientific or scholarly investigation, *esp* study or experiment aimed at the discovery, interpretation, or application of facts, theories, or laws. **2** careful or systematic searching or enquiry.'

The word is derived from the French word *recerchier*, which means 'to search thoroughly.' To pick up on some of the key vocabulary, research is born out of a desire to **search** for something, suggesting a degree of inquisitiveness and a desire to pick apart the workings of something. It is something that is done **thoroughly** in order to satisfy the searching of the researcher.

There are lots of different ways in which a researcher may go about their research. These can vary depending on the nature of the research to be undertaken and what the researcher hopes to achieve. These can also be influenced by a researcher's opinions as to what constitutes research that is valid and viable, according to their beliefs in various research styles and practices. Sometimes more than one research methodology may be required. Following are some of the types of research commonly used, along with a

discussion regarding their pros and cons. The following descriptions are summaries based on Bell (2010).

Action research

Action research is suitable when the researcher requires specific knowledge for a specific problem within a specific situation. It is often carried out by a practitioner who has indentified that within their organisation there is a need for change or improvement. The aim of action research is to produce recommendations for good practice that will resolve the problems or enhance the performance of an organization.

When undertaking action research it is important that all the participants are very clear about the aims of the research and what their role is in it. Participants are involved in reviewing the research as it is undertaken. Action research is seen as an ongoing loop of research rather that a start to finish process as the participants enter into a cycle of ongoing reviews, evaluations and changes of practice as necessary.

The very nature of action research means that it will not always be suitable. Firstly, it is a very specified form of research and not all research projects have the aim of trying to resolve a specific problem. Secondly, it requires active participation and involvement from others throughout the process and so the researcher becomes reliant on these 'partners' in their research. Thirdly, the continuous loop aspect would perhaps involve a more lengthy dedication to the

project that some researchers are prepared to devote. Action research very much lends itself to someone already working within an organisation who has the capacity to build on their recommendation with the support of others.

Case Study

The case study approach allows for a particular aspect to be studied in depth. Sometimes it is carried out following a survey to provide more information or sometimes it precedes a survey and can identify key areas that require follow up. Evidence is collected systematically and the relationship between variables is studied. Bell sums up this approach as follows:

> 'All organizations and individuals have their common and their unique features. Case study researchers aim to identify such features, to identify or attempt to identify the various interactive processes at work, to show how they affect the implementation of systems and influence the way an organization functions.' (Bell, 2010, p.9)

Critics of case study say that the study can become too specific to the particular organization being looked at. In order for it to have further reaching relevance there is a need to make sure it is relatable to other organizations. Case studies can make generalizations difficult and the researcher would need to carefully analyse data and demography of research to consider how specific data is relatable to other organizations. With this in mind, the demographic make-up of the research would need to be explained clearly.

Survey

Bell believed that it can be difficult to give a definition of what a survey is as a survey could cover a wide range of areas and be for a wide range of purposes. The aims of a survey are to gather evidence from a selection of the population and present results as if representing the whole population. Therefore, care needs to be taken when sampling that a true representation is achieved.

Question wording is key in a survey and great thought needs to be given as to how a wide range of people might interpret the questions. In order to ensure accuracy of results it is important that the questions mean the same thing to all the participants. It is normal for the researcher to carry out a 'pilot' in order to trial their survey and test out the questions before proceeding with the survey proper.

It is perhaps because of this requirement to ensure that questions do not have multiple meanings that surveys are based around 'fact finding' and suit research projects that require the acquisition of facts. Research projects that require the need to explore the question 'why' are not suited to this research approach. It can also be difficult to judge the correct number and demography of samples to be taken in order to represent the true whole depending on the nature of the organization or organizations being looked at.

The experimental style

The experimental style of research suits situations where there are 'measurable phenomena'. For example, setting up two groups of identical demography with chosen variables between the two groups. This approach better suits scientific research rather than social research for several reasons.

Firstly, when looking at a social experiment it can be difficult to isolate a variable as the way a person acts within a social setting could be the results of lots of variable. This would mean that larger and multiple groups may be required in order to look at the more extensive range of variables. This could lead to research that is both expensive and time consuming.

There are also ethical issues to be considered when carrying out the experimental style of research as part of a social research project. Individuals would need to be fully informed and possible proposals considered by an ethics committee. Some object altogether of the isolation and control of variables within social settings.

Ethnography and ethnographic

Ethnography is observing in a natural setting or field and collecting data to capture social meaning in ordinary activities which may or may not require the researcher to take part in themselves. Data is collected in a systematic way without the researcher imposing their own external meaning. This approach

allows the sharing of experiences with subjects to try and understand why the act the way they do.

This type of research can be very time consuming as the researcher needs to allow time to become accepted by the individual or group to develop trust. It may require the researcher to spend a considerable amount of time in a situation or circumstance for this to happen. As with the case study there is also the issue that the research can become too focused on one specific individual or institution and therefore does not translate more widely.

The grounded theory approach

During this type of research, the researcher develops their theory without committing themselves to specific data, lines of research or theoretical interests. The sampling used is called 'theoretical sampling' as it is directed by the evolving theory. This approach can also be very context specific.

Similar to action research, there is a cyclical nature to the grounded theory approach. Theories emerge from the data which may require more data which subsequently may lead to more theories. Data is processed immediately rather than being analysed at the end of the research. The project is continued until is reaches a point known as 'theoretical saturation' whereby no further evidence is required and the theory is complete.

Research using this investigative style can create multiple layers of meaning and understanding making it sometimes difficult to know when to stop. Time and budget restraints could mean that the research never reaches that point of theoretical saturation. Analysis can also be very complicated as the researcher needs to sort through data in order to create coherent relationships and categories.

Narrative enquiry and stories

This is the collection and development of stories either as a form of data collection of as a means of structuring research projects. The informants speak in story form during their interview and the researcher has the role of simply listening and attempting to understand what is being narrated. The approach is described as narrative 'when data collection, interpretation and writing are considered a 'meaning making' process with similar characteristics to stories.' (Bell, 2010, p.19).

The researcher weaves together voices from different sources in order to create a narrative. This approach is useful when gathering information on human experiences that are intense and personal to the group being interviewed.

This approach can be very time consuming as it requires the researcher to allow the storyteller to tell the story in their own time and in their own way. It often requires follow up interviews. A level of trust needs to be developed in order to

encourage the storyteller to open up and at any point the storyteller may decided on substantial editing or the complete withdrawal of their story from the project.

Analysis of documentary evidence

Brendan Duffy's contribution to Bell's book details the analysis of documentary evidence as a style of research. Duffy (2010) explains that there are two different approaches to this style of research. The 'source orientated approach' starts with the sources and allows these to shape the questions for research whereas the 'problem-orientated approach' starts with the formulation of questions, through investigation of what has already been discovered on the subject, and analyses the documents in the light of this.

There are two types of documents that can be consulted and these are 'primary sources' which 'came into existence in the period under research' and 'secondary sources' which are 'interpretations of events of that period based on primary sources.' (Duffy, 2010, p.128). Primary sources can also be 'deliberate sources' which are 'produced for the attention of future researchers' or 'inadvertent sources' which are 'used by researchers for some purpose other than that for which they were originally intended.'

When interpreting documents, researchers may find 'witting evidence' which is evidence that the author of the document originally meant to provide but there might also be 'unwitting evidence' whereby the researcher may learn something incidentally by studying the document. The document may be analysed for its

content to assess its meaning and significance or it may be critically analysed in which the researcher aims to deduce how genuine and authentic the document is.

Care needs to be taken when carrying out documentary research that not too many documents are used and that documents are not deliberately selected on the basis that they support the researcher's view or theory. The aim is to try and sample as balanced selection as possible whilst bearing time constraints in mind. The chosen sampling method should be justifiable and replicable. It must be sufficiently large enough to allow for valid conclusions to be drawn.

Social research

I have discussed some of the different forms of research methodologies that are available but Alan Bryman (1992, p.11) notes that some argue about the concept that 'the social world can and should be studied according to the same principles, procedures and ethos as the natural sciences.' Bryman and Bell both make distinctions between 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' research. The former largely requires the collection and study of facts, whereas the latter is more focused on individual perceptions of the world. (Bell, 2010). Although the difference may seem a 'hard and fast' one, Bryman discusses how each approach is fuelled by a different understanding of research.

Quatitative research applied to a social setting links in with positivism, whereby the researcher believes that you can apply the same study principles to the social

world as you can to natural science. Data focus would suggest an emphasis on explanation of human behaviour. In terms of the nature of the social entity, a quantitative approach would suggest that the reality of the organization is imposed externally and individuals conform to this reality. The theory guides the research project.

Qualitative research, in comparison, is interpretivist in the belief that the study of the social world requires a different approach to that of the natural world. The focus is more on understanding human behaviour. Social institutions are produced and continually evolved through social interaction and so their reality is imposed internally. Theory is the outcome of the research. However, Bryman does note that 'studies that have the broad characteristic of one research strategy may have a characteristic of the other.' (Bryman, 1992, p.21)

Justification of Approach

The overarching aim of this research project is to support other Catholic primary schools in developing the catholic life of their school. As shown, there are many different approaches and philosophies about social research and I would next like to justify why some research methodologies have been rejected and why one particular methodology has been chosen.

Rejected methodologies

The specifications of action research being suited to a practitioner who had identified a specific need for change did not fit in with the aims of my research which was to identify both positive and negative aspects of a general area within schools. The requirement of a continuous loop of reviews, evaluations and changes of practice did not fit in within my timescale.

The case study, I felt, would lead to a research project that was too focused on one school and would make it difficult for me to make generalisations about the Catholic life of the school. I felt a survey would be too focused on 'fact finding' and that it would be tricky to work the questions correctly to gain the information I needed on Catholic life without formulating questions with possible multiple meanings for recipients.

The experimental style was not appropriate on the grounds of the huge degree of variables that contributed towards the Catholic life of the school. Similarly to the case study, the ethnographic approach I felt would be too limited and would require field work in lots of different settings in order to generate generalising information, something which time constraints would not allow.

The grounded theory approach worked against the aims and objectives of the research project in which data was already available to be analysed and some theories could already be formed from existing sources on Catholic life within schools. Narrative enquiry and stories would also require a larger amount of

time that available in order to gather enough information to inform the research. I also felt it was based too much on personal experience and opinions to create generalisations.

Chosen methodology

The methodology that I chose for this research project was the analysis of documentary evidence, specifically Section 50 reports. The reason for this choice was that the evidence was readily available and the framework of the inspection reports was such that commentary would naturally be offered on the Catholic life of the school. The sample of reports chosen would be reasonable within the time constraints of the research project and were varied and numerous enough to be able to draw generalisations from.

The approach can be described as quantitative in that the reports contain factual information although the information contained on the catholic life of the school is based on the inspectors' interpretation of social construction within the setting. In one respect the reports can be seen as suggesting objectivism, whereby the Catholic Church and its social teachings impose expectations on the schools but also as constructionism as the community within the schools bring to life the meaning of the church's social teachings about what it means to be Catholic. Thus proving the point made earlier by Bryman about the clouding of research strategies.

Research Design

Using the analysis of documentary evidence approach, the research will involve analysing Section 50 inspection reports of the Archdiocese of Cardiff, which will include a wide range of primary schools from different ethnological backgrounds. The inspection reports were the most recent available for each school as of the date of printing, 30th June 2015.

Due to the change in the Section 50 Inspection Framework in 2010, I will only be looking at inspection reports that have been completed under the new framework. Due to the comparative nature of the analysis I felt that it was important that the reports were all written within the same frame of reference. This gave me a sample of 28 out of 43 schools.

The inspection reports were written by the inspectors who had completed the Section 50 inspections. Throughout the whole sample taken there were 15 different inspectors involved, in varying combinations. Each report was produced by between one and three inspectors.

The reports focus on three key questions, which are:

KQ1. How good are outcomes?

KQ2. How good is provision?

KQ3. How good are leadership and management?

The reports also include the context of each school, a summary in relation to how effective the school is in providing Catholic education and their prospects for improvement along with recommendations for improvement or required actions.

The Catholic life of the school is evidenced through all three key questions and does not have a specific section within the report and so the use of skimming and scanning was necessary in order to analyse how effective it was in each school. Based on the literature review, the key areas looked for were the school's mission statement, mentions of ethos, pastoral care, the search for excellence, leadership style and development, external signs of Catholic life, prayer and worship, Religious Education and relationships (within and without).

Although there was no specific grading for the Catholic life of the school, account was taken of the gradings given to each key question and schools were looked at within groups according to these grading which gave an overall impression of their success within Catholic education. The gradings are as follows in the table that follows….

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector leading practice or practice that is both consistent and highly effective.
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvements.
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement.
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths.

Following the analysis I was able to make some generalised statements regarding key strengths and weaknesses of schools in terms of the Catholic life being noted during the inspections, which led to some conclusions as to ways forward in terms of developing this area of Catholic school life.

Ethics and Integrity

I would like to conclude this chapter by discussing any ethical issues involved in the research methodology chosen and thoughts regarding the integrity of the research and any potential threats to this.

Ethics

My research has partly been born out of my own experiences of inspection. Bryman (1992, p.4) notes that 'many research publications emerge out of the researcher's personal biography.' In light of my references to my own personal experiences I have mentioned my own school and for ethical reasons I have changed the name of the school to keep it anonymous.

In terms of the analysis of the documents undertaken, all the inspection reports are publically available via the Archdiocesan website and do not require permission for viewing. The statements made are mostly general and where specific statements are made the name of the school has been kept anonymous. Also, the name of specific inspectors have been kept anonymous, although all name again are available on the inspection reports via the website.

Bell (2010, p.53) notes that even where there is no obvious requirement for ethics to be applied, the researcher should always apply their own ethics to the project:

> 'Even if you are not obliged to conform to required codes of practice nor to the demands of ethics or research committees, you will need to satisfy yourself that you have done everything possible to ensure that your research is conducted in a way which complies with your own ethical principles.'

In this respect I have carefully researched my chosen methodology and considered how my own views and opinions might affect the quality of my research. To this view I now turn to a discussion of integrity of research.

Integrity

Before I turn to my own personal integrity in relation to the research I would like to note some points on the integrity of the documents themselves. Whilst the inspection reports follow an approved framework and the reports are very statement orientated, the personal aspect of inspections cannot be denied. It is not possible for an inspector to be completely detached from the inspection

process and so some personal input is made as to what is both worthy and unworthy of mention in the report. The reports have been written by a variety of inspectors, all from different backgrounds, with different personalities, views, opinions, pet likes and hates. Whilst most inspections have more than one inspector, perhaps allowing for a more balanced view, a few of the reports are reliant on the opinions of just one individual. This must be born in mind in terms of the findings of the reports.

Richardson (2014) discusses the tensions that lie within the sphere of empirical theology. There have been arguments as to whether research carried out by Catholics within a Catholic setting can be classed as social science or theology. There is also doubt as to whether a Catholic can maintain objectivity while exploring the experiences of other Catholic. Being a practising Catholic, researching the Catholic life of a primary school, this would call into question the integrity and validity of my research project. On the other hand another school of thought, suggested by Van der Ven, states that only research collected by someone who understands personally the traditions of the community they are studying will be viable.

Richardson believes it is possible to carry out rigorous, detached methodology whilst also acknowledging one's own personal experience. In fact the personal experience may enhance the research. In light of this I have duly noted that I do have a personal interest in the research undertaken. In order to prevent this from

affecting the integrity of my research I will follow the chosen methodology carefully and will be mindful when analysing the documents that I only extract what is written in statement and avoid personal deduction.

Chapter Four
Analysis

Introduction

The aims of this chapter are to analyse and interpret the findings of my documentary research. The documentary research encompasses the 28 Section 50 inspection reports which have been written under the new inspection framework begun in 2010. The focus will be on the Catholic life of the school with reference to and in the light of the literature reviewed on this topic in Chapter Two.

To such effect, I will first reclarify the aims and objectives of this research project. Following this I will classify some of the information gleaned from the Section 50 inspection reports. This information will be shared in tabulated form and will include some data from the context section of the reports which I feel is pertinent towards understanding the specific make of the Catholic community within the school. I feel an understanding of this is important in terms of discussions in light of the literature. The tabulated data will then show the percentages of different judgements given to the schools looked at.

I will discuss briefly some of the comparisons between the data held. The sources I have consulted are all similar as they are written within the agreed

framework of the Section 50 inspection. The only differences are the reporting and accompanying inspectors of which there were 15 in different combinations. There were no other sources consulted for the research, therefore no requirement to compare different research sources.

During the interpretation section of the chapter I will go beyond the gradings of the reports and begin to delve more into the specifics by unpicking the Catholic life aspects of the written reports. I will link this into the literature reviewed and discuss where I think some of the strength and weaknesses of the Archdiocese are in terms of Catholic life. This will include exploring Christ at the centre of the educational enterprise, mission and ethos, commitment towards the poor and marginalised, excellence, leadership and management, prayer and worship and relationships.

Aim and Objectives

Aim

The aim of this research dissertation is to use Section 50 inspection reports from one Archdiocese to discover what makes a primary school successful in developing the catholic life of the school with a view to providing supportive ideas for other primary schools.

Objectives

- To explore the nature and purpose of Section 50 inspections, especially relating to the need to ensure that a school is fulfilling its mission as a Catholic school.

- To explain why the Catholic life of the school is important within the mission of the Catholic Church.

- To discuss the opinions of others regarding what makes a school successful in developing its Catholicity, with special regard for the role of leadership and management.

- To research primary school Section 50 reports within the local Archdiocese and focus on what the common strengths and weaknesses are within Catholic primary schools in relation to the inspection of the Catholic life of the school.

- To support others in managing the pressures and anxieties of school inspections, particularly relating to Section 50.

- To evaluate the research evidence and recommend improvements that will support other primary schools during their Section 50 inspections.

Classification

In the following section I will explain the classifications of the results of the Section 50 inspection reports and then present the collective data from the Archdiocesan reports based on these classifications.

Explanation of classifications

In the Section 50 inspection report, inspectors aim to gather evidence in order to answer three key questions which are:

Key Question 1: How good are outcomes?
Key Question 2: How good is provision?
Key Question 3: How good are leadership and management?

In their opening summary inspectors also answer the following key questions about the overall Catholic nature of the school and their capacity for improvement:

How effective is the school in providing Catholic education?
What are the school's prospects for improvement?

Each question is given a judgement based on the evidence seen and the judgements are as follows:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector leading practice or practice that is both consistent and highly effective.
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement.
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement.
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths.

Classifications

Below are tables which present the collected results of the gradings of the Archdiocesan primary schools who have been inspected under the new Section 50 framework. The results are given in percentages and are rounded up to the nearest 0.1%. The following table show the results of the three key questions:

Table 1

Key Question	% of schools attaining grading to the nearest 0.1%			
	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Unsatisfactory
KQ1	7.1	60.7	28.6	3.6
KQ2	3.6	67.9	25	3.6

KQ3	10.7	57.1	25	7.1

The following table shows the results of the questions answered in the summarising section of the report:

Table 2

Question	% of schools attaining grading to the nearest 0.1%			
	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Unsatisfactory
How effective is the school in providing Catholic education?	7.1	60.7	28.6	3.6
What are the school's prospects for improvement?	14.3	50	28.6	7.1

Contextual Data

In the opening section of the Section 50 inspection report, the inspector provides some contextual information relating to the school being inspected. This gives some background as to the demography of the school, its current status regarding stability of leadership and management and the catholicity of staff and any significant awards or achievements.

In order to make some comparisons between gradings and school contexts I have looked at some data regarding the pupil roll, numbers of pupils who are Catholic, Christian, of another faith or of no faith, children with additional learning needs, children registered for free school meals and the number of

teaching staff who are Catholic. The data was sometimes not included within the context section of the report but for most schools it was provided.

The following shows the range of data held for all schools in the Archdiocese inspected under the Section 50 inspection report. The number of pupils on role range from 545 to 88. The percentage of Catholic pupils ranges from 93% to 32%. The number of pupils of other Christian faiths ranges from 61% to 3%. The percentage of pupils from other faiths ranges from 28% to 0%. The number of children classed as having additional educational needs ranges from 42% to 1.8%. The number of children receiving free school meals ranges from 48% to 7.7%. The percentage of Catholic teachers ranges from 100% to 45%.

I have chosen these indicators in order to see if there is any links between the gradings of the key questions and summarising questions within the Section 50 reports and factors which I feel might have an impact on the Catholic life of the school. I will now explore this through comparisons.

Comparisons

During this section I will draw some factual comparisons between the data collected regarding the gradings of schools in relation to the summarising questions and the three key questions. I will also state what comparisons I have found between some of the contextual data and school's gradings. These will support my later discussions when I consider the Catholic life of the school in

relation to the literature reviewed. The Catholicity of the school (ie. the numbers of teachers and pupils who are Catholic), whether schools are successfully serving the needs of the poor and disadvantaged, and the links between success in different areas of Catholic life will be discussed whilst unpicking the language of the reports.

Comparison between the question gradings

For 19 of the schools (67.9%) the category of grading given for the two summarising questions (Table 2) and the three key questions (Table 1) matched exactly. For the remaining schools the gradings were either mixed between 'excellent' and 'good', 'good' and 'adequate' or 'adequate' and 'unsatisfactory'. There were no schools who had achieved 'excellent' or 'good' in one area and 'unsatisfactory' in another.

In the schools that had a mixture of 'excellent' and 'good' for their gradings, their prospects for improvement were always considered 'excellent'. Nearly half of the schools (42.9%) achieved a grading of good across the board. Of the remaining schools only 18.2% were graded as having a 'good' chance of improvement, with 63.6 % only having an adequate chance of improvement and 18.2% having an 'unsatisfactory' change of improvement.

In the two schools where leadership and management was deemed to be 'unsatisfactory' the prospects for improvement were also 'unsatisfactory.' These were the only two schools who were given unsatisfactory gradings and

only one of the schools was graded 'unsatisfactory' for every question. There seemed to be no further correlation between differing gradings of questions.

Number of pupils on role

There was no correlation between the number of pupils on role and the success of the schools during the inspection other than the schools with a pupil role below 100 did not have any gradings of 'excellent'.

Faith demography

All of the schools that achieved 'excellent' gradings had a high percentage of Catholics and Christians in their schools. These ranged between 89-69% Catholic and with the combination of fellow Christians ranged between 91-99%. All of the schools who consistently achieved gradings of 'good' had above 50% of Catholic pupils ranging from 51-93% and with the combination of fellow Christians between 71-100%.

Two of the schools within the 'good / adequate' category had lower numbers of Catholic pupils (40 % and 35 %) but schools in this category still had a percentage of above 70% combined Catholic and Christian pupils. In the 'adequate' category the percentage of Catholic pupils range from 33-69% and the combined percentage with fellow Christians 63-100%.

The one school that had a combination of adequate and unsatisfactory gradings had 37% Catholic and 65% combined Catholic and Christian pupils. The one

school that scored inadequate gradings for all the questions had 32% Catholic pupils and 88% combined Catholic and Christian pupils.

Children with additional learning needs

There is no correlation between the gradings given in the inspection reports and the percentage of children recorded as having additional learning needs in each school.

Free school meals

Free school meal numbers can give an indication about the levels of financial deprivation within a school community. There were no clear trends between percentages of free school meal pupils and performance in the Section 50 inspection. For example, the best performing school had 26% free school meal pupils and the worst performing school had 23% free school meal pupils. There was a wide spread of percentages across the schools within each performance category.

Percentage of Catholic teachers

There was no correlation between the percentage of teacher's that were Catholic and the performance of the schools. The 6 schools that had 100% Catholic teachers on their staff were spread across the different grading bands. The school with the lowest percentage of Catholic teachers was graded as 'good' across the board. However, I would like to note that the only school to achieve

'excellent' for every category of the inspection report had a teaching staff that was 100% Catholic.

Having now dealt with the hard data of the reports I would not like to move towards a discussion of some of the implications of the analysis and look more at the inspectors' language used within the gradings. I will link this in to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

Interpretation and discussion

In seeking to explore the common strengths and weaknesses of the Catholic schools within my Archdiocese I have so far looked specifically at the gradings of the inspection reports. In order for this to become a useful tool for others to ascertain what makes for a successful life of a Catholic school I will unpick some of the Section 50 reports in light of some of the key concepts available on Catholicity in education which have previously been discussed.

To do so I will seek to echo some of the earlier themes from Chapter Two. The themes I will focus on are the prominence of the School Mission Statement and Catholic Ethos, external signs within the physical environment, prayer and worship, relationships (both internally and externally) and leadership and management.

This will include highlighting some significant best practice and also areas of failure. Following the discussion of these themes I will draw together any common strengths and weaknesses of the Archdiocesan schools as a whole which will feed into my recommendations for improvement.

Direct quotations have been used from the reports which are all available on the Archdiocese of Cardiff website. The names of specific schools are not mentioned although mention is made of the grading categories.

Mission and Ethos

To revise the words of Archbishop Vincent Nichols (2009, p.6):

> 'From the first moment that any person sets foot in a Catholic school he or she ought to have the impression of entering a new environment, one that has its own unique characteristics.'

One of the common positive attributes stated relating to whether the school is achieving its role within Catholic education is that 'the Catholic ethos permeates all areas of school life.' However, this is not just achievable by the schools scoring the highest gradings. For example, a school that received gradings of 'adequate' was said to be '…a warm welcoming school with a strong Catholic ethos whose Catholic identity is immediately apparent.' In another adequate school, inspectors stated that 'The Catholic ethos of the school is strong.'

In terms of the awareness of the Mission Statement of the school, the inspectors stated of a school grading unsatisfactory, 'The new Mission Statement…..is

well known and understood by all.' and in a school graded 'adequate' 'Nearly all pupils are aware of the school's mission statement.'

On surface level this may call into question whether a strong Catholic ethos and a school Mission Statement has a positive impact on the success of Catholic primary schools. However, Stock (2012, p.17) stated that mission and ethos, to be truly valuable, go beyond that surface level of appearance. He reminds us that 'Gospel values need to be explicitly named, their meaning unpacked and pupils helped to understand how they relate to their lives both at school, at home and in society.'

In looked at schools who achieved gradings within the 'excellent' and 'good' bands we can see that this is really happening. In these schools pupils are able to explain how their school mission statement 'impacts on daily life and guides their high standards of behaviour.' In another school this also included their families and the wider community.

Other positive points from schools in these top grading categories speak of the ability of children to 'articulate' the school's ethos 'from a child-centred perspective', pupils participating 'enthusiastically' in the school mission, that children are 'acutely aware' of belonging to a Catholic school family and that there is 'a connection between the words of scripture and their lives.'

This would suggest that the more successful schools are more able to support pupils in actualising and being able to articulate what their ethos and mission is.

I would suggest that this is for two reasons. The first of which is that the more successful schools are better at achieving a vision that is shared by the whole school community. In the one school graded excellent the inspectors write:

> 'It is clear that all people in the school share a set of common values that are Catholic in nature.'

Other comments refer to ' a sense of mission shared by the whole community.', 'All members of the school strive to fulfil the aims of the Mission Statement' and 'A distinctive feature is the growing commitment of families from all denominations in supporting the schools Catholic ethos.'

I would like to refer back here to the data compared earlier in this chapter which showed a link between Catholic and Christian pupil percentages and higher gradings. It could be argued that the reason the schools are able to achieve such good comments relating to ethos and mission are because of this. However, the above quote relating to families from other denominations supporting Catholic ethos shows that this is not always the case.

The other piece of data I would like to refer to is the percentage of Catholic teaching staff. Although most schools have a higher percentage of Catholic teaching staff the data seemed to show no direct correlation between Catholicity of staff and achievement in the Section 50 report. However, in the higher graded schools, where ethos and mission was mentioned as a positive feature, there were many references to strong emphasis on Catholic traditions and beliefs and the schools place in relation to the wider Church family. In these schools the

Catholic life is at the very heart of everything that happens and is often described as central to school life.

Gallagher (2008) explained that the Catholicity at the core of school mission was vital. It seems to be that in these schools, despite not being comprised of solely Catholic teachers, the strength of shared vision and the practice of this shared vision in partnership with other members of the school community leads towards and excellence in ethos and mission. I will discuss later the important role that leadership and management also play in maintaining this shared vision.

To requote the point made earlier by CES (1999, p.11):

> 'A school's mission and character do not develop by themselves; they are formed through daily action, not by discussion alone, and every member of the school or college community can contribute to their development and enrichment.'

One of the shared good practice features that appears continuously within the schools with higher gradings is the way in which the mission of the school is explored, reviewed and contributed to by every member of the school community. This includes pupils, who often take part in 'mission review' days or weeks, staff who benefit from high quality inset based around the mission of the school and governors who are often said to apply their understanding of the distinctive nature of their school as a Catholic school to their decision making. One school offered a mission day whereby pupils, staff, parents and governors all came together 'to reflect on the vision and mission of the school.'

The idea behind all of this is that the mission statement is not something static, or something which is imposed upon members of the school community but is something which others are 'actively involved in shaping and supporting.' This supports the theory of the CES that 'every member' can contribute to the school's mission and character.

In contrast to this, schools with lower gradings were often criticised for their lack of development of these practices whereby the school community was given ownership of the mission statement. Some comments made included that there was lack of 'opportunities for pupils to contribute towards evaluating the Catholic life of the school' that governors were not 'fully involved in monitoring' the Catholic life of the school and that 'staff understanding of, and commitment to, the Catholic life of the school is at an early stage of development.'

External signs

During this section of the literature review I discussed how the external environment can make an instant impression on visitors within the school and this is certainly true when it comes to Catholic school inspectors. We have to remember that inspectors are looking for tangible evidence that we are what we say we are. CES (1999) reminds us that external signs and symbols make non-verbal statements about the school and Stock (2012) believes that on entering

the school building visitors should be aware that they are entering a unique and sacred space.

This certainly seems to ring true in terms of the success of schools within the Section 50 inspection as there is a clear link between physical environment and higher gradings. In the inspection reports there is very little negative commentary relating to physical environment but upon analysis you can see that it is the statements that have been left out of the lower grading schools that speak about their success in this area.

Commonly, throughout all of the reports, there runs the statement that 'the school's accommodation is clean and well maintained, providing a stimulating learning environment.' This is a common strength in all the schools. Another is the use of displays, prayer foci, statues, religious pictures and classroom prayer areas that reflect the Catholic traditions and seasons. Notable, however, in the school that received unsatisfactory gradings there was only mention of prayer areas in classrooms and not reference to other displays around the school other than the prominence of the school Mission Statement.

Schools with higher gradings seem to have further developed these basic concepts. For example, in the schools graded 'good', accommodation moves from being 'clean' 'well maintained' and 'stimulating' to 'bright', 'attractive', 'welcoming' and in the schools with some gradings of excellent the accommodation is 'well organised' and 'impressive'. The school which

received gradings of 'excellent' is said to be 'organised in an exemplary manner' and 'welcoming and informative'.

The vocabulary in the reports confirms Stock's (2012) opinion that Catholic schools, in their physical environment, need to consider a wider range of needs that simply construction and maintenance. Stock also speaks of symbols and Icons of the faith which are 'well-crafted and maintained.' Again, the displays of these in the higher graded schools seem to create a more positive impact on the Catholic life of the school than the lower graded schools.

Although referenced in the reports graded as 'adequate' and 'unsatisfactory' as providing opportunities for pupils to pray and reflect on the Catholic life of the school, there is little reference to their impact on the Catholic life of the school as a whole. In the school's graded 'good' these displays are described as 'attractive' and 'engaging'. In one school the displays are said to 'contribute to pupils' spiritual development' and 'remind pupils of ways in which they can live the Gospel.'

In the school's with mixed gradings of 'good' and 'excellent' the displays are described as 'bright' 'attractive' 'vibrant' and 'sacred'. These are often said to be celebrated and talked about by both pupils and staff. In one school the inspectors note, 'The Catholic life of the school enjoys prominence throughout the school…' In the school graded as 'excellent' the Catholic life of the school is also said to 'enjoy prominence in colourful and engaging displays.'

Healy (1999) spoke about the power of symbols within a community where they are communally constructed. He believed that these symbols could be powerful in creating an identity. I would like to emphasise the point 'communally constructed' as evidence would show that school's where staff and pupils feel engaged with the signs and symbols of their external environment and where they represent a deeper meaning for that community rather than being an 'add on' are more successful in developing their Catholic life.

This is also very apparent in the use of prayer spaces within classrooms. As I mentioned earlier, nearly every inspection report made specific reference to a prayer space or corner within classrooms. However, the success of these in contributing to the Catholic life of the school is varied. The main complaint is that pupils do not have ownership of their prayer space, which is the case in the school graded 'unsatisfactory' as lack of ownership was said to limit 'their impact on encouraging prayer or creating a sacred space.' In fact, in the lower graded schools there is little reference to the interactivity of these spaces.

In one of the schools graded 'good' this was also deemed to be lacking and the inspectors offered suggestions by stating that prayer areas 'could be more focused and interactive.' However, in the majority of good schools, prayer areas were described with words such as 'child-friendly', 'interactive', 'tasteful', 'attractive' and 'engaging'. In the schools with some 'excellent' gradings these areas are often talked about by both staff and pupils and in the school graded

'excellent' these areas are described as having 'impressive interactive focal points.'

Prayer and worship

The last part of the section on 'physical space' relating to prayer spaces leads nicely on to the general prayer and worship life of the school. From what we have already learnt from the prayer spaces, some of the features denoting a positive Catholic life within the school are ownership and active participation and this also applies to the whole prayer and worship life of the school.

CES (1995) stated that it is through the prayer and worship life of the school that the Catholic life becomes most prevalent. There were statements throughout the reports of schools graded from 'excellent' to 'adequate' stating that prayer and worship was either 'central' or 'important' to the life of the school.

Common statements relating to schools that are graded from 'excellent' to 'adequate' also included the fact that schools are fulfilling their requirements to provide the daily act or worship, that pupils are 'reverent', 'respectful' and 'reflective'. There are comments made in nearly all the schools about Masses held either in school or within the parish church. Another common statement made, even within a school graded 'adequate / unsatisfactory' is that pupil's spiritual and moral development benefits from the quality of the school's prayer

and worship. Yet another common strength was schools' abilities to reflect the liturgical seasons in their prayer and worship life.

However, as with the external environment, schools with higher gradings are described as taking prayer and worship to a deeper and more personal level for pupils. In relation to their spiritual development, comments amongst the higher graded schools include '…the manner in which pupils were able to think spiritually particularly at times of worship was impressive.', 'Worship is vibrant and it contributes significantly to the pupils' spiritual development.' And 'The prayer life of the school is strong and offers numerous opportunities for spiritual development, enabling pupils to develop their relationship with God.'

O'Malley (2007) stated that spirituality should be Gospel focused and show how Gospel values link to our lives. The higher graded schools showed more success at linking Gospel based spirituality with the lives of pupils and comments include '…they think spiritually and reflect on their everyday lives.' 'Gospel stories are at the heart of these occasions' of which 'pupils are challenged to put the key message of them into practice in their lives.' However, in a school graded 'adequate' inspectors felt that 'there was little opportunity for pupils to contribute their ideas and thoughts about the Gospel' and thus 'there were missed opportunities to develop pupils' spiritually.'

McCann (2006) spoke of the importance of introducing children to the traditions of the Church in order to make links between schools celebrations and

church celebrations. This was generally a strength amongst all schools, however it was notable that the only school graded fully 'unsatisfactory' offered few opportunities to develop prayer and collective worship, gave few opportunities for the use of scripture and it was noted by inspectors that 'pupils struggled to recall traditional prayers.' This would indeed stress the importance of linking the spiritual life of the school to the traditions of the Catholic Church.

Again, the idea of ownership comes up as being a key element of the Catholic life within the school. Common criticisms of schools relating to their prayer and worship life is that there is a lack of spontaneous prayer, pupils do not have opportunity to personally respond to prayer and worship and pupils do not have opportunity to plan, prepare and lead their own worship sessions. This seems to be an area of development within the Archdiocese as even schools with some gradings of 'good' and 'excellent' are reported as being in the process of developing a more pupil led prayer and worship life.

However, in the school graded 'excellent' pupils are said to 'confidently plan acts of collective worship'. This is also a feature in some of the other schools graded as 'good / excellent' and 'good'. In one report inspectors state that 'pupils benefit from regular opportunities to plan and lead worship' and in another report it states that pupils are developing their own and others' spirituality by planning their own collective worship. CES (1995) highlights that in Catholic schools pupils should be given opportunities to deepen their

relationship with Christ on both a personal and a public level. It seems that schools who provide positive opportunities for pupils to be led in worship and to take ownership of worship do this more successfully.

Relationships

Recalling the words of Archbishop Vincent Nichols from Chapter 2, relationships in school should 'be based on a deep respect between persons involved, without exception.' (2009, p. 6). CES (1996) believes that this should be evident in pastoral care offered and the capacity for the school to cater for the whole child and not just the 'intellectual dimensions.' The provision of 'pastoral care' for pupils is a strength of the Archdiocese schools and references to pastoral care are made in reports of nearly all gradings.

What does differ though is the level at which pastoral care is offered. For example, in the school graded a mixture of 'adequate / unsatisfactory' inspectors note, 'Pupils' wellbeing in supported by effective pastoral care systems.' In a school graded 'good' inspectors describe pastoral care as being 'effective' and something that enhances 'the wellbeing of pupils.'

In other schools pastoral care is described as having an even greater impact on pupils. In one school graded 'good' inspectors state, 'Highly effective pastoral support creates a sanctuary which promotes pupils' wellbeing.' and in a school graded 'adequate' inspectors write, 'Pastoral care in a strength of the school. Pupils benefit from the loving Catholic community that has been created by

governors, staff and parents.' This would seem to suggest that the provision of high quality pastoral care is not only the remit of the higher graded schools. Notable, however, there is no reference to 'pastoral care' in the school graded 'unsatisfactory'.

A commitment towards the poor and marginalised is one of the key features of Catholic education, described by the Congregation for Catholic Education as 'invaluable' and with the reminder that there are many forms of poverty, not just financial. One of the ways this is achieved is through community cohesion, whereby every pupil is welcomed into the school community and treated equally, regardless of their background. There is a significant number of pupils from backgrounds where English is not the first language or of other faiths within schools, groups which have the potential to become isolated or marginalised.

In the school graded 'unsatisfactory' this is at the development stage and is considered to be 'developing well'. In the school with mixed gradings of 'adequate' and 'unsatisfactory' cohesion is being promoted well. In a school graded 'adequate' it is described as 'a strong feature'. In a school graded a mixture of 'good' and 'adequate' the inclusion of all is described as 'a central goal.'

In the school's graded as 'good' to 'excellent' there are examples that schools go further in trying to create an ethos of inclusivity. One school is described as

being '..particularly responsive to pupils who have additional learning needs relating to behaviour issues' and in another '…there is a strong sense of belonging and all are welcomed in a spirit of equality.' One school is described as supporting pupils who lack literacy skills but have great spirituality through 'talk time' and the same school was said to fully include all pupils in the whole life of the school despite their 'faith commitment.'

In the school graded 'excellent', inspectors stated that the school provided 'an excellent and positive environment for its substantial proportion of pupils with English as an additional language' and that 'pupils and parents from ethnic communities report that they feel fully integrated into the life of the school.' In this school 'the quality of community cohesion is very high.'

Earlier, I spoke of a school graded 'adequate' whose strong pastoral care was linked to 'the loving Catholic community'. In another school graded 'adequate' inspectors write 'There is a clear approach promoted by governors and staff to foster community cohesion based on clear gospel values and seeing Jesus in our neighbours both near and far.' There are links here between the relationships within the school and the ethos of the school. Catholic schools do not have exclusivity on positive pastoral care but what these quotes remind us is that Catholic schools are motivated by the person of 'Jesus' and 'gospel values'.

Grace (2002) reminds us of the importance of the home-school-parish links in terms of showing as much of the life of the Church as possible. Whilst all

schools do seem to have relationships with the parish and church, the higher graded schools seem to have a stronger relationship than the lower graded schools.

The school graded as 'unsatisfactory' was said to 'welcome' parents and parishoners into the school. In the school graded 'adequate' and 'unsatisfactory' the inspectors noted that while 'many parents are supportive of the school' there are a 'significant minority' with whom relationships are deemed to be 'fragile.' In some of the schools graded 'adequate' schools are described as recognising 'the primary role of parents', having 'good relationships' with them and making efforts to welcome them into the school community to participate in its Catholic life and to support their children's learning.

In the schools graded and a mixture of 'adequate' and 'good' we can see the development of links with the parish. In one school inspectors note 'There is a desire from leaders and managers to develop meaningful and positive links with the parish' and in many of the school's the links are 'good' or 'very good'. Again there is reference to invitations for parents to come into school to support their children's learning.

The more successful schools seem to have more success in developing this relationship between home-school-parish into something meaningful that has a really positive impact on the Catholic life of the school. In relation to partnership with parents, one school graded 'good' was said to work 'very

closely with parents and carers who are supportive of all that is done to enable their children to grow in faith and understanding.'

Relationships with parents in schools graded 'good' are described as of 'high value', 'positive' and 'central.' In schools graded 'good' and 'excellent' they are described as 'excellent', 'very strong', 'high value'. The involvement of parents in both school and parish life is more established and positive in these schools.

In one school graded 'good' inspectors describe the relationship with the parish as 'outstanding' and go on to say that 'The priests from the parish are regarded as important members of the whole school community and ensure that the school is firmly at the centre of the Church community.'

The close links between the parish and the school are not only described as being something that enhances 'the pupils' experience of the faith' but also as something which reaches out and benefits the parents as well. In one school graded 'good' where pupils are described as being 'fully involved in parish life' Masses are said to be 'greatly valued, not only by staff and pupils but also by parents.' In another school graded 'good' parental support at Masses is said to be 'strong' and parents are said to 'speak very positively about their importance and their impact.'

In one of the schools which received some 'excellent' gradings inspectors write that 'the partnership at the core of school life between the school, the parish and

the home is excellent.' In another school with similar gradings staff are said to 'dedicate themselves annually to the mission of the church in front of the parish.'

The schools with greater success include all stakeholders within the educational enterprise and the school draws on the gifts and talents of parents and parish to support the whole life of the child. The parents and the parish are given a central and important role within children's education and the benefits to this seem to affect all parties involved. In terms of building up the body of Christ, this sense of unity has a positive impact on the Catholic life of the school.

Leadership and management

Through reading and analysing the Section 50 inspection reports it is clear that leadership and management have a pivotal role in developing a successful Catholic life within schools. In the literature review I spoke of John Sullivan's (2002) opinion that school leaders should use their role to 'articulate the 'story' of Catholic education' and ensure that the Catholic mission is at the heart of all decision making, practices and priorities.

We see examples of this coming through within the reports. In many of the schools graded 'excellent' or 'good' leaders develop a strong Catholic ethos and are aware of their role as part of the mission of the Church. In two schools graded 'excellent' and 'good' inspectors write that leadership is 'deeply committed to the Church's mission in education.' In another leaders and managers 'ensure that the Catholic nature of the school is clear, consistent and embedded..'.

In the school's graded 'good' again there is a sense of commitment to the role of Catholic education. In one school the inspectors write that the headteacher 'works tirelessly in the pursuit of excellence in Catholic education' and another headteacher is said to be 'strongly committed to Catholic values and principles.' The leadership teams in these schools seem to both understand and appreciate their school's position within the Church and are committed towards developing it.

In schools with 'adequate' gradings this vision is often described as something that is 'developing' with the leadership team having a 'vision for future developments' or a desire to move forward in the area of the Catholic life of the school. It seems that in these schools the desire and the will is present but the leadership team has not yet fully actualised their vision of their role within Catholic education.

In order for Catholic schools to be able to achieve mission integrity relating to their Catholic life, it is important that the leadership team acts as witnesses to the faith. I previously took a liberty with a famous Pope Paul VI quote and wrote 'Modern man listens more readily to witnesses than to leaders and managers, and if he does listen to leaders and managers it is because they are witnesses.

I will start with sharing some of the common characteristic traits that are shared across the board within the inspection reports. Leaders are commonly described as 'committed' 'enthusiastic' 'hardworking' with vision for improvement. In some of the schools graded 'adequate' the management team had only been in position for a short period of time and were described positively as being good role models for change and transformation within the schools.

In the schools graded 'excellent' through to 'good' we can see some additional character traits of leaders coming through which suggests their ability to give witnesses is more established. In the school graded 'excellent' the staff readily follow the lead of the headteacher who has developed a 'strong and shared Catholic ethos' and act as a positive role model. In another school with some excellent gradings the headteacher is described as an 'excellent role model' who is 'deeply committed to the Faith' and 'is a source of inspiration to those around her.' Other schools graded within 'excellent' to 'good' also frequently discuss the management team as being inspirational, positive role models who offer

clear guidance and support for others. The word 'passionate' is also used frequently.

Nuzzi (1999) stated that Jesus provides the ultimate role model for leaders and O'Malley (2007) looked carefully at the Gospels to find patterns of leadership within schools. O'Malley used the image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd to demonstrate this. Exploring his example we can see how the strengths and weaknesses of leadership across the Archdiocese exemplify how this model is a good example of effective leadership traits.

In describing leaders as the 'Good Shepherd' O'Malley firstly explains that they should know their 'sheep' by name. This would indicate an approach whereby leadership are well aware of the team they work with. In schools with gradings of 'excellent' and 'good' this is clearly evident in the way in which leaders and managers are able to aptly self-evaluate their schools and know the strengths and weaknesses of their team. An accurate self-evaluation is regularly referenced by inspectors in these reports.

In schools with gradings of 'adequate' and 'unsatisfactory' it would appear that leaders and managers do not know their 'sheep' quite so well. In these schools self-evaluation is often lacking in rigour and is less systematic. In some cases self-evaluation is considered to be underdeveloped or even inaccurate. In the school graded 'unsatisfactory' it would appear that the life of the 'sheep' in

relation to the Catholic life context is not known as there was no-one keeping an eye on this area of school life.

It would seem in the school graded 'unsatisfactory' the leadership team had not kept an eye out for the proverbial 'wolves' that could attack the success of the Catholic life of the school. In school's where the self-evaluation of the team was more apparent schools seemed well aware of potential dangers and were taking steps to avoid these.

Another quality of the 'Good Shepherd' is the ability to move the 'flock' on to 'pastures new'. This would suggest that leaders and managers should continually be looking for opportunities for improvement and renewal of the Catholic life of the school. Again, in the school's graded 'excellent' and 'good' the high quality of self-evaluation and processes in place to monitor, evaluate and review Catholic life provides a safe platform from which positive and meaningful change and growth can happen.

In schools with gradings of 'adequate' and 'unsatisfactory' the capacity of leaders and managers to lead their 'sheep' to 'pastures new' has been hampered by their lack of self-awareness and clarity of direction. Having spoken consistently negatively about the impact of leadership and management within the lower performing schools I would not like to interject with some more detail to explain some of the trends that are occurring.

The lower performing schools, graded from 'adequate' below, have all suffered from a lack of stability in relationship to leadership and management. Terms such as 'developing' 'period of transition of challenge' 'a short period of time' 'significant change in leadership' all alert us to this issue. In fact, in the two lowest performing schools one school's head and deputy were suspended with acting members in place and the lowest performing school had a seconded headteacher from the EAS, an acting deputy and no RE Co-ordinator on site.

The literature reviewed explained the ideal model that would need to be followed in order to create a leadership and management ethos that would be concurrent with Catholic ethos. The achievement of this would require considerable commitment and dedication from the leadership and management team. The instability of leadership and management within Catholic schools threatens the stability of the Catholic life.

The clear emphasis on self-evaluation, monitoring, evaluating and reviewing fits in with Sergiovanni's (2001) model of stewardship and service in which the leadership and management are answerable to others. I would like to return again to Barth's (1991) notion of collegiality in relation to this, whereby a 'community of leaders' is created. The leadership and management team do not act alone in their evaluations. Within Catholic schools a body exists of practising Catholics from the local community who can be said to represent the Catholic community that the schools are serving. This body is known as the

'Governing Body' and they play an extremely important role in the success of the Catholic life of the school.

We can apply Judith Warren's principles, referenced in Barth's book, that show collegiality is present by applying them to the relationship between leaders and managers (representing the school body) and governors (representing the Catholic community). Using this model in application to Catholic schools we would look for examples that the Catholic life is discussed, observed, noted, developed and shared in unison.

In the school's graded 'excellent' to 'good' the governing body is fully involved in the life of the school. They are often described as 'influential in determining the direction of the Catholic life of the school' and make 'significant contributions to the Catholic dimensions.' They have the appropriate amount of knowledge to be able to act as a 'critical friend' by providing support, encouragement but also challenging where necessary. This would seem to aptly fit Warren's model.

In contrast, however, in the lower graded schools we see that the governing body are offered less opportunity to develop this sense of collegiality. In these schools the role of the governing body was considered 'under-developed' and although the governors showed similar levels of commitment as those in the higher performing schools their lack of involvement in the monitoring and

evaluation of the schools meant that they had 'too little impact on the strategic direction of the Catholic life of the school.'

Summary

To summarise, the Catholic life of the school is best served where there is a stable, committed leadership and management team who bear witness to their Catholic faith and encourage others to do the same. Improving from within through self-evaluation, monitoring, evaluation and review creates a Catholic life that is able to shape and develop the school. Collegiality between members of the school community and the governing body creates a healthy atmosphere of support, encouragement and challenge.

Following on from this analysis of my findings in the light of the literature reviewed I will now move to the concluding stage of this research project which I will summarise the key findings and make some recommendations for improved practice based on these findings.

Chapter Five
Summary and Conclusions

The aims of this final chapter is to firstly summarise the findings from the analysis of the Section 50 inspection reports and based on these findings to make recommendations for improvement in practice. The summarising will look at the strengths and weaknesses that have been discovered within the Section 50 inspection reports in relation to the Catholic life of the school.

Summary

During my analysis chapter I looked at the grades given to schools in their Section 50 inspection and pulled apart the aspects throughout the reports that spoke about the Catholic life of the school. These were discussed in light of the literature written about Catholic education and its role within the Church's mission of fostering Catholic faith. To pull together some of these findings I will divided them into strengths and weaknesses.

Strengths

- Ethos and mission are explored, reviewed and understood by the whole faith community.

- Ethos and mission are made child-centred and pupils are able to connect to them on a personal level.

- Ethos and mission are based on the Gospel and scripture and members of the school community are able to see how they can live out their school mission in their everyday lives based on these examples.

- Catholic traditions and beliefs are strongly emphasised and related to the wider church family.

- There is a shared vision between all involved in the school community.

- The Catholic life of the school is evident in displays and symbols of the faith which, most importantly, are prominent and engaging and represent something deeply meaningful to the faith community.

- Pupils are given ownership of prayer space within classrooms which are child friendly, tasteful and inviting and encourage pupils to initiate their own development of prayer and spirituality.

- Worship is vibrant, liturgically correct and makes links between the parish community and the school community.

- Prayer and worship is instrumental in developing the spiritual life of the child and fostering their relationship with God through its Gospel focus, links to the wider church and the relation of Gospel values to real action.

- Pupils are given opportunities to respond personally to prayer and worship and develop their own connection and meaning from it.

- Pupils can confidently plan and lead their own acts of worship.

- High quality pastoral care provided for the whole needs of the child and not just their intellectual needs.

- There is a high level of cohesion within the school community based on respect for all and a real desire to provide an inclusive environment.

- There is a very strong link between the home, school and parish which has a positive impact on the Catholic life of the school.

- There are high levels on involvement in the life of the parish and the parish priest and members of the parish play and positive role within the life of the school.

- The leadership team are deeply committed to the role of the school within the Catholic mission of the school.

- The leadership team act as witnesses and role models and provide effective support and guidance for the school environment.

- The leadership team have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are able to provide a realistic and achievable action plan to keep the school aiming for excellence.

- The leadership team have a clear and shared vision for the Catholic life of the school which is sustained and understood by all members of the school community.

- The Governing Body play an active role within the life of the school, have a good understanding of its strengths, weaknesses and action plan for improvement and are informed enough to be able to act as a 'critical friend' by providing support, encouragement and challenge.

Weaknesses

- Mission and ethos are not contributed fully to by members of the education community and are in an earlier stage of development.

- Although there is evidence of a 'mission statement' and the desire for a positive Catholic ethos the lack of exploration of these means that they are not able to make a meaningful impact upon the spiritual lives of the school community.

- Although there is evidence of displays and signs, symbols and icons relating to the Catholic faith these have a lower impact relating to the Catholic life due to lack of ownership by the school community and lack of interactivity with these areas.

- Pupils are limited in their spiritual and prayer life by a lack of opportunity to take ownership of it through the leading their own prayer and worship sessions.

- Pupils do not have their own areas relating to their spiritual development for which they can take ownership of.

- Opportunities for pupils spiritual development within the prayer and worship life is missed due to lack of opportunity for them to respond to Gospel messages given.

- Links with the home and the parish are at a developing stage and are not making a significant impact on the Catholic life of the school.

- There is a lack of stability in leadership and management (and in some cases recruitment issues) which impact negatively on the ability to create a sustained and shared vision for the Catholic life of the school.

- The leadership team do not have an accurate enough system for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the Catholic life of the school and thus self-evaluation is inaccurate.

- The leadership team have not made sufficient enough progress in previous inspection targets.

- The leadership team do not make robust enough plans for the improvement of the Catholic life of the school.

- The Governing Body are not suitably informed of the Catholic life of the school and are so not in a position to make an impact on the strategic development of this.

Recommendations

Based on the strengths and weaknesses of the schools I will now make some recommendations for how I believe the Catholic life of schools within the Archdiocese can be further improved.

Sharing of best practice

This is not a new concept as the Archdiocese is already looking at the idea of developing a 'Best Practice Directory' whereby schools will be able to look up other schools which excel in certain areas and get support and guidance from those schools. This idea is certainly one that will be beneficial to the Catholic life of the schools as a whole as there is a link between the strengths and weaknesses of the schools and there is existing excellent practice to support schools in the areas where there are currently weaknesses. The areas that need to be developed in this way in relation to the Catholic life are:

- Developing meaningful mission and ethos.

- Prayer and worship – specifically pupil led.

- Environment – making it meaningful and interactive.

- Developing home-school-parish links.

- Self-evaluation and monitoring, evaluating and reviewing.

- The involvement of the Governing Body.

A more supportive inspection cycle

Again, this is not a new idea but an idea that is existing within the Archdiocese. A more supportive inspection cycle means that schools are offered support in between inspections with their targets. This support would be beneficial to many of the schools who have not successfully embedded a cycle of monitoring, evaluating and reviewing.

Leadership stability

The stability of leadership within Catholic schools in the Archdiocese is a cause for concern. There seems to be a clear link between underperforming schools and leadership stability. Lack of stability in leadership threatens the sustenance of the Catholic vision for education as established leadership is required to

develop mission and ethos on a meaningful level. In relation to this the Archdiocese might do the following:

- Review which Headteacher are in the stage of their career where retirement is imminent to see where gaps may be created.

- Investigate why some schools are currently unable to recruit a stable leadership team.

- Actively encourage members of teaching staff to consider their career progression, promote the MA in Catholic Leadership and Management for those aspiring to leadership positions.

- Create a 'buddy' system whereby newly appointed heads or deputy received support and guidance from existing leaders and managers to ensure they are not overwhelmed by their role.

Inset

Mission and ethos are vital to ensuring Catholic schools serve their role as part of the wider mission of the Church. In relation to this I think it should be compulsory that schools dedicate a portion of their inset time each year to their renewed commitment towards this. Members of the governing body should be encouraged and welcomed to join in this. I have found some excellent sources which will provided searching questions and reflections that can be used as part

of these days. I would recommend *Fit for Mission? Schools* by Patrick O'Donoghue, *The Light of His Face: Spirituality for Catholic Teachers* by John Bollan and *Christian Leadership* by David O'Malley.

Primary school inspections – the final verdict!

In the title of my dissertation I questions if school inspections are 'a necessary evil or a force for good?'. In relation to the Catholic life of the school, inspections can be used as a 'force for good'. The emphasis on self-evaluation within schools shows how inspections are now more focused on a school's capacity to improve from within and certainly in relation to developing meaningful mission and ethos schools need to build up their own communities and establish a common shared vision in the light of the overarching mission of the Church.

What inspections do is support schools in the self-improving process. The move towards a more supportive inspection cycle within the Archdiocese shows a commitment towards this. Furthermore, in terms of promoting the common good in Catholic education, inspections help to seek out excellent practice and by sharing their finding highlight this practice to others. The development of this will truly support schools in avoiding individualistic tendencies and create an ethos of support and encouragement across the Archdiocese.

Like them or not, school inspections are here to stay. I believe they play an

important part in keeping us all connected to the faith community at large and

when viewed as a form of 'critical friend' they can truly help schools within the

Archdiocese in their aim to become Christ-centred, living Gospel communities.

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