



THE EFFECT OF THE CATHOLIC SCHOOL ETHOS ON STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

This research examines how a Catholic secondary school communicates and sustains its ethos through the lived experiences of its students. Focusing on St Michael School, administered by the Society of Christian Doctrine, the study examines how its Catholic identity—shaped by the SDC virtues, particularly humility and meekness—is lived and transmitted to students within the school community.

A mixed-methods case study design was employed to provide both quantitative breadth and qualitative depth. Data were collected through a comprehensive student questionnaire administered to the entire school population, a semi-structured interview with a member of the school leadership team, and a post-survey student focus group. Statistical analysis of survey data complemented a thematic analysis of interview and focus group responses, identifying key patterns and recurring themes.

Findings indicate that St Michael School's Catholic ethos is communicated through both explicit and implicit dimensions—ritual practice, curriculum, relationships, and leadership witness. Students reported a clear awareness of the school's Catholic identity, valuing opportunities for religious participation and identifying core Gospel values such as humility, respect, and care as central to their experience. The results also highlight that ethos is most effectively transmitted through teachers' relational presence, personal example, and pastoral attentiveness. Leadership accessibility and continuous staff formation emerged as essential in ensuring coherence and authenticity between belief and practice.

The study concludes that St Michael School exemplifies the Church's vision of integral human formation, where faith, reason, and culture are harmoniously united. It recommends that sustained investment in educator formation, relational leadership, and ongoing reflection on the SDC charism remain central to nurturing a living and credible Catholic identity in a changing educational context.

Keywords: Catholic Education, school ethos, St Michael School, case study, leadership

Dedication

To my family, for their unwavering love and constant support.

To all educators—and especially the students—of St Michael School during these 27 years being a member of the community, for faithfully living the school ethos inspired by the charism of Saint George Preca through the Society of Christian Doctrine and serving as the motivation behind this research.

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List of Abbreviations

- GE** *Gravissimum Educationis*: Conciliar Declaration on Christian Education (1965)
- DIM** *Divini illius Magistri*: Encyclical of Pius (1929)
- CCE** Congregation for Catholic Education
- SCCE** Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education
- SDC** Societas Doctrinae Christianae (MUSEUM)
- QSD** Quantitative Survey Data
- AH** Assistant Head
- S7** Year 7 student who participated in post-survey semi-structured focus group
- S8** Year 8 student who participated in post-survey semi-structured focus group
- S9** Year 9 student who participated in post-survey semi-structured focus group
- S10** Year 10 student who participated in post-survey semi-structured focus group
- S11** Year 11 student who participated in post-survey semi-structured focus group

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Introduction

Background and Rationale

Catholic education, rooted in the mission of the Church, seeks to form the whole person—intellectually, morally, spiritually, and socially—so that students may “promote efficaciously the good of the earthly city” and serve “in the spread of the Kingdom of God” (*Gravissimum Educationis*, 1965). This formative vision is lived through a school’s ethos, which embodies its faith, values, and culture. For a Catholic school, ethos is not a set of abstract ideals but the lived expression of its Gospel-centred mission. Its effectiveness depends on how clearly it is communicated and how deeply the school community internalises it.

St Michael School, founded and run by the Society of Christian Doctrine and inspired by the charisma of Saint George Preca, has provided Catholic education in Malta for almost eighty years. Over 7,000 students have passed through its doors, shaped by a distinctive spirit of humility, meekness, and service. Nevertheless, in today’s increasingly secular and pluralistic society, questions arise about how effectively this ethos continues to shape its students.

Having worked at St Michael School for over twenty-seven years, the researcher has often reflected on what distinguishes the institution and the impact its ethos leaves on students. The lived experience of students provides the most authentic measure of whether the school’s Catholic identity is being meaningfully transmitted and internalised (McLaughlin 2005). This study, therefore, investigates how the school’s ethos is communicated, how students experience it, and how the leadership can improve its transmission.

Research Aim and Questions

The study aims to explore how effectively St Michael School transmits its Catholic ethos to its students. The central research question guiding this inquiry is:

How does a Catholic school communicate its ethos to students?

This broad question is addressed through three subsidiary questions:

RQ1: What are the students' experiences on how the school conveys the Catholic ethos?

RQ2: To what extent is the school ethos leaving a mark on the students? What mark?

RQ3: From the students' participation in this study, what light can the school leadership acquire to instil the school ethos in its students better?

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the growing body of research on how Catholic schools communicate and sustain their ethos in contemporary contexts (Donnelly 2000). Whereas previous local studies have focused mainly on leadership perspectives (Calleja 2021; Tabone 2021), this dissertation foregrounds the student voice—the recipients and co-constructors of ethos within everyday school life (Ellul 2015).

By examining the students' experiences, the study explores whether the school's intended ethos aligns with the experienced ethos as lived by students. Understanding this alignment is essential for ensuring that Catholic education remains both authentic and transformative. The findings also offer practical insights for school leaders and educators, guiding future formation, policy, and pastoral initiatives aimed at deepening the school's Catholic identity.

Methodological Overview

A mixed-methods case study design was adopted to capture both quantitative breadth and qualitative depth. The research was conducted at St Michael School during the 2023–24 scholastic year.

Quantitative data were collected through a Questionnaire on School Ethos administered to the entire student population (N = 357), achieving an 82% response rate. The survey explored students' perceptions of how the school's ethos is expressed and experienced.

Qualitative data were gathered through a semi-structured interview with an Assistant Head and a post-survey focus group with students from the different year levels. Together, these instruments provided triangulation and a holistic understanding of how the school's Catholic identity is communicated, experienced, and internalised.

Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics (Chi-square, Friedman, and Kruskal–Wallis tests). In contrast, qualitative data underwent thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and key themes using MAXQDA.

Structure of the Dissertation

This research is organised into five chapters:

Chapter One reviews relevant literature on Catholic school ethos, values education, and faith transmission, with particular attention to the charism of Saint George Preca and the role of the SDC values in the ethos of St Michael School.

Chapter Two explains the research methodology, including the design, instruments, data collection, ethical procedures, and analytical approach.

Chapter Three presents the findings from all collected data, organised according to the themes and sub-themes emerging from the research questions.

Chapter Four discusses the findings by integrating quantitative and qualitative data and linking them to academic literature.

Chapter Five concludes the study by summarising significant findings, drawing implications for practice and leadership, and offering recommendations for future research.

Conclusion

This research seeks to determine not only whether St Michael School's Catholic ethos is effectively transmitted to students but also how it is experienced and embodied in their daily lives. By foregrounding students' voices and experiences together, the study offers

new insight into how Catholic education continues to form young people amid cultural change—and how its mission can be renewed and sustained for future generations.

1. Literature Review

This chapter offers a glance at the Maltese educational landscape, where State, Church, and Independent sectors coexist, with a particular focus on Church school education. It examines the identity and mission of Catholic schools, identifying the distinctive characteristics that distinguish them as authentically Catholic. The discussion emphasises the Catholic school community as essential in embodying and transmitting its ethos through a lived commitment to the Gospel, especially in addressing contemporary challenges such as multiculturalism, secularisation, and inclusion. The role of the school leadership is examined as a crucial element in sustaining this ethos through both pastoral care and visionary guidance. The chapter concludes by situating St Michael School within the evangelising mission of Saint George Preca and the charism of the Society of Christian Doctrine (SDC).

1.1 The Local Educational System

In Malta, compulsory education spans ages five to sixteen and is provided by the State, the Church, and Independent schools under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. During the 2022–2023 scholastic year, State schools catered for 59.4% of students, Church schools for 26.9%, and Independent schools for 13.7% (NSO Malta 2024). While the education system is highly centralised due to the island’s size, the distinct ethos of each sector produces diverse social and educational outcomes.

The Church’s teaching emphasises the State’s duty to safeguard children’s right to education and cultural participation (*Divini Illius Magistri (DIM)*; *Gravissimum Educationis (GE)*), whilst furthermore any State interference that limits parental choice in education infringes on the Church’s mission and human rights (Scicluna et al. 2020; SCCE 1982). As Roche (1997) clarifies, a school’s culture is “the stuff” of political and moral negotiation over shared beliefs and values. Within Malta’s increasing pluralism and secularisation, education also serves as a means of forging national identity across religious and cultural diversity (Kelty 1993). The State’s policy direction, expressed in the National Education Strategy for Malta 2014–2024 (MEDE 2013) and the Education

Strategy Consultation Document (MEYR 2023), prioritises equity, social justice, well-being, and inclusion as guiding principles for contemporary schooling.

Church schools in Malta, once associated with social elitism, underwent major reform following the 1991 Church–State Agreement, which ensured free access and State subsidies (Zammit Mangion 2000). While this partnership enabled greater accessibility, some argue that financial dependence risks diluting Catholic identity through state-imposed restrictions (Spiteri Axiak 2020). These schools retain relative autonomy under the Education Act, consistent with the Catholic social principle of subsidiarity, which allows institutions to act within their competence and moral responsibility (Sullivan 1998).

Over fifty Church schools are coordinated by the Secretariat for Catholic Education, striking a balance between central overseer and the freedom to express the founding congregation’s charism and ethos that runs the school. Despite expanded access, Church and Independent schools continue to demonstrate stronger academic outcomes than State schools (MATSEC 2024), suggesting that their mission to integrate academic excellence with moral and spiritual formation remains effective (USCCB 2005; Alva 2017). In this respect, Maltese Catholic schooling exemplifies the Church’s call for education that is both inclusive and transformative—one that serves the common good through the holistic development of the person (Congregation for Catholic Education (CCE) 1988).

1.2 The Identity and Mission of a Catholic School

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops summarises the fourfold purpose of Christian education as providing an atmosphere where “the Gospel message is proclaimed, community in Christ is experienced, service to others is the norm, and thanksgiving and worship of God are cultivated” (USCCB 2005: 16). These objectives, consistently reaffirmed in Church teaching, define the Catholic school as both an educational and evangelising community (*DIM* 1929; Sacred Congregation of Catholic Education (SCCE) 1977; CCE 1997; CCE 2007).

1.2.1 The Identity of a Catholic School

A Catholic school's identity is primarily expressed through its ethos, which McLaughlin (2005) defines as the prevailing tone or atmosphere "informing an identifiable entity involving human life and interaction" (p. 311). Though often difficult to articulate, ethos exerts a pervasive formative influence within the school community. In Catholic education, this ethos is intentionally shaped as a community "animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity" where the whole person—spiritual, intellectual, moral, and social—is formed in the light of Christ, integrating faith and culture so that every aspect of school life embodies and transmits Gospel values (GE 1965: 8). As the CCE affirms, "a Catholic school is not simply a place where lessons are taught; it is a centre that has an operative educational philosophy, attentive to the needs of today's youth and illumined by the Gospel message" (1988: 22)

Beyond mission statements and rituals, the Catholic ethos also operates implicitly through what Jackson (1968) termed the hidden curriculum—the relationships, practices, and daily interactions that silently communicate values and attitudes. In this sense, ethos functions as a lived theology and a cultural atmosphere that continually shapes moral and spiritual identity, making the Catholic school not merely an instructional setting but a formative environment of faith. A clear sense of identity is indispensable, so much so "that which they can give is primarily that which they are" (CCE 2013: 57).

At the centre of this identity stands the person of Jesus Christ: "there is always Jesus Christ... and everything should lead to an encounter with the living Christ" (CCE 2014). All Catholic schools must be inspired by the Gospel, from which they draw their vitality, and strive to make Christ's presence visible in daily life and relationships (Boyle et al. 2016). In doing so, they respond to the materialism and secularism of contemporary society (SCCE 1977) not by retreating from culture, but by serving as countercultural communities that socialise students into a spiritual worldview. This strengthening of Catholic identity in sync with the Gospel inspiration, relentlessly avoids the perils of falling into fundamentalism and relativism (CCE 2013). Hunt et al. (2000) argue that Catholic schools should engage the modern world dynamically, recognising that secularisation coexists with religion as a formative force within culture (Franchi and

Rymarz 2022a). This requires sensitivity to the signs of the times and a commitment to educating youth as agents of transformation and truth (Trafford 1989; SCCE 1982).

Ethos is most tangibly experienced through the school's lived environment. Bezzina and Micallef (2003) note that the Catholic character of a school is conveyed not only through visible symbols and displays but, more profoundly, through the daily behaviour and relationships of all members of the community. This embodied witness shapes the atmosphere in which authentic teaching and learning take place (CCE 2014). Within this lived reality, ethos becomes integral to Catholic identity, expressed in the synthesis of faith, culture, and life—a theme consistently affirmed in Church teaching (SCCE 1977; CCE 1988, 2007, 2013). Such integration ensures that education honours the dignity of every human person while forming them in the likeness of Christ (Hunt et al. 2000; Moore 2005). Nevertheless, preserving this harmony requires constant vigilance, for secularism, consumerism, globalisation, and social fragmentation continually challenge the Gospel-centred values at the heart of Catholic schooling (CCE 2007, 2013; Giardino 2000).

Students enter Catholic schools shaped by diverse cultural and familial influences, often with limited moral or religious formation. While parental choice of Catholic education is a positive sign (Belmonte and Cranston 2009), when such schools are sought merely for academic prestige or professional advancement, their spiritual mission is diminished (CCE 1997). Authentic Catholic education cannot be reduced to utilitarian aims but must prioritise the holistic formation of faith and character.

Ultimately, the most significant threat to Catholic identity stems from within: the community responsible for upholding and transmitting the ethos. The decline in religious vocations and the corresponding rise of lay educators has transformed the traditional landscape of Catholic education (Wallace 2000; Traviss 2000; Spiteri Axiak 2020). While this shift must ensure continuity, it also heightens the need for robust formation of lay teachers who now carry the Church's educational mission. Fussell (2021) warns that without well-formed educators, the Catholic school's identity is at risk. The Church has long insisted that educators must not only teach the faith but embody it, for without a clear awareness of the school's Catholic identity, the witness of the community—and the integrity of its mission—is weakened (SCCE 1977).

1.2.2 The Community of a Catholic School

The school community is central to preserving Catholic identity and fulfilling the mission of Catholic education. Since education is inherently a social rather than an individual act (*DIM* 1929), the creation of a community grounded in Gospel ideals is fundamental to the Catholic school's vocation (Spiteri Axiak 2020). What distinguishes Catholic schools from others is their commitment to shaping relationships inspired by Christ's message of love, fraternity, and service. As Pope Francis reminds us, "the wellspring of human dignity and fraternity is in the Gospel of Jesus Christ" (Fratelli Tutti, 2020b). This vision calls for a climate of mutual respect, inclusion, and encouragement, where every student is recognised as created in the image of God.

The Catholic school community—comprising teachers, students, parents, and staff—is called to be a community of faith, bearing witness to Christ through actions and relationships that embody the school's ethos (CCE 2013). Moore (2005) notes that the uniqueness of a Catholic school lies in its dual nature as both a religious and a learning community. Values are transmitted "through the interpersonal and sincere relationships of its members and through both individual and corporative adherence to the outlook on life that permeates the school" (SCCE 1977:32). Such witness transforms ordinary professional relationships into expressions of Christian love and service, making the school a living sign of the Church's presence in the world.

The community's decisive role in transmitting the Catholic ethos means that educators must view their vocation as an apostolate—a ministry to the young (*GE* 1965; McVey and Poyo 2019; SCCE 1977). Teachers are not only transmitters of knowledge but also evangelisers, whose authenticity lends credibility to the Gospel message they embody. Moore (2005) describes Catholic educators as ministers of the Church, whose formation is crucial to sustaining the school's spiritual mission. This ministry requires educators to view their role as a call to holiness, inspiring and empowering others in their faith (Harvie and Kerrigan 2022).

As the Second Vatican Council (1965) affirms, teachers hold the most significant influence over whether Catholic schools achieve their aims. Their daily interactions give life to the ethos, making the Catholic school not simply an institution but a community

of witness. For this reason, the Church's esteem for educators implies a reciprocal responsibility: teachers must understand their vocation as a privileged participation in the Church's mission of evangelisation.

1.2.3 The Mission of a Catholic School

The Church's teaching on education affirms that Catholic schools participate directly in her salvific mission by forming the whole person within a Christian worldview (*GE* 1965; *SCCE* 1977). As *Spectata Fides* (1885) observed, Catholic schools preserve and transmit the Church's most extraordinary inheritance—the Catholic faith itself. They are thus “privileged means” of evangelisation, integral to the Church's ministry of proclaiming the Gospel through education (*CCE* 1988; *USCCB* 2005). The Congregation for Catholic Education describes Catholic schools as centres of evangelisation, formation, and inculturation, uniting students of diverse backgrounds into a community of faith and learning (*CCE* 1997; *USCCB* 2005).

Sullivan (1998) identifies three central dimensions of this mission drawn from Church documents: the integral development of the person, the autonomy of knowledge, and the synthesis of faith and culture. Catholic education aims to form individuals holistically—spiritually, intellectually, morally, and socially—recognising that every human being is created in the image of God. As the *CCE* (1997) states, Catholic schools are “schools for the human person,” cultivating not only intellectual and moral growth but also spiritual maturity, preparing students to serve society with justice, compassion, and integrity (*CCE* 2014).

For a school to merit the title “Catholic,” it must remain accessible to all, irrespective of wealth or intellect. Elitism contradicts the Gospel's universal call: “Evangelisation as an invitation is meaningless if all the doors are closed” (Guerra 2000: 85). True Catholic education, therefore, upholds inclusivity while remaining faithful to its identity. Welcoming non-Catholic students does not compromise the ethos; instead, a strong Catholic identity ensures that all who enrol understand and respect its mission (*CCE* 1988, 1997, 2014). Faith, however, must never be imposed— “faith does not admit of violence”—but instead proposed through dialogue and authentic witness (*SCCE* 1982).

Aligned with the Church's broader mission, Catholic schools also express a "preferential option for the poor" (GE 1965), embracing those who experience both traditional and modern forms of poverty. Sullivan (1998) interprets this inclusively, extending to the marginalised, disabled, or struggling students whose dignity must be affirmed and whose unique gifts nurtured. Historically, Catholic schools have embodied this mission by serving the disadvantaged, becoming "the voice of the voiceless in society" (Alva 2017: 226). In contemporary contexts, they continue this witness by welcoming migrants and newcomers, offering a sense of belonging and spiritual rootedness (USCCB 2005).

Cultural and religious diversity should not be perceived as a threat but as an opportunity for dialogue and growth. The Church teaches that love for persons entails love for their cultures, and Catholic schools, by their very nature, are intercultural communities open to encounter and mutual enrichment (CCE 2013, 2014). Within this pluralistic reality, they are called to present faith as an "attractive option" through humility, openness, and service, building not only understanding but also a civilisation of love.

1.3 The Role of Catholic School Leadership

School leadership plays a pivotal role in shaping educational outcomes. As Boyle et al. (2016) observe, leadership ranks second only to teaching in its influence on student achievement, with its effects most pronounced in schools facing significant challenges. In the context of Catholic education, leadership extends far beyond administrative management. Catholic school leaders are not merely organisational managers but pastoral and ecclesial leaders whose role is deeply rooted in the mission of the Church. The CCE (2013) emphasises that such leaders act as true educational shepherds, integrating professional competence with spiritual guidance and fostering communities animated by the Gospel.

1.3.1 The Catholic School Leader

Leadership in Catholic education is not conferred merely by appointment but is expressed through purpose, vision, and service. As Trafford (1989) notes, it entails two

essential functions: directing the school toward its mission in the spirit of its ethos and ensuring the conditions for its sustainability. Spiteri Axiak (2020) identifies three complementary dimensions of Catholic school leadership. The pastoral dimension focuses on living and sharing the faith; the transactional aspect addresses the daily management and resource needs of the institution; and the mobilising dimension seeks to move the community toward its shared Gospel-inspired purpose. Effective leaders integrate all three, adapting their approach to the needs of people and context.

Catholic school leaders are therefore more than administrators—they are faith leaders, moral exemplars, and cultural architects. Guerra (2000) suggests that, among all leadership roles, the administrative head holds preeminence as the visible embodiment of the school's mission. Their influence is multidimensional: spiritual, managerial, and instructional or, in contemporary terms, centred on mission and Catholic identity, academic excellence, and operational vitality (Wallace 2000; Rufus 2023). These leaders guide the school's religious formation, promote Catholic identity (Roche 1997), and ensure the vitality of both faith and learning communities (Sullivan and Pena 2019; Belmonte and Cranston 2009).

Effective leadership requires a deep understanding of the school's culture, shaped by its ethos. MacNeil et al. (2009) argue that by discerning the values, beliefs, and behaviours embedded in the ethos, leaders can embody and transmit them to others. Nevertheless, authentic leadership also requires critical discernment—retaining what aligns with the school's mission while challenging practices that obscure it. The leader's role is thus both preservative and transformative: remaining faithful to the school's foundational charism while renewing it for contemporary needs (Avenell 2022).

Given the demands of this vocation, recruiting and preparing competent Catholic leaders remains a pressing challenge (Rufus 2023). Belmonte and Cranston (2009) highlight the limited preparation many leaders receive before assuming their roles. Guerra (2000) emphasises that experienced leaders must intentionally mentor and form potential successors, ensuring continuity of mission and ethos. Sustaining this leadership pipeline requires not only formal preparation but also ongoing professional and spiritual support from peers and senior colleagues (Bezzina and Micallef 2003; Kelty 1993). Through such

formation and accompaniment, Catholic school leaders can remain faithful stewards of both the educational mission and the Gospel they are called to embody.

1.3.2 Pastoral Care and Community Building

Pastoral care lies at the heart of Catholic school leadership, reflecting the Church's conviction that community is fundamental to the very existence of Catholic education (CCE 1988; Fussell 2020; Rufus 2023). The leader's role, therefore, extends beyond administration to the nurturing of relationships that embody Gospel values. As Spiteri Axiak (2020) notes, Catholic school leaders bear a broad responsibility to foster and sustain positive relationships among students, staff, parents, and the wider Church community.

Effective pastoral leadership recognises the uniqueness of every individual—acknowledging their gifts, limitations, and potential for growth—and seeks to accompany them toward personal and collective flourishing. The leader models a culture of empathy and service, ensuring that all community members feel valued and included. Building a cohesive and caring staff community is foundational, as it is through the unity and witness of educators that students and families experience the school's ethos most authentically. Only within such a climate of belonging and trust can a leader hope to inspire a shared commitment to the school's spiritual and educational vision.

1.3.3 Faith and Visionary Leadership

Pastoral care alone cannot fulfil the mission of a Catholic school without the complementary dimensions of faith and visionary leadership. Faith leadership anchors the community in the Gospel, guiding and supporting it through spiritual authenticity, relational care, and witness (Spiteri Axiak 2020). The Catholic school leader embodies this commitment through a focus on building a Christian community that reflects Christ's mission and attends to the needs of all (Hater 1981). As Wallace (1998) cautions, without such faith-rooted leadership, Catholic schools risk becoming merely private institutions

known for academic excellence and religious nostalgia rather than living faith communities.

Authentic faith leadership begins with the leader's own interior life. A leader who is not personally grounded in prayer, reflection, and ongoing conversion cannot authentically communicate faith to others (McVey and Poyo 2019; Wallace 2000; Franchi and Rymarz 2022b). Since many contemporary Catholic schools include "unchurched" students and staff, leaders must discern and adapt forms of faith leadership suited to a pluralistic context (Spiteri Axiak 2020). The CCE (2014) insists that such leadership should not be driven by self-interest or fashion but by a Gospel-inspired vision and a pedagogical formation rooted in the Christian tradition.

At the same time, faith leadership must be visionary. Visionary leaders inspire and empower the community to pursue both academic and spiritual excellence, articulating a compelling mission that aligns with Gospel values and future challenges (Rufus 2023). As Kelty (1993) notes, "to see a school operating is to see vision in effect" (p. 32). This vision is not imposed but co-created through collaboration, enabling shared ownership and long-term growth (Ristau 2010). Effective visionary leadership strikes a balance between fidelity to the school's Catholic heritage and responsiveness to evolving cultural and educational realities (Trafford 1989; Spiteri Axiak 2020).

Visionary Catholic leaders are thus forward-looking, forming communities that not only prepare students to succeed but also to transform society in pursuit of justice and the common good (Heft 2000). They foster environments of inclusion, discernment, and moral purpose while guarding against market pressures that could erode the Gospel-based value system of Catholic education (Grace 2002). In uniting faith and vision, Catholic school leaders ensure that their schools remain dynamic expressions of the Church's mission—places where faith illuminates learning, and learning deepens faith.

1.4 Students' views of the school culture

The universal right to education, long upheld in ecclesial teaching, is affirmed as a fundamental human right (GE 1965; CCE 1997). However, Church documents rarely acknowledge students' right to express their perspectives on schooling or to have their

lived experiences inform educational improvement. In much of the academic literature, students are often viewed as objects rather than contributors to educational processes, despite their daily immersion in the school’s culture, relationships, and practices. Students often possess deep insights into their community’s ethos and are eager to share their views when given a respectful and trusting environment. As Franchi and Rymarz (2022a) argue, Catholic education must “return to the human face” of schooling—the young people and educators who together embody its mission (p. 172).

An inclusive school culture that values student voice fosters a sense of belonging, self-esteem, and motivation, enabling learners to thrive academically and socially (Spiteri Axiak 2020). Within Catholic education, this aligns with the vision of the Church documents on education (SCCE 1982; CCE 2007), which holds that authentic formation arises from relationships that affirm human dignity and cultivate solidarity. Positive relationships with educators and peers are thus central to engagement, while exclusion or alienation—such as through cliques or marginalisation—can undermine both moral and academic development (Sparkes 1999). Extracurricular activities further enhance a sense of belonging by offering opportunities for participation, growth, and service.

Ultimately, recognising students’ perspectives is integral to sustaining a vibrant Catholic school ethos. Their lived experiences offer valuable insight into how the Gospel is embodied—or neglected—within the school community. By listening to students’ voices, Catholic school leaders can strengthen relational trust, enrich formation, and ensure that the ethos remains a shared and living reality rather than a mere institutional ideal. This consideration was a key motivation for undertaking the present research, which places students’ experiences and perspectives at its centre, allowing their voices to articulate the lived reality of the school ethos most powerfully and provide actual feedback on the efficacy of its transmission.

1.5 The Context of St Michael School

1.5.1 The Society of Christian Doctrine (SDC)

The Society of Christian Doctrine (SDC) was founded in 1907 by St George Preca in Malta as a lay movement dedicated to deepening the faith of young people. Initially gathering

youths informally after work, Preca was motivated by his concern over the widespread religious ignorance he observed, despite Malta's reputation as Cattolicissima— "most Catholic"—a term used by Pope Pius XI (*Times of Malta* 2005). Through his preaching, writings, spiritual direction, and sacramental ministry, Preca became, as Pope Benedict XVI (2007) described at his canonisation, "a priest dedicated to evangelisation... first and foremost by the example of his life." His apostolate gave rise to the locally coined name for the Society, M.U.S.E.U.M. (Magister Utinam Sequatur Evangelium Universus Mundus – "Divine Teacher, may the whole world follow the Gospel"), which expanded rapidly through catechetical centres across Malta, Gozo, and later abroad (Bonnici 1980).

Preca's spirituality combined personal holiness with theological formation and lay missionary zeal. The Society's Rule, approved in 1932 and later revised, underscores lifelong Catholic formation through instruction, prayer, the sacraments, and humble service (SDC MUSEUM 2013). Members commit to living their faith in daily life through humility, meekness, and forgiveness, rejecting revenge and embodying Christlike gentleness. Serracino Inglott (2009) interprets the SDC vocation as an "incarnationalist neo-monastic" way of life, rooted in the sequela Christi—following Christ in the ordinary circumstances of the world.

Central to SDC spirituality are the virtues of meekness and humility, which Preca regarded as the foundation of Christian discipleship. As Borg (2021) notes, Preca saw these as expressions of strength under God's authority—an inner power that fosters kindness without retaliation. Tabone (2021) further explains how Preca instituted the Vow of Meekness as a daily reminder for members to imitate Christ's gentleness, viewing humility not as weakness but as courageous surrender to God's will. Despite opposition and misunderstanding, Preca's steadfast humility became a hallmark of his sanctity, recognised by Pope John Paul II (2001) at his beatification.

Today, the SDC remains active globally, continuing Preca's mission of evangelisation and catechesis. Through its members' witness, the Society continues to shape Maltese religious culture and moral consciousness (Spiteri Axiak 2020), embodying Preca's enduring vision of a lay apostolate that incarnates Christ in the world through humble service and steadfast faith.

1.5.2 The School Background and History

In marking the school's 75th anniversary, Headmaster Raymond D'Amato described St Michael School's journey as "the application of the philosophy and pedagogy of Fr George Preca and the SDC charism" (Aloisio 2022, xiii). The school's foundation was inconceivable without the evangelising zeal of four SDC members—Anthony Agius, Emanuel D'Amato, Lorenzo Farrugia, and Giuseppe Carbone—who, inspired by Preca, sought to provide holistic formation to Maltese youth in the aftermath of World War II.

Agius, an engine fitter at the Malta Drydocks, became increasingly aware of the moral and educational vulnerability of young apprentices, who made up a significant segment of Malta's post-war workforce (Zarb Dimech 2021). Aloisio (2022) remarks that Agius, motivated by the SDC's mission, envisioned a "special school" that would prepare students not only for technical examinations but also for life, integrating spiritual, moral, and intellectual formation (p. 12). Supported and blessed by Preca himself, Agius and his collaborators opened St Michael School on 4 November 1946 at Villa Violette, Marsa. Preca's affection for the school was well known—he viewed it as a continuation of the SDC's catechetical mission (Aloisio 2022: 27). By 1951, the school relocated to its current site in Santa Venera to accommodate its rapid growth and evolving educational needs.

Over the decades, St Michael School transitioned from a technical to a secondary institution, aligning with national reforms and broader curricular developments. In 1977, governance was formally entrusted to a Board of Directors appointed by the SDC Superior General, ensuring fidelity to the Society's ethos while supporting modernisation. The school expanded physically and pedagogically, constructing new facilities and sports spaces to enhance holistic education.

A significant turning point came in 2005, when the long-standing policy limiting employment to SDC members was lifted. This allowed the recruitment of lay and female educators, addressing staff shortages but also presenting the challenge of sustaining the SDC ethos among new personnel unfamiliar with its spiritual tradition.

1.5.3 The School Ethos

The ethos of St Michael School is rooted in the love of the Gospel and animated by the charism of St George Preca and the SDC (see Appendix 1). Central to this spirituality are the virtues of humility and meekness, drawn from Jesus' invitation: "Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart" (Mt 11:29). The school's educational philosophy seeks to form students spiritually, morally, and intellectually, cultivating a community nourished by the presence of God and strengthened by the protection of St Michael the Archangel. In the spirit of Christ the Teacher, the school aims to receive and educate every student with compassion, healing, and guidance inspired by the Gospel.

According to Roche (1997), school culture is defined by its core values, beliefs, and traditions—elements that give meaning to institutional life. St Michael School's ethos expresses these through daily witness, curriculum, relationships, and community engagement. As articulated in its mission statement (see Appendix 1), the school "strives for a better life inspired by the teachings of the Gospels," upholding the dignity and uniqueness of every individual while instilling in students "a vision of hope based on our faith in Jesus Christ." This aligns with the broader vision of Catholic education, in which the dignity of the human person finds its fullest expression in unity with Christ (CCE 1997).

Guided by the SDC virtues of humility and meekness, the school promotes a spirituality that grounds education within a living awareness of God's presence. Its ethos reflects the conviction that Jesus Christ must remain the heart of Catholic education (CCE 2014). Accordingly, St Michael School provides a holistic education that integrates faith, culture, and life (SCCE 1977), forming students to think critically and act ethically in a society often dominated by utilitarian and technocratic values (CCE 1988). This holistic formation extends beyond academics to include care for cultural understanding, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility—dimensions that prepare students to participate actively and conscientiously in a diverse and interdependent world.

Ultimately, this study aims to investigate how a clearly articulated ethos is experienced and internalised by students. While the mission and vision of the school are firmly expressed in policy and practice, their transformative impact depends on how the

community lives them daily. As Lydon (2009) observes, faith and tradition are not merely transmitted as information but embodied as a “living tradition” that inspires others through authentic witness. Similarly, Pollefeyt and Bouwens (2014: 319) remind us that “Catholic identity is a verb... made real through acts of love and compassion.” Only when the school’s ethos is lived out in genuine relationships and service does St Michael School truly fulfil its calling as a Catholic community whose witness is both formative and irresistible.

2. Research Design

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology adopted to address the research questions and achieve the study's objectives. It outlines the qualitative and quantitative methods employed, the data collection instruments and the rationale for their selection, as well as the procedures followed during the research implementation. The chapter also describes the methods of data analysis, the criteria for participant selection, and the use of a pilot study. Finally, it considers potential researcher biases and the study's limitations, outlining the measures taken to mitigate these challenges.

2.2 Research questions

This case study addresses the central research question: How does a Catholic school communicate its ethos to students? It further explores this inquiry through the following specific research questions:

RQ1: What are the students' experiences on how the school conveys the Catholic ethos?

RQ2: To what extent is the school ethos leaving a mark on the students? What mark?

RQ3: From the students' participation in this study, what light can the school leadership acquire to instil the school ethos in its students better?

2.3 Methodology

To address the research questions effectively, this study adopted a case study design as its primary methodological approach. Case studies, as an empirical form of inquiry, allow for an in-depth exploration of complex phenomena within their real-life context. According to Yin (2009), case studies can be categorised as exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory. Exploratory case studies investigate a phenomenon by developing or applying new theoretical perspectives; descriptive case studies provide a detailed

portrayal of the phenomenon; and explanatory case studies seek to uncover the underlying reasons or mechanisms behind it. The present research combines elements of both descriptive and explanatory approaches, examining how the Catholic school's ethos is communicated to students and analysing how this ethos influences their experiences and development.

2.3.1 Mixed Methods

Following an extensive review of the literature on the transmission of the Catholic school ethos and the formulation of research questions, it was determined that students' perspectives on their lived experience of the ethos should occupy a central place in this study. A purely quantitative design, relying solely on closed-ended questions, would have limited the inquiry to statistical interpretation, without capturing the deeper meaning behind students' responses. Conversely, an entirely qualitative approach would have provided rich, contextual insights but lacked the breadth and generalisability provided by quantitative data.

For these reasons, a mixed methods approach was adopted. As Dornyei (2007) notes, this design integrates the best of quantitative and qualitative methods. It allows researchers to "look at the same question from another angle, using the other approach, thus uncovering the new aspects of the issue" (p. 30). The quantitative data in this study provided a broad understanding of students' perspectives and patterns related to the transmission of the Catholic ethos. In contrast, the qualitative data deepened this understanding by exploring students' experiences and interpretations in context. This combination of methods provided a more comprehensive and refined analysis, making it particularly well-suited to address both the main and subsidiary research questions of the dissertation.

2.3.2 Merging the Data

Merging data in mixed methods research is essential for integrating the strengths of qualitative and quantitative approaches to achieve a comprehensive understanding of

the research problem. Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009) define mixed methods research as “collecting, analysing, and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or in a series of studies that investigate the same underlying phenomenon” (p.265). The integration of numerical trends with rich contextual insights enhances interpretation, enables cross-validation, and reveals patterns that might remain hidden when using a single method. Such complementarity increases the validity, reliability, and depth of findings, providing a holistic view of the phenomenon under study. As Yin (2006) observes, the rigour of mixed methods research depends mainly on the strength of integration at every stage of the process.

In this study, the merging of quantitative and qualitative data served distinct yet complementary purposes. Quantitative analysis offered a broad overview of students’ perceptions of the school’s ethos and its impact on their experience. Qualitative data from the interview and focus group deepened this understanding by contextualising and explaining the statistical patterns, thereby addressing the specific research questions concerning how the school communicates its ethos and the implications for leadership (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009). The integration of both strands thus produced a more nuanced and holistic interpretation of how the St Michael School ethos is perceived and lived by students.

2.3.3 Data Collection

Data collection lies at the core of any research process, forming the foundation for addressing research questions and achieving the study’s aims. Systematic and precise data collection ensures that findings are valid, reliable, and credible. Employing a variety of data collection tools enables researchers to capture the richness of human behaviour from multiple perspectives—an approach commonly referred to as triangulation in the social sciences. As Cohen et al. (2011) define it, triangulation involves “the use of two or more data collection methods to study some aspect of human behaviour” (p. 195). This methodological pluralism strengthens evidence, uncovers patterns, and enhances the interpretive depth of the research. The quality and relevance of the data collected directly influence the robustness of the analysis and the significance of the conclusions.

As Creswell (2002) observes, “quantitative data provides for generalisability, whereas qualitative data offers information about the context or setting” (p. 515)

In this case study, multiple instruments were employed to explore the research questions.

- A semi-structured interview with a member of the School Leadership Team (SLT) provided direct insight into how the school’s ethos is conceptualised and communicated from an administrative perspective.
- A student questionnaire, administered to the entire school population, captured how students at different stages of secondary education perceived the school’s ethos as expressed in daily rituals, culture, and activities, providing the lion’s share of data collected for the study (see student questionnaire in Appendix 2)
The student questionnaire was adapted from an existing instrument developed by Shafran (1994) in his doctoral dissertation *The Educational Method of Saint John Bosco as School Culture in the Salesian High Schools in the United States* (University of San Francisco). Items and constructs from Shafran’s questionnaire were reviewed for relevance to the present study’s context and aims. Several items were retained, others modified, and others added to align with the ethos and operational realities of St Michael School, while other sections were omitted. This adaptation ensured conceptual consistency with Shafran’s original work while tailoring the instrument to investigate the transmission of Catholic school ethos in the Maltese context
- Finally, a semi-structured focus group, conducted after the survey, explored students’ lived experiences of the school ethos, allowing participants to discuss salient themes that emerged from the quantitative analysis collaboratively. As Morgan (1997) notes, focus groups elicit collective rather than individual viewpoints, making them particularly valuable for exploring shared perceptions within a community.

The data from all three instruments facilitated the integration and interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative findings. Synthesising these datasets enabled the identification of effective practices and areas for improvement, guiding the school administration toward a more purposeful transmission of its ethos (Ivankova et al. 2006).

2.3.4 Analysis of Qualitative Data using Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis, with the use of MAXQDA, was applied to the qualitative data gathered from the interview and focus group to identify, compare, and interpret recurring themes, thereby facilitating an understanding of how the Catholic school conveys its ethos to students. Clarke and Braun (2017) define thematic analysis as a “method for identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (‘themes’) within qualitative data” (p. 297). Its strength lies in its systematic yet flexible approach to uncovering patterns within and across datasets to construct meaning and generate insight (Ozuem et al. 2022).

An inductive thematic approach was adopted to capture the students’ experiences as they emerged naturally from the data rather than being shaped by preconceived categories. The interview and focus group were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim (see Appendix 3 for the questions during the interview and focus group). Participants were free to use either Maltese or English, or to switch between languages, ensuring that linguistic preference did not inhibit expression, particularly for the students. Both interviews were guided by open-ended questions to elicit detailed, reflective responses that offered a deeper understanding of participants’ perspectives.

To ensure accuracy and trustworthiness, the transcript of the interview with the SLT member was returned for verification. This process, known as member checking (Mercer 2007), allowed the participant to review the transcription, correct inaccuracies, or expand on any responses. The SLT member confirmed the transcript without modification.

Thematic analysis was also applied to three open-ended questionnaire items. Students were asked:

- (1) Why did they choose to attend St Michael School?
- (2) Explain their response to whether attending the school had made them a better person.
- (3) Identify the most important values they had learned there.

The analysis of these responses provided a qualitative dimension to the survey data, allowing connections to be drawn between quantitative findings and the students' articulated experiences of the school's ethos.

2.3.5 Analysis of Quantitative Data using IBM SPSS

Cohen et al. (2011) emphasise that quantitative data analysis is a powerful research tool and should not be regarded as superior or inferior to qualitative analysis, as its "use is entirely dependent on fitness for purpose" (p. 604). In this study, quantitative data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS to examine students' questionnaire responses.

The student questionnaire, available in either Maltese or English according to participant preference, comprised 79 items: three multiple-choice questions, three open-ended questions, and 73 five-point Likert-scale items. These items were grouped into six thematic areas derived from the literature on Catholic school ethos and aligned with students' experiences at St Michael School: school ethos, Catholic religiosity, school services, school life, approachability of staff, and discipline. Revilla et al. (2014) note that a five-point Likert scale strikes an effective balance between respondent usability, analytical richness, and interpretative clarity—an important consideration given that participants were aged between 11 and 16. Three different five-point scales were employed:

- Strongly disagree to strongly agree (for four themes),
- Not important to very important (for one theme), and
- Never to always (for one theme).

The questionnaire was administered digitally between February and May 2024. The researcher personally facilitated each session across the fifteen classes. The extended administration period was necessary due to the limited availability of the computer lab, which had to coincide with each class's free period to avoid disrupting regular lessons. Each session began with a brief presentation (approximately seven minutes) outlining the survey's purpose and potential benefits for both the students and the school. The researcher introduced the concept of ethos in accessible language, reviewed the school's ethos statement, and encouraged questions for clarification.

Before completing the questionnaire, students were reminded that their responses would remain anonymous to encourage honesty and prevent fear of identification. Participation was entirely voluntary: students who had parental consent but declined assent faced no consequence. Most participants completed the questionnaire within 20 to 25 minutes.

2.4 Participants in the Study

Following authorisation from the Faculty Research Ethics Committee and the Secretariat for Catholic Education, formal permission was sought from the Head of St Michael School to conduct the research. The Head approved the study and nominated the Assistant Head—responsible for chairing the school’s Pastoral Care Committee and overseeing staff induction—to participate in the interview as a representative of the SLT.

Approval was also granted to administer the student questionnaire to the entire school population to maximise participation. Parental consent and student assent were obtained through letters distributed by the school secretary, who acted as the intermediary between the researcher and families. A total of 298 students out of 357 completed the questionnaire, yielding a participation rate of 82.1%. Five responses were excluded due to invalid or incomplete data, leaving 293 valid questionnaires for analysis.

Table 2.1 The distribution of participants in the student questionnaire by year groups.

| Student Group | Number of Participants | Percentage of the whole Year Group | Percentage of total participation |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Year 7 | 60 | 83.3% | 20.5% |
| Year 8 | 61 | 85.9% | 20.8% |
| Year 9 | 63 | 88.7% | 21.5% |
| Year 10 | 48 | 67.6% | 16.4% |
| Year 11 | 61 | 84.7% | 20.8% |

Seven parents declined consent for participation. Most non-responses were due to student absence on the day of data collection, except the Year 10 cohort, where several students opted not to participate.

Participation in the post-survey focus group was by invitation. The researcher selected five students—one from each year group—who demonstrated confidence in expressing their views. Parental consent and student assent were again obtained prior to participation. After a preliminary analysis of the questionnaire data to identify key discussion themes, the focus group was convened in June 2024. Conducted in a semi-structured format, it lasted just under 60 minutes, allowing students to respond freely in either Maltese or English.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

Given that the research was conducted at the researcher's place of employment and that the school was explicitly identified by name, participants could be readily identified. To mitigate this, the researcher strictly adhered to the University of Malta Research Code of Ethics and the University of Malta Research Ethics Review Procedures. All data collection and processing fully complied with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, 2018).

The school secretary acted as an intermediary between the researcher and participants, distributing information letters and consent forms to maintain transparency and minimise potential bias. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, with all participants informed of their right to withdraw at any time and for any reason. In such cases, any data previously collected was permanently deleted from the dataset.

To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned to all participants, as “the cloak of anonymity is often vital in sensitive research, such that respondents are entirely untraceable” (Cohen et al. 2011: 171). All unprocessed data were securely stored in an encrypted folder on a password-protected personal computer. Data will be used solely for this dissertation and will be permanently destroyed one year after the study's completion.

Copies of all correspondence with the Secretariat for Catholic Education, the Head of School, the SLT member, and parents' consent and students' assent are included in Appendix 4. These measures ensured that the research was conducted with complete

ethical integrity, safeguarding participant welfare and promoting the authenticity, reliability, and quality of the findings.

2.6 The Pilot Study

Cohen et al. (2011) emphasise the critical importance of careful wording and pre-testing in questionnaire design to ensure clarity and effectiveness. Likewise, Oppenheim (1992) highlights the essential role of pilot testing in enhancing a questionnaire's validity, reliability, and practicality, asserting that "everything about the questionnaire should be piloted; nothing should be excluded" (p. 48). Accordingly, a preliminary study was conducted prior to the primary data collection phase.

Following the development of the questionnaire, a specialist in statistical analysis reviewed it, and minor modifications were made based on expert feedback. The pilot study was then carried out in December 2023. Seventeen students participated: six from Year 9, six from Year 10, and five from Year 11. These year groups were deliberately selected as older students were more familiar with the school ethos and could therefore provide more informed responses. The researcher nominated participants based on their academic performance and reliability in completing both the test and retest phases.

A test-retest procedure was employed to assess the questionnaire's reliability and internal consistency. Participants completed the questionnaire twice, with a five- to ten-day interval between administrations. Responses were analysed using the Kendall Tau correlation coefficient, an appropriate measure for examining associations between ordinal data collected at different times. The null hypothesis specifies poor test-retest reliability and is accepted if the p-value exceeds the 0.05 level of significance. The alternative hypothesis specifies satisfactory test-retest reliability and is accepted if the p-value is smaller than the 0.05 criterion. One of the limitations of the Kendall Tau test is that the test is not robust enough when the rating scores provided by respondents are negligible. In that case, the result of the Kendall tau test is ignored.

Further examination of inconsistent items revealed that discrepancies often resulted from individual inattentiveness—instances where a student provided opposing

responses to the same item in the test and retest. Two questions were identified as problematic by multiple participants due to unclear wording: one was rephrased for clarity, and the other was removed from the final version of the questionnaire.

2.7 Research Biases

Bias in research is inevitable, particularly in qualitative inquiries where the researcher's background and experiences shape both perception and interpretation. The researcher's long-standing professional involvement at the school and personal vocation within the SDC naturally inspired the present study but also introduced potential subjectivity. Although complete neutrality is unattainable, conscious efforts were made to remain self-aware and minimise bias throughout the research process.

Recognising that this study was conducted within the researcher's own workplace, every effort was made to mitigate preconceived notions, personal assumptions, and expectations that could influence data collection or interpretation. Emphasis was therefore placed not only on validity but also on the trustworthiness, authenticity, and quality of the research.

During data analysis, interpretation was strictly limited to the evidence emerging from the transcribed interview and focus group data, avoiding any extrapolation influenced by the researcher's prior knowledge or experience. Although this demanded a high degree of self-discipline and self-awareness, regular supervisory review and constant reference to the raw data ensured analytic rigour and helped minimise researcher bias.

2.8 Limitations

This research is subject to several limitations. A primary constraint concerns language. All data collection tools—whether spoken or written—were administered in Maltese (although the student questionnaire was also offered in English for those who elected for it), which raises potential issues regarding the fidelity of translation into English. Subtleties of tone, expression, and non-verbal communication may have been partially lost in transcription. The researcher remained attentive to this limitation and

endeavoured to preserve the original meaning of participants' words as accurately as possible.

A second limitation relates to the questionnaire's length and linguistic complexity. Some students, particularly those with literacy challenges, found certain items difficult to understand, leading to incomplete or inconsistent responses. Although 82.1% of the student population participated—a satisfactory rate for school-based research—non-participation may nonetheless indicate disengagement or disinterest in the school ethos. While this remains speculative, it underscores the importance of interpreting findings within the context of respondent representation.

The focus group sample posed another constraint. Only one student per year group participated, selected through invitation rather than voluntary recruitment, primarily due to time and logistical limitations. A broader or year-specific focus group design could have yielded richer comparative insights across cohorts and enhanced the interpretation of survey data.

Finally, the researcher's dual role as assistant head and researcher introduced the possibility of insider bias (Mercer 2007) and a potential power imbalance, particularly during interactions with students. While the researcher's familiarity with the school facilitated logistical arrangements and access, it may also have influenced participants' responses. To mitigate this, confidentiality and anonymity were repeatedly assured. During questionnaire administration, the researcher refrained from circulating in the classroom to minimise student discomfort and encourage frankness. In the focus group, participants were reminded that the researcher was acting solely in a research capacity, not as a member of school administration, and were selected based on an established rapport to promote open and honest dialogue.

3. Findings

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings derived from both quantitative and qualitative data, integrated to reflect the mixed methods approach adopted in this study. The results from the QSD, the interview with the SLT member, and the student focus group are woven together to provide a cohesive understanding of the lived experience of the school's Catholic ethos. Quantitative trends are interpreted alongside participants' narratives to illuminate not only how the ethos is perceived and experienced by students but also how it is communicated and embodied in the broader school community. This integrated presentation allows for a more refined and holistic interpretation of the data, consistent with the study's methodological design.

3.2 General Information on the Findings

3.2.1 Quantitative Survey Data (QSD)

A total of 293 students completed the questionnaire, representing a response rate of 82.07% from a total population of 357 students. This high level of participation strengthens the reliability of the data and supports the validity of statistical inferences about the wider population. To assess the precision of the findings, the margin of error was calculated at a 95% confidence level. Based on the sample proportion of 82.07%, the maximum margin of error was 4.39%, indicating that the reported results are expected to differ by no more than $\pm 4.39\%$ from the actual population values. This provides a high degree of confidence in the representativeness of the data.

3.2.1.1 The Chi-Square Test for Independence

Table 3.1 presents the results of the cross-tabulation analysis examining the relationship between year group and religious affiliation. The overall Chi-square test did not show a statistically significant association at the 5% level ($\chi^2(12) = 20.532, p = 0.058$), indicating that religious affiliation remained largely consistent across the different year groups.

A focused comparison between Year 7 and Year 11 revealed a statistically significant association ($\chi^2(3) = 14.132, p = 0.003$). Analysis of standardised residuals indicated that the Non-Practising Catholic category accounted for most of this difference, with Year 7 showing fewer students than expected (Residual = -2.4) and Year 11 showing more students than expected (Residual = 2.4). No other religious affiliation categories showed significant deviations across the two-year groups.

Table 3.1 Cross-tabulation of Year Groups and Religious Affiliation with Chi-Square Test for Independence Results.

| | | Practising Catholic | Non-Practising Catholic | Christian Denomination | Other | Total |
|--------------|---------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------|---------------|
| Year 07 | Count | 50 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 60 |
| | % within School Year | 83.3% | 5.0% | 6.7% | 5.0% | 100.0% |
| | % within Rel. Affiliation | 22.9% | 6.3% | 25.0% | 27.3% | 20.5% |
| Year 08 | Count | 48 | 9 | 1 | 3 | 61 |
| | % within School Year | 78.7% | 14.8% | 1.6% | 4.9% | 100.0% |
| | % within Rel. Affiliation | 22.0% | 18.8% | 6.3% | 27.3% | 20.8% |
| Year 09 | Count | 46 | 11 | 5 | 1 | 63 |
| | % within School Year | 73.0% | 17.5% | 7.9% | 1.6% | 100.0% |
| | % within Rel. Affiliation | 21.1% | 22.9% | 31.3% | 9.1% | 21.5% |
| Year 10 | Count | 36 | 6 | 4 | 2 | 48 |
| | % within School Year | 75.0% | 12.5% | 8.3% | 4.2% | 100.0% |
| | % within Rel. Affiliation | 16.5% | 12.5% | 25.0% | 18.2% | 16.4% |
| Year 11 | Count | 38 | 19 | 2 | 2 | 61 |
| | % within School Year | 62.3% | 31.1% | 3.3% | 3.3% | 100.0% |
| | % within Rel. Affiliation | 17.4% | 39.6% | 12.5% | 18.2% | 20.8% |
| Total | Count | 218 | 48 | 16 | 11 | 293 |
| | % within School Year | 74.4% | 16.4% | 5.5% | 3.8% | 100.0% |
| | % within Rel. Affiliation | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

$\chi^2(12) = 20.532, p = 0.058$

3.2.1.2. The Friedman Test

The Friedman test was applied to compare mean rating scores (Likert scale) across all statements from the student survey. These mean scores ranged from 0 to 4, where 0 corresponded to **strongly disagree** and 4 to **strongly agree** (Sections 4, 5, 7, and 9); 0

corresponded to **not important** and 4 to **very important** (Section 6); and 0 corresponded to **never** and 4 to **always** (Section 8). The null hypothesis stated that the mean rating scores across the statements were similar and was accepted when the p-value exceeded the 0.05 significance level. The alternative hypothesis, indicating significant differences between mean scores, was accepted when the p-value was below 0.05.

Appendix 5 presents the Friedman test results for each survey item, including its mean value, standard deviation, and the detailed distribution of responses expressed as percentage scores.

3.2.1.3 The Kruskal-Wallis Test

Given that the survey data were derived from ordinal Likert-scale ratings and did not fully meet the normality assumptions required for parametric tests, the Kruskal–Wallis test was used as a suitable non-parametric alternative to compare group differences. This test examined variations in mean rating scores for all statements across groups of participants categorised by year group and by religious affiliation. The null hypothesis stated that mean rating scores did not differ significantly between groups and was retained when the p-value exceeded the 0.05 significance threshold. Conversely, the alternative hypothesis—that significant differences existed between groups—was accepted when the p-value was below 0.05. The detailed results are presented in Appendix 6 (by year group) and Appendix 7 (by religious affiliation).

3.3 Findings related to each Research Question

The overall survey results provide a comprehensive overview of students' experiences and perceptions of the Catholic ethos at St Michael School. To explore these findings in greater depth, this section integrates both the quantitative survey data and the qualitative insights drawn from the interview and focus group, presenting the results in relation to the three research questions guiding the study. The data are organised thematically to allow for a focused examination of how different dimensions of the ethos are communicated, internalised, and supported within the school community. Table 3.2

outlines this framework, listing the themes, sub-themes, and corresponding survey items from the quantitative component. The qualitative data from the interview and focus group are incorporated within each thematic section to enrich and contextualise the quantitative findings, in keeping with the mixed methods design of the study.

Table 3.2 Framework of Research Questions: Themes, Sub-Themes, and Survey Items.

| Research Question Theme | Sub-Themes | Linked Survey Items |
|---|--|--|
| 1. Communication and Expression of Catholic Ethos | Religious Rituals and Practices | 4f, 4g, 5a, 5d, 5e, 5m, 6a |
| | Curriculum and Teaching | 4h, 4i, 5b, 5c, 5n, 6b, 6c, 6d, 7b, 7c, 7j |
| 2. Impact and Internalisation of Catholic Ethos on Students | Personal Faith Development and Spirituality | 4c, 5j, 5k, 5l, |
| | Moral and Ethical Growth | 5g, 5h, 6e, 7g, 7m, 9b, 9c, 9f, 9i |
| | Sense of Belonging and Community | 4b, 5o, 6f, 7a, 7e, 7h, 7i |
| | Behavioural Changes and Choices | 6j, 6k, 7f |
| 3. Leadership and Strategies for Enhancing Ethos Transmission | Leadership Role Modelling and Vision Communication | 4a, 5f, 6g, 6h, 6j, 6l, 6m, 7q, 7r, 8a, 8b, 9e |
| | Enhancing Teacher Training and Support | 4d, 4e, 5i, 5p, 7d, 7n, 7o, 7p, 8g, 8h, 9g, 9h |

3.3.1 Communication and Expression of Catholic Ethos

(Findings related to RQ1: What are the students’ experiences on how the school conveys the Catholic ethos?)

3.3.1.1 Religious Rituals and Practices

The QSD findings show that religious rituals and practices are both visible and valued, reflecting a clear perception of the school’s Catholic identity. Most students reported regular opportunities for Mass (90.8%, M = 3.45, SD = 0.73) and Confession (81.2%, M = 3.04, SD = 0.84), while three-quarters (75.1%, M = 3.02, SD = 1.09) viewed religious services as important or very important. As one focus group participant noted, “We have daily Mass every morning, for example” (S10). Devotional practices and charism markers

were also salient: praying to St Michael (73.7%, $M = 2.89$, $SD = 1.16$) and valuing St George Preca (83.0%, $M = 3.20$, $SD = 0.93$). A substantial majority (81.9%) disagreed that it was difficult to identify the school as Catholic ($M = 0.70$, $SD = 1.09$).

Regarding personal spirituality, 68.2% disagreed with the statement “I do not feel God’s presence” ($M = 1.11$, $SD = 1.21$), indicating a broadly positive experience, though higher standard deviations suggest variation among students. Year 8 students reported the strongest sense of God’s presence ($M = 0.75$) compared with Year 10 ($M = 1.69$), while practising Catholics ($M = 0.94$) felt it more strongly than those with other affiliations ($M = 2.09$). A Year 8 non-practising Catholic commented, “I feel closer to God because of school.”

Mass was the most positively rated practice, with consistently high scores across all year groups (≥ 3.35) and religious affiliations (≥ 2.94). Practising Catholics ($M = 3.51$) and Year 8 students ($M = 3.54$) recorded the highest means. One Year 9 respondent wrote that attending daily Mass “helped me become a better person.” Confession ($M = 3.04$) and other religious services ($M = 3.02$) were valued but to a lesser extent, while the morning prayer to St Michael ($M = 2.89$) showed greater variability. Practising Catholics again rated this devotion highest ($M = 3.04$).

Focus group feedback reinforced these quantitative patterns: students highlighted the importance of Mass, liturgical celebrations, morning assemblies, and live-in retreats (S7, S10, S11). Overall, while students strongly value communal worship and sense God’s presence at school, engagement with specific devotions and sacramental practices, such as Confession and daily prayers, appears more varied.

Overall, the findings suggest that while students highly value opportunities for Mass and generally feel a connection to God’s presence, their engagement with specific devotions and sacramental practices like confession and ritual prayers appears less consistent.

3.3.1.2 Curriculum and Teaching

Survey results indicate that curriculum and teaching are widely perceived as supporting holistic development—academic and spiritual—while revealing some variability in daily devotional practice. Students rejected the claim that the school does not encourage

talent development (75.1% disagree; $M = 0.97$, $SD = 1.17$) and affirmed that the school helps them reach their full potential (80.9% agree/strongly agree; $M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.04$). Academic success is recognised as a priority (74.4%; $M = 2.94$, $SD = 1.04$). On faith integration, most students disagreed that religion lessons are irrelevant to life (75.8%; $M = 0.94$, $SD = 1.11$) and agreed that they have learnt to be a good Catholic at school (82.3%; $M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.73$). The practice of beginning lessons with prayer is less consistent across classrooms—52.2% disagree and 40.0% agree ($M = 1.84$, $SD = 1.24$)—indicating uneven implementation of this particular ritual. As confirmed from the focus group, some teachers make the sign of the cross before the lessons, whilst many others do not (S7).

Beyond formal lessons, students felt encouraged to join activities (82.0%; $M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.96$), and they rated school activities (83.6%; $M = 3.29$, $SD = 0.95$) and live-ins (86.3%; $M = 3.45$, $SD = 0.86$) as important/very important, with family activities valued but somewhat less so (72.0%; $M = 2.97$, $SD = 1.16$). Only 14.7% felt they cannot grow at this school ($M = 0.92$, $SD = 1.23$). Taken together, the pattern suggests that the Catholic ethos is communicated not only through academic emphasis and the religion curriculum, but also through co-curricular formation. At the same time, daily classroom prayer shows greater variability than other elements (as reflected in the higher standard deviation around prayer/family-activity items). In his interview, the AH referred to the ethos as being presented throughout the school year through the activities which are organised. He mentioned three very particular occasions in which the values of the school ethos are central in curricular planning: the live-ins, Lenten reflection and voluntary work during the Christmas festivities. All these scored relatively high with students perceiving them as important or very important: 86.3%, 75.1% and 69% respectively.

3.3.2 Impact and Internalisation of Catholic Ethos on Students

(Findings related to RQ2: To what extent is the school ethos leaving a mark on the students? What mark?)

3.3.2.1 Personal Faith Development and Spirituality

The survey results suggest that the school's Catholic ethos contributes meaningfully to students' personal faith development, though the depth of impact varies among individuals. A majority affirmed that the school views Jesus as their model, with 86% agreeing or strongly agreeing ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 0.90$). A statistically significant difference was observed, with Year 7 students reporting the highest mean score ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 0.85$), alongside students who identified as practising Catholics ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 0.79$). Similarly, most students recognised the school's role in supporting their faith, as 74.1% agreed that the school helps their faith ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 1.08$), and 73% disagreed with the statement that the school had not helped them to be better Catholics ($M = 1.02$, $SD = 1.26$). The AH remarked that when former students return to visit the school, it is evident that the majority have assimilated and continue to live out the values they acquired during their time at St Michael School.

Understanding of MUSEUM values was also strong, with 73.1% of students reporting that their schooling deepened this awareness ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 1.02$). At the same time, around one in ten students expressed uncertainty about whether they have become better Catholics, indicating that the ethos is not internalised equally by all. Together, the findings point to a school environment in which faith and the charism are actively promoted and generally embraced by students, though the extent of personal internalisation varies. A Year 11 practising Catholic student remarked, "I have taken an interest in the teachings of Christ the Lord during my time at Saint Michael School," while a Year 8 non-practising Catholic student observed, "I feel closer to God." In the post-survey focus group, S11 noted that, beyond the school's academic endeavours, the way things are done—through interactions with teachers, whole-school activities, and similar experiences—positively impacts his faith and shapes the way he perceives others.

3.3.2.2 Moral and Ethical Growth

Students generally perceive a strong ethical climate consistent with the Catholic ethos, marked by honesty, kindness, fairness, and responsibility. A majority felt encouraged to be honest (86%, $M = 3.16$, $SD = 0.88$) and rejected the idea that the school fails to inspire

kindness (85% disagree; $M = 0.75$, $SD = 1.09$), as S11 put it in the focus group, “your values, for example, gentleness, humility, showing respect toward others—almost grow in you naturally.” Perceptions of justice were also positive: fair play is encouraged (77.5%, $M = 2.99$, $SD = 1.05$), students feel treated fairly (70%, $M = 2.85$, $SD = 1.16$), and the atmosphere is firm but fair (73%, $M = 2.94$, $SD = 0.99$); most also agreed that correction is for their benefit (76.7%, $M = 3.00$, $SD = 1.02$). As S8 commented: “maybe not absolutely, but many times, even when the teachers correct you, you know it is for your own good, not for some other reason, alright. So you always reflect on what we learn about Jesus.”

At a personal level, students reported striving to be the best person they can be (82.6%, $M = 3.17$, $SD = 0.92$) and that the school instils responsibility (83.9%, $M = 3.27$, $SD = 0.89$). Service beyond the classroom is valued too, with Christmas voluntary activities rated Important/Very Important by 69% ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 1.05$). Taken together, the pattern suggests that moral teaching and disciplinary practice are not merely stated ideals but are internalised mainly in students’ attitudes and choices, even as the dispersion on some items indicates expected variability in individual experience.

When prompted in the QSD to list the most important values they have learnt from the school, the responses were gathered into five groups as listed below in Table 3.3, showing some of the values most mentioned and the number of students referring to those values.

Table 3.3 The most mentioned values students have learnt from school (QSD question 12)

| Clustered Values | Some Particular Values | Number of students |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Christ-centred Living | Discipline / Responsibility | 44 |
| | Honesty / Sincerity | 23 |
| | Service / Helping Others | 18 |
| Humility and Meekness | Humility | 20 |
| | Meekness | 25 |
| Spiritual Dependence on God | Faith | 27 |
| Holistic Development | Growth | 53 |
| | Perseverance | 11 |
| Healing and Friendship | Respect | 90 |
| | Love | 30 |
| | Kindness | 27 |
| | Acceptance | 14 |
| | Friendship | 14 |

The clustered values presented in the table highlight how students' moral and ethical growth is closely intertwined with the Catholic ethos of the school. Students most frequently identified values such as respect, love, kindness, and friendship, suggesting that interpersonal relationships are perceived as a central expression of their formation. Alongside these relational dimensions, there is also a strong emphasis on responsibility, honesty, humility, and perseverance, which reflects the school's role in shaping a disciplined and principled character. Importantly, several responses explicitly connected ethical growth to a spiritual foundation, with references to faith and reliance on God indicating that moral development is not viewed in isolation but as rooted in Catholic belief. These findings suggest that these values demonstrate the school ethos is being internalised in ways that integrate personal virtue, relational care, and spiritual orientation.

3.3.2.3 Sense of Belonging and Community

Across the indicators for a sense of belonging and community, students report a broadly welcoming, respectful, and supportive school climate consistent with the Catholic ethos. Most rejected feelings of exclusion: 86.7% disagreed that they do not feel welcomed ($M = 0.53$, $SD = 0.90$), and 75.5% disagreed that one is respected only if Catholic ($M = 1.84$,

SD = 1.24). Students identifying as non-Catholics also positively expressed the school's inclusivity irrespective of faith, giving only a mean score of 1.00 (Christian denomination) and 1.27 (Other).

Belonging and care were affirmed, with 75.8% agreeing they feel part of a family (M = 2.89, SD = 1.14), as S11 confirmed when he reflected on his past five years at school, "I really feel it was like a family, and I will be very sorry that I have to leave." Relational support was substantial: 84% said they can always find someone to talk to when facing problems (M = 3.23, SD = 0.92), and a feeling of charity was recognised by 75% (M = 2.96, SD = 0.99). In this regard, the AH mentioned the 'formation session' explicitly held for new staff members to transmit and inspire the school ethos and the values that emerge from it as part of their induction, to be able to transmit to the students. While on several items, some variability in individual experience was observed, the overall pattern points to a communal environment characterised by welcome, respect, care, and accessible support.

These findings suggest that the school provides a welcoming and caring community in which students feel respected, supported, and included, thereby reflecting the Catholic ethos of love, charity, and belonging.

3.3.2.4 Behavioural Changes and Choices

The data suggest that the Catholic ethos at St Michael School is reflected in students' behavioural orientations, particularly in their reliance on support structures and loyalty to the school. Access to guidance teachers was deemed important or very important by 86.4% of students (M = 3.40, SD = 0.89), while a slightly smaller but still substantial majority (70.3%) placed high importance on professional services such as counsellors and psychologists (M = 3.00, SD = 1.11). Perhaps the most notable behavioural indicator of ethos internalisation is institutional loyalty: 81.8% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would encourage others to enrol at St Michael School (M = 3.15, SD = 1.00). When prompted to 'advertise' the school to prospective students, based on their personal experience, S10 suggested, "I would describe it as a welcoming school with

good teachers. They do not just teach you subjects like Maths or Physics, but they also teach you about life and so on.”

The positive influence of the school ethos on students’ behaviour and choices was further evidenced in the survey, where more than 91% of respondents affirmed that their time at St Michael School was helping them to become better people, while only 25 students expressed disagreement. These findings suggest that the ethos is not confined to abstract principles but is manifested in students’ concrete choices, both in their appreciation of institutional support and in their willingness to advocate for the school community.

3.3.3 Leadership and Strategies for Enhancing Ethos Transmission

(Findings related to RQ3: From the students’ participation in this study, what light can the school leadership acquire to instil the school ethos in its students better?)

3.3.3.1 Leadership Role Modelling and Vision Communication

Overall, students report a clear and accessible expression of the school’s Catholic identity alongside generally positive views of leadership and staff. Most respondents affirmed that staff act as faith models (61.1%; $M = 2.58$, $SD = 1.09$), although nearly a quarter were undecided (23.5%), indicating room to deepen visible, day-to-day witnessing of faith. Role models are identifiable: 68.9% disagreed that it is difficult to name a person they admire ($M = 1.15$, $SD = 1.23$). A Year 9 student commented: “I grew up as a person by learning from the staff.” Perceptions of accessibility were favourable overall—two-thirds viewed administrators as easy to talk to (66.9%; $M = 2.77$, $SD = 1.19$)—with a notable difference across levels: AHs were rated Often/Always approachable by 70.7% ($M = 2.92$, $SD = 1.03$), compared to 47.4% for the headmaster ($M = 2.47$, $SD = 1.20$). Respect for teachers was substantial (67.9%; $M = 2.71$, $SD = 0.98$). When asked how the Catholic ethos permeates the school, during the focus group S9 explicitly stated: “the

way teachers behave with us shows respect, while also providing discipline where it is needed.”

The school’s institutional Catholic identity was strongly endorsed (St Michael is a Catholic school: $M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.01$; St Michael’s run by SDC: $M = 3.01$, $SD = 1.12$), and students rated the presence of MUSEUM members as important (63.8%; $M = 2.77$, $SD = 1.13$), more so than non-MUSEUM members (39.6%; $M = 2.20$, $SD = 1.18$). Eight students stated that they chose St Michael's School because the SDC runs it. “Since it is a school run by the SDC, I used to be very active in the SDC” (Year 10, practising Catholic). Taken together, the data depict a community where the Catholic vision is widely recognised, leadership is generally approachable (especially at the assistant-head level), and admired role models are present. In contrast, the undecided share on staff faith-modelling and the headmaster–assistant-head gap suggest specific opportunities to strengthen relational visibility and everyday witness.

When asked how the school leadership communicates the school ethos to the new cohort of students each year, the AH mentioned the formal: displayed on the wall, written in the diary and through direct meetings, but more effectively, “it is passed on through the regular school day, especially these two virtues that have been mentioned.” Similarly, a student in the survey admitted that he was persuaded to attend St Michael School based on what he heard “because it is a school with good values and dedicated educators” (Y9, practising Catholic). Such comments underline the survey trend that role modelling and approachability are central to how students experience the school’s Catholic vision.

3.3.3.2 Enhancing Teacher Training and Support

Teachers emerged as central figures in the everyday transmission of the Catholic ethos, both through their personal witness and their relationships with students. A substantial majority of respondents agreed that staff embody virtues such as humility (67%, $M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.04$) and meekness (69%, $M = 2.74$, $SD = 0.95$). During the focus group, when commenting on whether educators embody meekness and humility, S11 agreed that “I think I notice it most—their meekness—in the way they correct us as students.” About

two-thirds of the students (67%) also affirmed that their teachers help them experience Jesus as a friend ($M = 2.65$, $SD = 1.18$). Explicit references to faith were common: 82% rejected the statement that teachers never speak about God or religion ($M = 0.94$, $SD = 1.11$).

Relational findings were consistently strong. More than four-fifths of students agreed that teachers participate with them in activities (84%, $M = 3.16$, $SD = 0.91$), care about them (81%, $M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.93$), and want to know them personally (68%, $M = 2.83$, $SD = 1.05$). Nearly nine in ten reported that they feel comfortable speaking with at least one teacher (86%, $M = 3.39$, $SD = 0.97$). A Year 10 student in the survey commented, “At this school, if you ever face difficulties, there are many people you can talk to who will give you fair and good advice.” The AH echoed this assimilation, especially of the virtues of meekness and humility, emphasising, “over time, most [educators] conform to the values of the school ethos. The school atmosphere facilitates this, and this can be felt.”

Nonetheless, some areas revealed notable variability. While teachers were generally regarded as approachable (74%, $M = 2.80$, $SD = 1.17$), Learning Support Educators (LSEs) received considerably lower ratings (44%, $M = 2.17$, $SD = 1.36$). This suggests a need for more targeted training and support to ensure consistent relational and faith-based engagement across all staff roles. The AH acknowledged that although significant efforts are being made in the formation of educators with respect to the school ethos, the task remains ongoing, and “more can always be done.”

3.3.4 Summary

RQ 1 demonstrated that the Catholic ethos is effectively conveyed through rituals, curriculum, and school life, although some practices are implemented with varying consistency. RQ 2 showed that students generally internalise the ethos, reporting positive effects on their faith, moral development, sense of community, and behavioural choices, though with different levels of depth. RQ 3 highlighted strong leadership and teacher support in transmitting the ethos, while also indicating areas for further development, especially in role modelling and staff formation.

Overall, the findings confirm that the school's Catholic ethos is both expressed and internalised, though unevenly across different dimensions. The following chapter will discuss these results in relation to the broader literature and theoretical framework, drawing out their implications for ethos formation and school practice.

4. Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter interprets the findings presented in Chapter 3 in light of the study's objectives, relevant literature, and the guiding theoretical framework. While the previous chapter provided a descriptive account of the results, this chapter analyses their meaning and significance. The discussion is organised around three overarching themes corresponding to the research questions, each developed through sub-themes emerging from the thematic analysis and supported by data from the student survey, the AH interview, and the post-survey student focus group. This structure facilitates an integrated interpretation of patterns and relationships across data sources, identifying areas of convergence and divergence and drawing out key implications for educational practice.

4.2 Communication and Expression of the Catholic Ethos

4.2.1 Religious Rituals and Practices

The cross-tabulation of year group and religious affiliation (p. 31) offers insight into adolescent religiosity within a Catholic secondary school. While no significant differences emerged across all year groups, the contrast between Year 7 and Year 11—marked by an increase in non-practising Catholics—indicates a gradual decline in religious observance through adolescence. This mirrors national findings showing Maltese youths' growing distance from formal religious practice (Galea and Sultana 2025; Galea et al. 2023). Nevertheless, the overall stability of religious affiliation suggests that the Catholic school environment may moderate this decline, supporting students' faith identity amid secularising influences. As Galea et al. (2023) observe, adolescents' engagement with faith today depends more on authenticity and personal relevance than on inherited religiosity—highlighting the need for Catholic schools to nurture reflective and dialogical faith formation.

A limitation of this study is the absence of a survey item on post-Confirmation faith group participation, which could have clarified whether the observed stability derives mainly from school influence or participation in such post-Confirmation groups. Nevertheless, evidence suggests that Catholic schools, together with families, help sustain a sense of belonging and slow religious disengagement (Galea and Sultana 2025). Still, as Groome (2019) emphasises, exposure to a Catholic ethos alone is insufficient; enduring faith requires active accompaniment, witness, and critical engagement.

At St Michael School, Catholic identity is expressed both explicitly through ritual and implicitly through relationships. Students identified daily Mass, morning prayers, and liturgical celebrations as integral to school life, affirming the institution's conscious commitment to its mission (SCCE 1997, 66). Mass attendance—an objective marker of Catholic commitment (Engebretson 2014)—provides a rhythm of communal worship that strengthens belonging. As one student commented on him becoming a better person through the school, “I've connected with my faith more and I've grown and matured” (Year 9, practising Catholic). This gradual moral formation through shared ritual reflects Pollefeyt and Bouwens's (2014) understanding of religious socialisation as internalising values through lived practice.

The school's Marian devotion, maintained since its founding, exemplifies continuity between tradition and daily life, even if its prominence has lessened (Aloisio 2022). Such practices embody what Eifler and Landy (2014) call the sacramental imagination of Catholic education, where faith permeates everyday experience rather than remaining confined to formal instruction. Students also linked Catholicity to interpersonal relationships: “It is in the way teachers treat us—with respect—and when necessary, they show some discipline” (S9).

The AH described this ethos as “contagious,” noting that even non-SDC educators eventually “live it,” though they may not articulate it formally. This reflects literature on the hidden curriculum, where values are transmitted implicitly through culture and relationships (Darder et al. 2023) and resonates with Bourdieu's (1977) concept of habitus—the embodiment of shared dispositions through sustained participation.

Collectively, the findings suggest that St Michael School's ethos operates on two interconnected levels: explicit rituals provide the visible structure of faith life, while relationships and daily practices create an informal pedagogical space where Catholic values are absorbed and enacted—the “stuff” of school culture (Deal and Peterson 2016). This dual dynamic reflects ethos as both taught and caught, aligning with Pollefeyt and Bouwens's (2010) notion of recontextualization, where Catholic identity is maintained while engaging authentically with pluralistic contemporary culture.

4.2.2 Curriculum and Teaching

Findings indicate that St Michael School's curriculum and pedagogy effectively foster holistic formation aligned with Catholic education's mission to promote the integral development of the person. A Year 10 student reflected that the school “teaches us life's values which are important to be a better person holistically.” Most students affirmed that the school helps them reach their full potential and develop their talents, reflecting a curriculum that balances academic excellence with personal growth. This aligns with the Church's educational vision, which stresses that intellectual formation is inseparable from spiritual and moral development (CCE 2017). Miller (2006) similarly reiterates Church's teachings that Catholic schools are privileged places for forming the whole person, uniting competence with conscience.

Students' strong agreement that they have learnt to be a good Catholic and that religion lessons are relevant to life suggests a form of religious education that transcends doctrinal instruction to shape moral and spiritual identity. This reflects Groome's (2019) concept of shared Christian praxis, where faith is nurtured through reflection and lived experience. The AH confirmed that core values are integrated throughout the curriculum, particularly through intentional activities that blend learning, service, and spirituality. Such initiatives exemplify what Cook and Simonds (2011) term “curriculum as lived encounter,” in which faith formation arises through community participation and experiential learning.

The high student valuation of co-curricular activities further underscores their formative power, which function as what Bryk et al. (1993) call communal practices of faith—shared experiences that nurture belonging, responsibility, and ethical awareness. These initiatives also mirror Catholic social teaching, especially the principle of solidarity expressed through service-oriented pedagogy (Scanlan 2008).

However, variations in daily classroom practices reveal inconsistency in translating the Catholic ethos into everyday pedagogy. While collective rituals such as assemblies and live-ins visibly express faith, only 48% of students reported praying at the start of lessons, indicating uneven integration of spirituality into classroom routines. This reflects Pollefeyt and Bouwens's (2010) observation that recontextualising Catholic identity in pluralistic contexts depends greatly on teachers' confidence and formation. The AH acknowledged this tension, noting that "a lot is being done for the formation of educators, but more can be done," highlighting the need for sustained professional formation to ensure ethos coherence across subjects.

Overall, the Catholic ethos at St Michael School is conveyed through both explicit and implicit curricula. Explicitly, it is taught through religion lessons, live-ins, and reflective practices; implicitly, it is transmitted through relationships, shared routines, and the moral tone of classroom life. This dual process resonates with literature on the hidden curriculum, which emphasises that values are often absorbed through culture and interaction rather than formal teaching (Giroux 2020). In this sense, the ethos functions as both content and context—shaping how students learn, relate, and construct moral meaning.

In sum, the findings demonstrate that St Michael School articulates its Catholic identity through a coherent integration of ritual, curriculum, and community practice. The school's charism—rooted in humility, meekness, and service—is expressed not only through formal observances but through pedagogy and relationships that embody Gospel values. This reflects the Church's vision of the Catholic school as a "place of evangelisation, of authentic apostolate, and of pastoral action" (CCE 1997). However, while communication of ethos is strong, personal internalisation varies, suggesting that expression alone does not ensure transformation. The following section, therefore, explores how these values influence students' faith development, moral formation,

community impact and lived behaviour—examining the extent to which the ethos is not only expressed but internalised.

4.3 Impact and Internalisation of the Catholic Ethos on Students

4.3.1 Personal Faith Development and Spirituality

At the heart of Catholic education stands the person of Jesus Christ, to whom all educational activity is ultimately directed (CCE 2014; *GE* 1965). A Catholic school cannot rest on a generic educational philosophy; its ultimate purpose must be the Gospel itself. As the CCE (1988: 25) insists, the living presence of the “Master” must permeate every aspect of school life.

Findings show that St Michael School’s ethos plays a significant formative role in shaping students’ personal faith development. Nearly three-quarters of respondents agreed that attending the school strengthened their faith. While internalisation varies, the overall pattern reflects a culture that integrates belief with lived experience. Students’ testimonies reveal faith formation extending beyond cognitive instruction to relational and experiential dimensions. Students’ testimonies illustrate encounters with faith that echo the Church’s call that “everything should lead to an encounter with the living Christ” (CCE 2014).

This finding aligns with *DIM* (1929: 100), which holds that the fruit of Christian education lies in the “supernatural virtue and life in Christ” cultivated in the learner. During the focus group, S9 reflected that the school’s ethos promotes respect and equality for all: “I am Catholic, but I believe because it is a Christian school we can help and respect everyone equally”, echoing the school’s mission statement: “every individual is unique and that his dignity is to be fully respected.” Such comments suggest that the school’s faith culture extends inclusively, shaping moral as well as spiritual awareness.

Historically, St Michael School's impact has been profound. Aloisio (2022) notes that generations of former students embody the Christian spirit instilled through the SDC charism—many becoming fathers of strong families, SDC members, or religious vocations. Describing the school as “a nursery of vocations” (p. 88), he also records thirteen former educators who have served as missionaries abroad. The AH echoed this legacy, observing that returning ‘old boys’ continue to “live the values acquired at school,” attesting to the durability of formation rooted in faith-based relationships and practice.

These findings illustrate what Groome (2019) calls lived theology—faith that is not merely taught but experienced through ritual, community, and moral action. The stronger identification with Jesus among younger students supports research showing that pre-adolescent faith formation, reinforced by community and example, exerts more profound influence than in later adolescence (Galea and Sultana 2025).

Students' grasp of the school's SDC values further highlights how charism functions as a moral and spiritual framework. This formation sustains Catholic identity within pluralistic contexts by helping students interpret Gospel values in personally meaningful ways. Even non-practising students who report feeling closer to God reflect an inclusive spirituality that promotes relational and ethical growth, consistent with Catholic teaching (SCCE 1982).

Taken together, the findings portray a model of Catholic education that realises what Church teaching calls “integral human formation,” uniting faith, reason, and culture (CCE 2017). At St Michael School, faith development unfolds through participation in a community where Gospel values are lived through teaching, relationships, and service—what Cook and Simonds (2011) describe as a “culture of relationships.” Though internalisation differs among individuals, the evidence suggests that the school nurtures a spiritual ecology in which students encounter faith as both lived reality and moral invitation.

4.3.2 Moral and Ethical Growth

The Catholic school ethos is defined by its commitment to forming a community rooted in Christian values, where education fosters both intellectual and moral growth (John Paul II 1982). At St Michael School, this vision—grounded in the SDC’s charism of humility and meekness—remains a guiding force. As an AH reflected, despite the school’s evolution over 75 years, “the initial vision has not changed... virtues of meekness and humility are still strong columns on which the school rests... many people, on entering the school for the first time, experience an environment filled with peace and love” (Aloisio 2022, 179). These virtues, embedded in the school’s ethos, are not abstract ideals but lived moral habits cultivated through example and community life.

Staff members who are SDC educators, including all administration, play a vital role and have a greater responsibility in embodying and transmitting these virtues. As found in Church teaching, religious congregations bring the richness of their charism to schools, guiding students through witness as much as instruction (CCE 1988, 35). Students’ fondness for SDC teachers confirms this living transmission. To further support spiritual and moral formation, and a more intentional transmission of the school’s ethos values, the school recently established the role of a lay chaplain, an SDC member, whose remit—according to the job call—is “to implement the School Ethos, Vision, and Mission... and lead the Catholic life of the school community.” In the interview, the AH stressed the chaplain’s role in passing on SDC values and promoting vocations. Though Church documents do not specifically refer to lay chaplains, their function aligns with the Church’s broader vision of lay educators as spiritual leaders in schools (SCCE 1982; CCE 1988; 2014).

Students’ reflections and survey responses reveal a deeply incarnational understanding of virtue—ethical behaviour seen not as compliance but as participation in a shared moral community. Values frequently mentioned by students, such as gentleness, humility, and respect, illustrate integral human formation: the unity of intellectual, moral, and spiritual development (CCE 2017). Discipline, too, was viewed relationally—“correction for one’s own good” (S8)—echoing the Catholic view of discipline as formative rather than punitive, nurturing the virtues of prudence and self-mastery (CCE 1997). The students’ recognition that correction reflects the teachers’ concern for their

well-being confirms that moral instruction at St Michael School is delivered through example and relationship. As McLaughlin (2016) argues, authentic moral education balances freedom with formation, where norms are encountered within relationships of care and respect.

Table 3.3 (p. 38) further illustrates how students link moral and spiritual growth. The most frequently cited values—respect, love, kindness, and friendship—reflect the *communio* model of Catholic education, where moral learning unfolds through community and relationship (Bryk et al. 1993). References to responsibility, honesty, humility, and perseverance show that students view virtue as a lived habit rather than an abstract ideal—an approach consistent with Thomistic virtue ethics (Catholic Education Service 2020). Mentions of faith and dependence on God underscore that moral growth is spiritually grounded, in line with John Paul II’s (1998b) assertion that faith and reason cooperate in moral discernment.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that St Michael School’s moral ethos extends far beyond formal instruction. Ethical formation occurs through the hidden curriculum—the implicit transmission of values through relationships, expectations, and shared practices. Students internalise moral norms because they are consistently modelled, enacted, and reinforced within the school’s relational and spiritual environment. In this sense, St Michael School reflects what Grace (2016) calls the moral ecology of Catholic schooling. In this community, virtue formation and faith are mutually sustaining, shaping both conduct and conscience.

4.3.3 Sense of Belonging and Community

The community life at St Michael School exemplifies the communal and relational dimension of Catholic education, where belonging and mutual care embody the Christian ethos through what the CCE (2013: 50) calls a “dynamic osmosis” among all stakeholders. Students’ responses reveal a pronounced sense of welcome and inclusion across faith backgrounds, with many describing the school as a “family” in which they feel accepted, supported, and loved. This reflects the Church’s vision of Catholic schools as “places of encounter and communion,” where each person is valued as a child of God

(CCE 2007). One student captured this sentiment: “The friends and teachers make me a better person” (Year 8, non-Christian).

The school’s emphasis on respect and inclusivity—even toward students of different or no faith—demonstrates what the CCE (1997) calls the “evangelising witness of love.” Such openness mirrors Pope Francis’s (2016) “culture of encounter,” grounded in charity rather than uniformity. This inclusiveness resonates with *GE* (1965), which affirms that Catholic education must uphold the dignity of every person and promote holistic human development. The finding that students of diverse religious backgrounds express an equal sense of belonging underscores how St Michael School sustains a distinctly Catholic yet hospitable identity.

Relational care is central to this experience. Eighty-four percent of students reported having someone to talk to in times of difficulty, and 85% acknowledged the importance of caring staff. Such findings illustrate a deeply embedded pastoral ethos. The AH noted that formation sessions for new staff are designed to help them “internalise and transmit the school’s ethos,” ensuring continuity of mission (Tabone 2021). This practice exemplifies Church teachings, which envision Catholic schools as “educating communities” where staff and students journey together in faith and mutual care (CCE 2014). As one Year 11 student, identifying as non-believing, reflected: “I am not a Christian and do not believe in any God, but I have still learnt how to become a good person and how to help others.”

Theologically, this communal life can be understood as an embodiment of *koinonia*—a communion of persons modelled on Trinitarian love (CCE 2017). The school’s emphasis on charity, inclusion, and relational support represents integral human formation: the harmonious growth of intellectual, moral, and social dimensions in light of the Gospel. Such an environment enables students to experience Catholic social teaching as lived solidarity rather than abstract doctrine. As Bryk et al. (1993) observe, this capacity to cultivate strong communal bonds lies at the heart of Catholic schooling’s contribution to the common good.

However, not all students experienced this sense of belonging equally. Twenty-five students (8.5%) reported that they had not become “better persons” through their school experience, with 14 of these from Year 10—representing 29% of that cohort,

many cited relational issues as their reason. This group also had the lowest survey response rate (48 of 71 students). Significantly, Year 10 students began at St Michael School in scholastic year 2020–2021, during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when restrictions severely disrupted social and cultural initiation. Local research confirms the long-term impact of pandemic-related isolation on youth development (Galea et al. 2023). It is therefore plausible that this cohort’s limited early integration weakened their sense of community and attachment to the school ethos—a hypothesis that warrants further investigation.

In general, St Michael School demonstrates how belonging, care, and inclusivity function as sacramental expressions of the Catholic ethos—making visible the grace of community life. This atmosphere of charity and respect fosters what Pope Francis (2013) calls a “spirituality of encounter,” whereby the school becomes not only a place of learning but also a locus of relational and moral transformation.

4.3.4 Behavioural Changes and Choices

“A sound human and spiritual education should help young people deepen their formation, develop all the dimensions of their being and take their place in society” (John Paul II 1998a, 6). The holistic welfare of pupils has long been central in Church teaching, which envisions education as the integration of the spiritual, moral, intellectual, and social dimensions of life. *DIM* (1929) affirmed that the goal of Christian education is to elevate and perfect all aspects of human existence in accordance with Christ’s example (par. 95). This vision enables students to grasp the mystery of the human person and to realise their vocation as contributors to both society and faith (CCE 1988: 55).

At St Michael School, the behavioural expressions of ethos reveal that the Catholic identity extends beyond belief and ritual into concrete action and ethical decision-making. Students’ reliance on pastoral and professional support, their loyalty to the school, and their commitment to moral growth suggest an internalisation of the Catholic understanding of formation in freedom and responsibility (CCE 1997). Their appreciation for guidance and counselling confirms that pastoral care is viewed not as peripheral but

integral to their formation—echoing the Church’s emphasis on accompaniment as a pathway to discernment, healing, and maturity (CCE 2017).

Students’ willingness to recommend the school and describe it as “welcoming” and “teaching about life” (S10) indicates that they identify strongly with its mission and ethos. This reflects what Grace (2016) calls the moral agency of Catholic schooling, in which students become co-witnesses to the values they have absorbed. Such behaviour illustrates the movement from external instruction to internalised conviction—the transformation described in *GE* (1965), where authentic Christian education seeks not only knowledge but conversion of life.

The quantitative finding that over 91% of respondents believe their time at St Michael School has helped them “become better persons” confirms the tangible moral impact of the ethos. As Pollefeyt and Bouwens (2010) note, Catholic identity must become performative, leading to compassionate and ethical action within pluralistic contexts. Students’ sense of fairness, care, and responsibility reflects this lived witness—what Pope Francis (2013) in *Evangelii Gaudium* calls the formation of “missionary disciples” whose faith is expressed through solidarity and service to the common good.

Moreover, the high valuation of pastoral support demonstrates the school’s embodiment of *cura personalis*—care for the whole person—long central to Catholic pedagogy (Cook and Simonds 2011). By recognising emotional and spiritual care as part of their education, students reveal an understanding of learning as an integrative process that shapes intellect, conscience, and compassion. Their responses mirror Catholic teaching, which identifies the goal of Catholic education as enabling students to live responsibly and generously within the community.

In conclusion, students’ behavioural expressions—responsibility, advocacy, openness to support, and gratitude—demonstrate that St Michael’s cultivates a living ethos that shapes both conscience and conduct. This ethos is not doctrinally abstract but embodied in daily choices and relationships, where moral integrity and Christian service are learned through practice.

Taken together, the findings on personal faith, moral formation, belonging, and behaviour confirm that St Michael School embodies the Church’s vision of integral

human formation—educating the head, heart, and hands in harmony. The school’s ethos thus operates relationally and behaviourally, transforming belief into culture through shared life and witness (CCE 2017). However, as the AH noted, sustaining this formative environment requires continuous leadership commitment to teacher formation and modelling of the ethos. The following section, therefore, examines how leadership practices—strategic vision, relational guidance, and role modelling—nurture and strengthen the transmission of Catholic identity within the evolving educational and cultural landscape.

4.4 Leadership and Strategies for Enhancing Ethos Transmission

4.4.1 Leadership Role Modelling and Vision Communication

Catholic schools “are not limited to a vague Christian inspiration or one based on human values” but must make their faith foundation explicit and visible in daily life” (CCE 2013: 17). Their ethos is not a hidden agenda but an openly professed mission, articulated in Church documents and expressed in the school’s culture. This clarity raises an important question: to what extent do families choose such a school for its Catholic ethos, and how effectively is this ethos communicated before and after enrolment? From the QSD, parents’ prior seeking of the school’s ethos was frequently undecided (49.1%), implying that for many families, the ethos may be more powerfully encountered, once enrolled, than deliberately sought at admission, which is usually sought for after hearing about the school, “by word of mouth”, as the AH insisted. The findings suggest that leadership plays a decisive role in this process. The administration must not only present the ethos formally—through websites or prospectuses—but also embody and communicate it personally during interactions with prospective families. Likewise, the ongoing formation of students and staff requires regular engagement with the school’s values beyond initial induction, echoing Shafran’s (1994) observation that formation in Catholic education must be continual rather than introductory.

The data reveal a generally positive perception of leadership and staff at St Michael School, where Catholic identity is both clearly articulated and relationally enacted. Students affirmed that teachers serve as faith models and that leaders are approachable, suggesting that ethos is not confined to policy but lived through daily witness. This aligns with Church teachings, which stress that a Catholic school's vitality depends more on witness than on formal statements (CCE 1997). Moreover, Catholic educators are called to be "credible witnesses" whose lives embody the Gospel they teach (CCE 2014). Sixty-one percent of students viewed staff as models of faith—evidence of meaningful progress—though the 23.5% undecided highlight the need for greater consistency in visible expressions of faith among teachers.

Students' reflections further confirm the formative impact of role modelling, underscoring what Groome (2019) terms shared Christian praxis, where educators form students not merely through teaching but through lived example. Similarly, the AH observed that ethos is communicated "through the regular school day, especially through these two virtues [humility and meekness]," illustrating how faith becomes habitual and embodied rather than programmatic. This reflects the "hidden curriculum" (Jackson 1968; Noddings 2013), whereby educators' attitudes and relationships convey values more powerfully than formal instruction.

Leadership accessibility also emerged as a key factor in ethos transmission. Spiteri Axiak (2020) emphasises that leadership is not a position, but a gift shared with others, and students' perceptions reinforce this: two-thirds viewed administrators as approachable. However, a notable gap appeared between assistant heads and the headmaster. Catholic leadership, grounded in servant leadership (Greenleaf 1977; Duignan 2006), depends on relational visibility. As Heft (2020) notes, when leaders seem distant, moral and spiritual credibility can fragment, since presence itself communicates authenticity. The stronger ratings for assistant heads likely reflect their closer pastoral engagement—what Cook and Simonds (2011) call the charism of relational leadership. Enhancing the headmaster's visibility and faith presence could therefore strengthen unity between the administrative and pastoral dimensions of the school's mission.

The school's founding charism also anchors its Catholic identity. Students' recognition of the SDC values and their admiration for educators who embody its virtues indicate that

the school sustains a coherent, spiritually grounded ethos that remains accessible in a pluralistic context. Several students noted they chose the school for its “good values and dedicated educators,” showing that ethos communication functions as both testimony and invitation. This aligns with *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), which frames Catholic education as evangelisation through joyful witness rather than proselytism.

Nonetheless, the variation in students’ perceptions—particularly among those undecided about staff faith-modelling—points to the need for ongoing formation of educators. While new staff participate in induction sessions on the school ethos, sustaining a unified witness requires structured opportunities for spiritual renewal for all teachers, especially non-SDC members. The CCE (2007) highlights continuing professional and spiritual formation as essential to the mission of Catholic education.

In summary, leadership and staff at St Michael School embody the Catholic ethos through relational engagement, moral example, and fidelity to the school’s charism. Nevertheless, ethos transmission depends not only on structure but on the spiritual depth and visible witness of those who lead. Strengthening ongoing formation, reflective practice, and leader accessibility will ensure that the school’s mission remains both credible and incarnate, a “witness of life that awakens faith in others” (CCE 1988).

4.4.2 Enhancing Teacher Training and Support

The data reaffirm the central role of teachers as the primary agents of ethos transmission in Catholic schooling. At St Michael School, educators’ personal witness, relationships, and faith-infused pedagogy form the living medium through which the Catholic ethos is most tangibly experienced. Most students affirmed that staff embody Gospel virtues such as humility and meekness—core aspects of the school’s charism. This aligns with the Church’s teaching that “more than by their words, teachers influence others by their behaviour” (SCCE 1977: 43). S11’s reflection that educators’ meekness is visible “in the way they correct us as students” exemplifies how moral authority and compassion converge in Christian pedagogy. Such relational expressions of virtue illustrate what Groome (2019) describes as education as spiritual accompaniment, where teaching becomes a ministry of presence grounded in love and respect.

Teachers' relational engagement also emerged as a defining feature of ethos communication. Over 80% of students reported that teachers care for them, participate with them in activities, and take an interest in knowing them personally. These findings resonate with Noddings' (2013) ethic of care framework, which positions attentiveness and relationality as the moral foundation of authentic education. In a Catholic context, such care embodies *caritas*—love expressed through service—which Church teaching identifies as the heart of the Catholic educational project. The emphasis on approachability and accompaniment reflects *cura personalis*, the Ignatian principle of caring for the whole person, reaffirmed as central to the educator's vocation (CCE 2007). Teachers also play a mediating role in students' faith experience. Nearly seven in ten students agreed that teachers help them "experience Jesus as a friend," indicating that educators' pastoral engagement constitutes a form of lived theology—a pedagogy of witness. As the CCE (2013) notes, such a witness allows teachers to become "signs of hope and faith" through everyday interactions. The AH confirmed this dynamic, noting that "over time, most educators conform to the values of the school ethos," showing how immersion in a faith-rich environment transforms both staff and students. Pope Leo XIV, addressing teachers from Great Britain, captured this vocation eloquently: students "look up to you as models—in life and in faith... they will look to you particularly in how you teach and how you live" (Address to Teachers, 5 July 2025).

However, the findings also reveal disparities that warrant attention. While overall teacher approachability was high, Learning Support Educators (LSEs) scored notably lower, suggesting uneven relational and spiritual engagement across roles. It is important to note that, unlike class teachers, LSEs work with a limited number of students requiring targeted support, which may explain part of this discrepancy. Nonetheless, the results highlight an institutional challenge: ensuring that all staff—irrespective of position or religious affiliation—receive meaningful formation in the school's ethos. Such professional and spiritual formation is not optional but vital to preserving the school's identity and coherence between faith and practice (CCE 2007: 25). Emphasising that ethos formation is an ongoing process of renewal rather than a completed task.

This formation imperative takes on particular significance within the current demographic context of the school. In the scholastic year 2024–25, St Michael School

enrolled 360 boys aged 11–16, supported by 96 staff members—almost triple the 33 staff members recorded in 1999–2000. The growth mirrors broader educational developments: Learning Support Educators have increased from one to twenty-seven, and non-teaching staff from six to fifteen. While the proportion of SDC members among staff has declined, all leadership positions remain occupied by SDC members, ensuring continuity of the school’s ethos and mission. As shown in Table 4.1, women now comprise nearly 60% of staff, particularly among LSEs. Active SDC members represent 18% of employees, with former members accounting for another 8%. Together, they form over a quarter of the workforce who have internalised the Society’s formative spirituality. The continuing presence of SDC leaders thus anchors the school’s ethos, while the growing lay and female presence enriches its expression in a contemporary and inclusive educational setting.

Table 4.1 The composition of the school staff by gender, SDC association and role

| Gender | | | SDC | | | Total |
|--------|-------|----------------|------------|------------|---------------|-------|
| | | | Non-member | SDC member | Ex-SDC member | |
| Female | Role | Teacher | 25 | | | 25 |
| | | LSE | 20 | | | 20 |
| | | Non-Teaching | 11 | | | 11 |
| | Total | | 56 | | | 56 |
| Male | Role | Administration | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| | | Teacher | 10 | 9 | 6 | 25 |
| | | LSE | 2 | 3 | 2 | 7 |
| | | Non-Teaching | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 |
| Total | | 13 | 17 | 10 | 40 | |
| Total | Role | Administration | 0 | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| | | Teacher | 35 | 9 | 6 | 50 |
| | | LSE | 22 | 3 | 2 | 27 |
| | | Non-Teaching | 12 | 1 | 2 | 15 |
| Total | | 69 | 17 | 10 | 96 | |

From a broader perspective, this emphasis on teacher formation reflects the Church’s understanding of education as a vocation rather than a profession. For lay educators especially, formation must be both theological and pastoral—enabling them to translate Gospel values into credible, culturally relevant pedagogy (Pollefeyt and Bouwens 2010). Targeted support for LSEs and non-SDC staff is therefore not merely a professional

development need but a theological necessity: the call for all who teach to participate fully in the communitarian mission of Catholic education.

In conclusion, the findings affirm that teachers at St Michael School serve as authentic witnesses of the Catholic ethos through humility, relational care, and faith-informed pedagogy. Their engagement embodies “an atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity” (CCE 1988). However, the observed variations in approachability and formation underscore that ethos transmission depends on continued investment in the spiritual and professional growth of educators. Teacher formation must therefore be understood as the sustained cultivation of a shared vocation—one that enables educators to embody the school’s charism not only in teaching but in being.

The discussion of leadership and teacher formation thus underscores that the vitality of St Michael School’s Catholic ethos rests not on programmes or structures but on people—on the witness, vision, and renewal of those who lead and teach. Leadership provides direction and coherence; teachers give life to that vision through daily presence, compassion, and example. Together, they animate a culture where faith and learning intertwine as mutually reinforcing dimensions of the same mission. The next and final chapter synthesises the insights from all three research questions, drawing overarching conclusions about the vitality of ethos transmission at St Michael School and offering recommendations for future practice, formation, and research.

5. Conclusion

This concluding chapter synthesises the main findings and insights that have emerged from the investigation into the transmission and lived experience of the Catholic ethos at St Michael School. Building on the descriptive analysis presented in Chapter 3 and the interpretive discussion in Chapter 4, this chapter draws together the key themes. The study set out to explore three core research questions dealing with how the Catholic ethos is communicated and expressed, how it is internalised and lived by students, and how leadership and staff foster and sustain it within the school community. In integrating these dimensions, the chapter reflects on the coherence between the school's stated mission and its daily enactment, identifying both the strengths that underpin its vibrant faith culture and the areas requiring continued attention. Finally, it offers recommendations for practice, leadership, and further research aimed at deepening the alignment between the school's vision and the formation of a community that continues to embody the Gospel values of humility, service, and love.

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

The findings of this study reveal that St Michael School maintains a coherent and deeply embedded Catholic ethos that permeates its educational, relational, and leadership structures. Across all three research questions, the data consistently indicate that the ethos is not confined to formal declarations or religious instruction but is lived through daily practices, relationships, and the communal atmosphere of the school.

RQ1: Communication and Expression of the Catholic Ethos demonstrated that the school's Catholic identity is visibly and symbolically expressed through its rituals, environment, and curriculum. Religious practices such as daily prayer, liturgical celebrations, and the continued Marian devotion serve as formative experiences that cultivate shared meaning and belonging. The curriculum was found to integrate both academic excellence and moral formation, enabling students to perceive their education as holistic and value-oriented. However, some variation in daily devotional practices—particularly classroom prayer—suggests areas for greater consistency in lived

expression. These findings affirm that the ethos is communicated not only through religious symbols and instruction but through what scholars have termed the hidden curriculum—the norms, relationships, and daily interactions that implicitly convey the school’s values (Jackson 1968; Noddings 2013).

RQ2: Impact and Internalisation of the Catholic Ethos on Students revealed that the school’s ethos exerts a measurable influence on students’ personal faith development, moral and ethical growth, and sense of belonging. Students reported that their experience at St Michael’s helped them grow in faith, responsibility, and character, with virtues such as respect, kindness, and honesty most frequently identified as learned values. The school was also perceived as a caring and inclusive community where students feel known, supported, and loved—reflecting the Church’s vision of education as a community of faith and charity. Importantly, the findings suggest that ethos internalisation occurs both cognitively and affectively: through structured formation activities such as live-ins and voluntary service, but also through the relational influence of teachers and peers.

RQ3: Leadership and Strategies for Enhancing Ethos Transmission highlighted the pivotal role of leadership and teacher formation in sustaining the Catholic identity of the school. Administrators and teachers were generally viewed as approachable and as credible models of the school’s values, with the Assistant Heads in particular embodying relational leadership that resonates with students. Teachers’ care, humility, and willingness to accompany students were central to the lived experience of ethos, underscoring their role as “credible witnesses” of the Gospel (CCE 2014). Nonetheless, variations in the approachability of some staff—especially among Learning Support Educators—and the visibility of the headmaster’s leadership point to the need for ongoing professional and spiritual formation to ensure consistency across all levels of the school community.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that the Catholic ethos at St Michael School is both expressed and embodied: communicated through ritual, curriculum, and leadership; internalised through relationships and personal formation; and sustained through the daily witness of educators. Nonetheless, they also reveal that ethos transmission is not static but dynamic—requiring continual reflection, renewal, and

collaboration among all members of the school community to ensure its vitality in an evolving cultural context.

5.2 Implications and Recommendations

The findings of this study carry several implications for practice, leadership, and future development at St Michael School, as well as for Catholic education more broadly. They affirm that the vitality of a school's Catholic ethos depends not only on the clarity of its mission but on the authenticity with which that mission is embodied and experienced in daily life. Accordingly, the following recommendations aim to strengthen the coherence between vision, formation, and practice.

5.2.1 Strengthening Faith Integration Across Curriculum and Daily Practice

Although students recognised explicit expressions of the Catholic ethos in rituals, celebrations, and the curriculum, variability in daily devotional practices—particularly in classroom prayer—suggests the need for renewed focus on integrating faith consistently across all subject areas. Faith formation should not be confined to religion lessons or assemblies but permeate the entire curriculum through what Groome (2019) describes as life-to-faith and faith-to-life pedagogy. The introduction of short reflective practices, ethical discussions tied to lesson content, or class-led prayers can make this integration more experiential and participatory. Moreover, ongoing evaluation mechanisms, such as reflective staff meetings or student feedback on faith experiences, could help ensure coherence between the school's stated values and classroom realities.

5.2.2 Enhancing Professional and Spiritual Formation for All Educators

Teacher formation emerged as both a strength and an ongoing need. The evidence indicates that educators embody the school's values of humility, care, and responsibility. However, differences in approachability and ethos engagement—particularly among

Learning Support Educators—suggest that formation must be systematic, inclusive, and continuous. CCE (2014) emphasises that formation is not merely professional development but a process of spiritual accompaniment enabling teachers to become “credible witnesses” of faith. It is therefore recommended that St Michael School expand its formation initiatives to include all staff, regardless of their religious background or role, by offering structured sessions on the school’s charism, greater immersion into the SDC spirituality, opportunities for reflection, and mentorship led by senior staff or other MUSEUM members. All this needs to be included in the school calendar and throughout the school year. Embedding such formation within professional appraisal and induction processes could enhance its sustainability and impact.

5.2.3 Fostering Leadership Visibility and Shared Vision

While students perceive the leadership team—particularly Assistant Heads—as approachable and supportive, the data suggest that the headmaster’s relational visibility could be further strengthened. Visible, participatory leadership reinforces ethos continuity and enhances students’ sense of belonging. Pope Francis (2015) reminds priests to be shepherds living with “the smell of the sheep,” such that Catholic leadership guides not from above but through proximity, humility and example. Practically, this could involve more regular student-leadership dialogue sessions, informal presence in communal events, and a more precise articulation of the school’s mission through both formal addresses and daily interactions. In parallel, leadership formation programs that emphasise spiritual leadership and servant-leadership principles (Greenleaf 2002; Sergiovanni 2015) can help cultivate a unified, mission-oriented leadership culture.

5.2.4 Promoting Reflective Ethos Evaluation and Student Voice

Students’ capacity to articulate the values they have internalised—respect, kindness, humility, and responsibility—demonstrates a high level of awareness of the school’s moral vision. This strength can be deepened through formal mechanisms that encourage students to reflect on and co-own the ethos. Establishing student-led ethos committees, periodic reflective surveys, or “ethos dialogues” where students and staff jointly discuss

how the school's values are lived, could promote a more participatory ethos culture. This approach reflects the Church's call for dialogical education and aligns with contemporary pedagogical theories that view ethos as a co-constructed moral ecology (Arthur, Kristjánsson, and Thomas 2016).

5.2.5 Sustaining Ethos Transmission Through Community and Partnership

Finally, the findings underscore the school's strength as a community of belonging. However, sustaining this environment requires collaboration with families and ex-students. Parents' ambivalence regarding the school's ethos at enrolment suggests the importance of intentional home-school partnerships that communicate and reinforce shared values. Family formation sessions, faith-based service projects, and ex-students mentorship programs could extend the influence of the school's ethos beyond its physical boundaries. Church teachings affirm that the vitality of Catholic education depends on the participation of all who share responsibility for its mission.

5.3 Summary of Implications

Collectively, these recommendations point to a continuous cycle of reflection, formation, and renewal. Ethos transmission at St Michael School is already strong, but its long-term vitality depends on intentional formation of educators, sustained visibility of leadership, and authentic integration of faith into all dimensions of school life. The school's enduring challenge, as articulated by the AH, remains "the perennial task" of doing more—not in quantity but in depth—to ensure that every member of the community becomes a living expression of its Gospel-inspired mission.

5.4 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

While this study provides a comprehensive examination of the communication, internalisation, and leadership of the Catholic ethos at St Michael School, several limitations must be acknowledged. These limitations are not weaknesses of design but

inherent features of a qualitative–quantitative mixed-methods inquiry conducted within a single institutional and cultural context. Recognising them helps to frame the scope of interpretation and identify avenues for future research.

5.4.1 Contextual and Generalisability Limitations

The study’s findings are rooted in the unique history, culture, and charism of St Michael School, which operates within the particular ecclesial tradition of the SDC. Consequently, while the insights may resonate with other Catholic or faith-based schools, generalisability is naturally limited. Further comparative research across multiple local Catholic institutions—especially those operating under different charisms or within diverse cultural settings—would enrich understanding of how ethos transmission manifests in varied educational and societal contexts. Cross-national studies could also illuminate how cultural pluralism shapes the recontextualization of Catholic identity in schools, as discussed by Pollefeyt and Bouwens (2010).

5.4.2 Data Source and Methodological Constraints

The study relied primarily on student perceptions obtained through surveys, a focus group, and an interview with an Assistant Head. While these perspectives are vital in capturing lived experience, they do not encompass the full range of stakeholders, particularly teachers, parents, and ex-students. Their voices could provide deeper insight into how ethos transmission occurs across generational and professional lines. Future studies might adopt a more participatory or ethnographic approach—such as classroom observations, teacher interviews, or longitudinal tracking of ex-students—to explore how values are sustained over time and through different life stages.

5.4.3 Quantitative Variability and Depth of Qualitative Insight

Although the survey provided valuable quantitative data on student attitudes and perceptions, the breadth of items occasionally limited the depth of qualitative interpretation. For example, while students agreed with statements on faith and moral

formation, the nuances of how these experiences are internalised require further exploration. Follow-up studies using narrative or phenomenological methods could uncover how personal stories, experiences of grace, or moral dilemmas shape students' ethical and spiritual growth. Integrating such approaches would allow future research to move beyond measurement toward a richer understanding of the inner dynamics of faith development (Fowler 1981).

5.4.4 The Challenge of Measuring Ethos

As scholars such as Justice (2016) and McLaughlin (2005) have argued, ethos resists easy quantification because it operates as both a culture and a grace—a dynamic interplay of belief, practice, and relationship. This study approached ethos through measurable indicators (e.g., prayer, fairness, community belonging), but these can only approximate the lived, spiritual reality of faith-based education. Future research might develop more holistic frameworks or mixed-method instruments to assess not only observable outcomes but also dispositions, affective responses, and experiences of transcendence within the educational environment.

5.5 Concluding Reflection

Despite these limitations, the study offers meaningful insights into the lived experience of Catholic education within a contemporary Maltese context. It demonstrates that ethos, when authentically embodied and consistently nurtured, remains a powerful formative force that unites intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth. The evidence suggests that the ongoing vitality of Catholic schools depends not merely on doctrinal fidelity but on relational witness—the capacity of leaders, teachers, and communities to incarnate Gospel values in ways that are credible, compassionate, and transformative. As Pope Francis (2019) reminds educators, “We cannot form future generations without offering them hope, without offering them a path that leads to meaning.” In this sense, the study reaffirms the mission of Catholic education as not only an academic enterprise but a shared pilgrimage of faith, service, and human flourishing.

This study set out to explore how the Catholic ethos at St Michael School is communicated, internalised, and sustained through leadership and practice. The evidence demonstrates that ethos is not a static declaration but a living reality—embodied in relationships, rituals, and the ordinary rhythms of school life. Within a pluralistic and rapidly changing cultural landscape, St Michael’s continues to serve as a model of how faith, learning, and community can coexist in dialogue. Its story illustrates that the heart of Catholic education lies not only in transmitting knowledge but in forming persons whose lives reflect the Gospel. By nurturing both intellect and spirit, structure and grace, the school reaffirms the Church’s vision of education as a work of human and divine collaboration. In doing so, it contributes to the ongoing renewal of Catholic schooling as a community of faith, hope, and transformative love.

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Appendix 1

School Ethos

St Michael School strives to welcome its students with the same healing and teaching attitude that Jesus showed towards all those who befriended him. Thus, Christ the Teacher is our model on whom we cast our behaviour and all our activities.

Inspired by the call received by St George Preca, St Michael School lives a particular spirituality where the virtues of humility and meekness are the prevalent attitudes that guide us. At St Michael, we work through our daily routine with the knowledge that we are constantly nourished by the presence of God and strengthened by the protection of St Michael the Archangel.

To provide a holistic education, we endeavour to form an educational environment which encourages students to develop new talent and obtain the necessary knowledge that empowers them to live up to their potential.

Mission Statement

St Michael School is a Catholic Secondary School run by the Society of Christian Doctrine, M.U.S.E.U.M. The school caters for boys between the ages of 11 and 16.

Our community continuously strives for a better life inspired by the teachings of the Gospels and other human values. Together, we assert that every individual is unique and that his dignity is to be fully respected. Therefore, we do our utmost to instil in every student a vision of hope based on our faith in Jesus Christ.

We work hard to prepare each student to take on the challenges of active and responsible participation in society, its varied cultures, and its environmental heritage.

Appendix 2

Student Questionnaire

Note: The questionnaire was adapted from Steven Shafran's (1994) doctoral dissertation, The Educational Method of Saint John Bosco as School Culture in the Salesian High Schools in the United States (University of San Francisco). Items were modified and supplemented to align with the Maltese educational context and the specific focus on the transmission of Catholic school ethos.

01. In which secondary school year are you in this year?

- Year 7
- Year 8
- Year 9
- Year 10
- Year 11

02. What is your religious affiliation?

- Practicing Catholic
- Non-Practicing Catholic
- Christian denomination
- Other

03. Why did you choose St. Michael School for your secondary schooling?

04. School Ethos

This question is about how things are done at St. Michael School through its daily rituals and spread throughout every aspect of the school experience, such as values, attitudes, etc.

How much do the following statements reflect your experience at St. Michael School?

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a) Before choosing the school, my parents sought to see the ethos of St. Michael School. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| b) I do not feel welcomed at this school. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| c) As stated in the school ethos, Jesus Christ as Teacher is the model on whom we model our behaviour. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| d) At this school, the staff strive to live the virtue of humility. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| e) At this school, the staff strive to live the virtue of meekness (gentleness). | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| f) I do not feel the presence of God throughout the school day. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| g) I feel the importance of praying for the protection of St. Michael the Archangel in the morning assembly. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| h) I feel the school does not encourage me to develop new talents. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| i) I feel the school helps me to reach my potential. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

05. Catholic Religiosity

This question asks about your experience of the Catholic religion at St. Michael School.

How much do the following statements reflect your experience at St. Michael School?

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a) This school has plenty of opportunities to go to mass. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| b) Most lessons begin with prayer. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| c) The religion lessons do not help me reflect on my life. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| d) Opportunities for confession are available throughout the year. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| e) St George Preca is important in the life of this school. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| f) There are staff members who are model adults for me in my faith. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| g) I am encouraged to be honest at this school. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| h) The school does not inspire me to be kind to others. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| i) In this school, we experience Jesus as a friend through our teachers. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| j) Being at this school has not helped me become a better Catholic. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| k) My time at school so far has helped me understand better the MUSEUM values. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| l) Attending a Catholic school helps my faith greatly. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| m) It is difficult to tell that this is a Catholic school. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| n) From school, I know what it means to be a good Catholic. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| o) In this school, you are only respected if you are a Catholic. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| p) Teachers never speak about God and religion. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

06. School Services

This section has to do with the services offered to you by the school to improve your experience at school. For the following statements, you are asked to rate how important each statement is to you.

In your opinion, how important is each of the following school services?

| | Not Important (0) | Slightly Important (1) | Moderately Important (2) | Important (3) | Very Important (4) |
|--|-----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a) Religious services (Mass, celebrations, Lenten reflection, etc.) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| b) School activities (Marathon, clubs, leagues, sports day, etc.) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| c) The Live-Ins | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| d) Family activities (parents' days, meetings, social gatherings, etc.) | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| e) Voluntary activities during the Christmas period. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| f) Caring school staff | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| g) Presence of MUSEUM members. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| h) Presence of non-MUSEUM members. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| i) The service given by the Chaplain. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| j) The service offered by the Guidance Teachers. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| k) The service of professionals at the school (Counsellor, psychologist, social worker, INCO, etc.). | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| l) St. Michael School is a Catholic Church School. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| m) St. Michael School is run by the Society of Christian Doctrine (MUSEUM). | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

07. School Life

This question asks about your experience in general of your school experience.

How much do the following statements reflect your experience at St. Michael School?

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a) I feel like I am part of the family at this school. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | I am | <input type="radio"/> |
| b) In this school, I'm encouraged to join an activity. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| c) Academic success is a priority at this school. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| d) Teachers participate with us in activities. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| e) I do not feel loved in this school. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| f) I would encourage others to come to this school. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| g) Fair play is encouraged. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| h) There is always someone to help if I have a problem. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| i) There is a feeling of charity that surrounds our activity. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| j) I do not feel I have the opportunity to grow at this school. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| k) The school regards as highly important the whole wellbeing of students | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| l) I am happy to be a part of this school. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| m) I'm treated fairly. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| n) I can find at least one teacher I feel comfortable talking to. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| o) Teachers care about you. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| p) I feel that teachers want to know you as a person. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

| | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| q) There is nobody whom I admire at this school. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| r) The school head and assistant head are easy to talk to. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

08. Approachability of School Staff

This question has to do with your opinion on how approachable the different staff members of the school are.

How approachable are the following educators in your school?

| | Never (0) | Rarely (1) | Sometimes (2) | Often (3) | Always (4) |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a) Headmaster | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| b) Assistant Head | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| c) School Chaplain | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| d) Guidance Teachers | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| e) School Counsellor | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| f) Year Class Teacher | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| g) In general, Teachers | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| h) In general, Learning Support Staff | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

09. Discipline

This question asks about your experience of the discipline at St. Michael School.

How much do the following statements reflect your experience at St. Michael School?

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a) The rules and regulations are clearly explained. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| b) There is a firm but fair atmosphere at this school. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| c) At this school, when I have been corrected, it is for my benefit. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| d) Teachers mostly prefer to correct students not in front of everyone but privately. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| e) Talking to those in charge of discipline is easy here. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| f) I strive to be the best person I can be. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| g) It is easy to respect the teachers at this school. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| h) Teachers do not show respect towards the students at this school. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| i) The school emphasises the need to be responsible. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

10. Conclusion

You are kindly asked to answer the following questions as sincerely as possible.

10. During the time you have been attending St. Michael School, do you feel that you are becoming a better person?

- Yes
 No

11. Give a reason/s for the answer you gave in the previous question (number 10).

12. Which are the most important values that you feel you are learning from St. Michael School so far?

Appendix 3

SLT Member Interview Questions

1. What are the central values as mentioned in the school ethos that characterise this particular Church school?
2. Where does the inspiration for these values adopted by the school come from?
3. How does the school promote its ethos to prospective students and their families?
4. How does the school leadership communicate the values of its ethos to the new students each year?
5. Which are the main deliberate actions the school leadership takes to communicate and expose the students to the values cherished in the ethos?
6. What other ways, either formally or informally, are the students exposed to these core values?
7. How does the school administration try to continually motivate all staff members to be witnesses of these core values, so they will be in a better position to leave a positive influence on the students?
8. How effective, in your opinion, would you judge the effectiveness of how the students receive and make their own the values proposed by the school ethos?
9. With a history of over 75 years, what are the principal values that old boys relate that they picked up from the school, and so appreciate the education they received from the school with these values?
10. What suggestions could you make on how the students can be better exposed to the school's core values, with the hope of adopting them and living them in their everyday lives?

Post-Survey Focus Group (Questions)

Għanijiet tal-focus group: L-għanijiet nifhem aħjar il-perspettivi tagħkom dwar l-etos, nidentifikaw spazju għal titjib, u l-għbir ta' eżempji jew stejjer speċifiċi.

X'nifhmu b'etos? L-iskola Kattolika hija skola ta' fidi li tesprimi sett ta' valuri fundamentali li jistgħu jiġu deskritti bħala umani, reliġjużi, Insara u Kattoliċi. Dawn il-valuri tal-Evangelju jiddefinixxu l-etos edukattiv. Il-viżjoni edukattiva li toħroġ minn dawn il-valuri tippromwovi id-dinjità, stima tajba u l-iżvilupp sħiħ ta' kull student bħala persuna umana. Din il-viżjoni Kattolika edukattiva hija inklussiva u tirrispetta 'l kulhadd u b'kunfidenza tidjaloga ma' nies bi twemmin differenti.

L-etos tal-iskola tagħna:

L-iskola St Michael tistinka biex tilqa' lill-istudenti tagħha bl-istess attitudni ta' fejqa u ta' tagħlim li wera Ġesù lejn dawk kollha li għamlu ħbieb miegħu. Għalhekk, Kristu l-Għalliem huwa l-mudell tagħna li fuqu nitfgħu l-imġiba tagħna u l-attivitajiet kollha tagħna.

Ispirata mis-sejha li rċieva San Ġorġ Preca, l-Iskola St Michael tgħix spiritwalità partikolari fejn il-virtujiet tal-umiltà u l-umiltà huma l-attitudnijiet prevalenti li jiggwidawna.

F' St Michael ngħixu r-rutina tagħna ta' kuljum bl-għarfien li kontinwament ninsabu msahhin bil-preżenza ta' Alla u bil-ħarsien ta' San Mikiel Arkanglu.

Biex nipprovdu edukazzjoni ħolistika, aħna nistinkaw biex niffurmaw ambjent edukattiv li jħegġeg lill-istudent jiżviluppa talent ġdid u jikseb l-għarfien meħtieġ li jagħtih is-setgħa li jgħix il-potenzjal tiegħu.

L-iskola St Michael hija skola Kattolika

X'inhil-opinjoni personali tiegħek għall-fatt li l-iskola St Michael li fiha tattendi, hija skola Kattolika? Tagħmel differenza għalik? Xi tħoss li huma l-aktar fatturi li jagħmluha skola Kattolika?

Kristu Mgħallem bħala Mudell

Fl-esperjenza tiegħek, tara li Kristu bħala Mgħallem huwa mudell li jinfluwenza xejn il-mod kif l-għalliema u l-istudenti jaġixxu bejniethom fl-Iskola St Michael? Jekk iva, kif? Tista' taqşam eżempji speċifiċi? (kważi 87% qablu li Ġesù hu mudell)

Attitudni ta' Fejġan u Tagħlim

B'liema modi l-Iskola St Michael tistinka biex tirċievi u tappoġġja lill-istudenti b'mod simili għal kif Ġesù wera kura għal sħabu? Dan kif ħalla impatt fuq l-esperjenza tiegħek?

Virtujiet tal-Umiltà u tal-Manswetudni

Fl-esperjenza tiegħek fl-iskola St Michael, kif jidher il-virtù tal-umiltà fil-ħajja tal-iskola? Tista' tiddekrivi sitwazzjonijiet fejn dan il-virtù tal-umiltà kien partikolarment evidenti?

Fl-esperjenza tiegħek ta' kuljum fl-iskola St Michael, kif jidher il-virtù tal-manswetudni fil-ħajja tal-iskola? Tista' tiddekrivi sitwazzjonijiet fejn dan il-virtù tal-manswetudni kien partikolarment evidenti?

Spiritwalità u Rutina ta' Kuljum

L-ispirtwalità tal-iskola, ispirata minn San Ġorġ Preca, kif tinfluwenza l-attivitajiet u l-imġiba tiegħek ta' kuljum? Din l-ispirtwalità tħalli effett fil-fidi personali tiegħek? Għandek xi esperjenzi personali li juru dan?" (iktar minn 85% qablu li SĠP hu importanti fl-iskola)

Mitmugħa mill-Preżenza ta' Alla

Tħossok tesperjenza l-preżenza ta' Alla fl-iskola St Michael? Jekk iva, b'liema modi? Jekk le, għaliex? Dan l-ikel spiritwali kif issostnik fil-ħajja tiegħek ta' kuljum?

Ħarsien ta' San Mikiel Arkanglu

Il-protezzjoni ta' San Mikiel Arkanglu fil-komunità tal-iskola tiegħek xi tfigger għalik? Tista' taqşam kif dan it-twelmin jinfluwenza?

Edukazzjoni Holistika

Kemm taqbel li l-iskola St Michael tipprovdi edukazzjoni ħolistika li tgħinek tiżviluppa talenti godda u tikseb għarfien? Liema attivitajiet jew programmi kienu l-aktar ta' benefiċċju għalik?

Empowering Students

B'liema modi l-iskola tagħtik opportunitajiet biex tilhaq il-potenzjal tiegħek? Hemm esperjenzi partikolari jew sistemi ta' appoġġ li għenuk tikber?

Komunità Skolastika u Appoġġ

Is-sens ta' komunità fl-iskola St Michael kif jirrifletti l-etos Kattoliku tagħha? Tista' taqsam żmien meta ħassejtek appoġġjat b'mod partikolari mill-komunità tal-iskola?

L-Evalwazzjoni tiegħek tal-iskola

Li kieku tiġi mistoqsi minn xi ħadd li jew hu jew il-ġenituri tiegħu qegħdin jaħsbu biex jidhru l-iskola St. Michael, x'tgħidilhom dwar l-iskola fuq l-esperjenza personali tiegħek?

Suġġerimenti għal Titjib

X'aspetti tal-etos Kattoliku tal-iskola St Michael taħseb li jistgħu jittejbu? Għandek xi suġġerimenti speċifiċi dwar kif l-iskola tista' tinkorpora aħjar il-valuri ewlenin tagħha

Tħoss li l-etos tal-iskola St Michael jagħti vizjoni ċara ta' x'inhuma l-valuri l-aktar importanti?

Mill-esperjenza tiegħek, tħoss li dak li hemm miktub fl-etos tal-iskola jaqbel mal-esperjenza personali tiegħek fl-iskola?

Kif taħseb li l-iskola għandha tikkomunika aħjar dan l-etos lill-istudenti tagħha biex ikunu iktar konxji tal-valuri tiegħu?

Appendix 4

Institution Permission Letter

Secretariat for Catholic Education

16, The Mall

Floriana FRN 1472

9th January 2023

Dear Fr Charles Mallia,

I am Mr Christopher Aquilina, a student reading for a Master's degree in Catholic School Leadership at the University of Malta. As part of this course, I will be carrying out research to write a dissertation. My supervisor is Rev Dr Carl-Mario Sultana.

The title of my dissertation is "The Effect of the Catholic School Ethos on Students: A Case Study." This mixed-methods study aims to see how effective the Catholic school is in communicating its ethos to the students, from their point of view. This will enlighten the school leadership on where to put its energy and invest to be more effective in how the school ethos is communicated to the students, with the hope that they become more immersed in and accept the Christian values and attitudes they experience. I would be grateful if you would permit me to conduct this research study in the same school where I presently work: St Michael School, Santa Venera.

Should permission be granted, I would like to conduct an interview, which will be between 30 and 45 minutes, with a member of the SLT to better understand how the school presently communicates its ethos to students. An online questionnaire will be administered to the whole student population, which will not take longer than 20 minutes to fill in. Then, a semi-structured focus group interview with a maximum of ten students will follow (two from each year group) to delve deeper into specific issues arising from the questionnaire. This focus group will take between 45 and 60 minutes.

The interview and focus group will be audio-recorded and focus on how the Catholic school ethos can be understood better and delivered effectively to be better adopted by attending students in a contemporary Catholic school context.

Participation is voluntary, and I will first ask Mr Raymond D'Amato, Head of School, for permission to collect the data from the school. Following this, I will forward the information letters and consent forms through email to the Head of School to be passed on to the prospective participants and also, in the case of the students, to their parents/guardians. Participants can choose to terminate their participation at any time for no specific reason without any negative consequences, and data already collected will be destroyed. Furthermore, all participants will be coded, and no names or remarks will be mentioned that could reveal their identity at any point in the written dissertation. All raw data will be securely stored on an encrypted hard drive to which only I have access, and the data obtained will be solely used to compile my dissertation, after which it will be safely destroyed. In this regard, I abide by the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR) with all the data collected and generated.

I assure you that I will abide by all the ethical guidelines issued by the University Research Ethics Committee of the University of Malta throughout my research.

Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact my supervisor (please see contact details given below) or me.

Thank you for your kind consideration,

Sincerely yours,

Christopher Aquilina

Head of School Permission Letter

St. Michael School,
Cannon Road, St Venera
SVR 9030, Malta.

2nd November 2023

Dear Mr Raymond D'Amato,

I am Mr Christopher Aquilina, a student reading for a Master's degree in Catholic School Leadership at the University of Malta. As part of this course, I will be carrying out research to write a dissertation. My supervisor is Rev Dr Carl-Mario Sultana.

The title of my dissertation is "The Effect of the Catholic School Ethos on Students: A Case Study." For this study, I would like to conduct a case study within your school to see how effective the Catholic school is in communicating its ethos to the students from their point of view. This will enlighten the school leadership on where to put its energy and invest to be fruitful in how the school ethos is communicated to the students. This will hopefully help the students become more immersed in and accept the Christian values and attitudes they experience during their five years at school. I would be grateful if you would permit me to conduct my research study at your school.

Should permission be granted, I would like to conduct an interview, which will be between 30 and 45 minutes, with an SLT member to understand better how the school communicates its ethos to students. An online questionnaire will be administered to the whole student population, subject to parental consent, which will take about 30 minutes to fill in (this can easily be done during free slots of each class when the computer lab is available, without interrupting the school routine in any way). Then, a semi-structured focus group interview with a maximum of five students will follow (one from each year group) to delve deeper into specific issues arising from the questionnaire. This focus group interview will be 45 minutes at

maximum. The interview and focus group will be audio-recorded and focus on how the Catholic school ethos can be delivered effectively to be better adopted by attending students in a contemporary Catholic school context. With your permission, I will email the school clerk with the information letter and the consent form to be forwarded to the prospective participating SLT member and the parents of all students for both the questionnaire and prospective participants for the post-survey focus group.

Participation in the study is voluntary, and participants will suffer no negative consequence should they choose not to participate in this research and data already collected will be destroyed. Furthermore, the participants will be coded, and no names or remarks will be mentioned that could reveal their identity at any point in the written dissertation. All data collected will be kept on an encrypted hard drive on a laptop to which only I have access and which will be password-protected. The data obtained will be solely used to compile my dissertation, after which it will be safely destroyed on submission of my final version of the dissertation. In this regard, I abide by the national legislation and the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 (GDPR) with all the data collected and generated. I will also abide by all the regulations regarding Research Ethics of the University of Malta.

Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact my supervisor (please see contact details given below) or me.

Thank you for your kind consideration,

Sincerely yours,

Christopher Aquilina

Participant's Information Letter

11 October 2023

Information letter

Dear SLT member,

My name is Christopher Aquilina, and I am a student at the University of Malta, presently reading for a Master's Degree in Catholic School Leadership. I am presently conducting a research study for my thesis titled "The Effect of the Catholic School Ethos on Students: A Case Study," which is being supervised by Rev. Prof. Carl-Mario Sultana. This letter is an invitation to participate in this study. Below you will find information about the study and about what your involvement would entail, should you decide to take part.

This study aims to investigate how effective the Catholic School is in transmitting its ethos to students. This will also lead to proposing how the school leadership can more effectively transmit its ethos to the students. Your participation in this study would help contribute to a better understanding of how your school translates its ethos to the day-to-day school life experienced by students and what means are currently employed. Any data collected from this research will be used solely for this study.

Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview that should take between 30 and 45 minutes. The interview will be held at a time and date convenient for you. With your signed consent, the interview will be audio-recorded. However, I would take notes instead if you prefer not to be audio-recorded. I will keep your identity confidential, and your identity will be unrevealed in my write-up using a pseudonym. Data collected will be kept on an encrypted hard drive on a laptop to which only I have access and which will be password-protected. All data collected from the interview will only be accessed by me and, if need be, by my supervisor. In exceptional cases, examiners might also need access to this data for verification purposes.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary; in other words, you are free to accept or refuse to participate, without needing to give a reason. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time, without needing to provide any explanation and without any

negative repercussions for you. Should you choose to withdraw, any data collected from your interview will be erased as long as this is technically possible (for example, before it is pseudonymised or published), unless erasure of data would render impossible or seriously impair achievement of the research objectives, in which case it shall be retained in a pseudonymised form.

If you choose to participate, please note that there are no direct benefits to you, although one hopes that, through this research, some light will be shed on how your school may convey its ethos to the students in a more beneficial manner. Your participation does not entail any known or anticipated risks.

Please note also that, as a participant, you have the right under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation to access, rectify and where applicable ask for the data concerning you to be erased. All data collected will be destroyed once I have submitted my final version of the dissertation.

A copy of this information sheet is being provided for you to keep and for future reference.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor (details below).

Sincerely,

Christopher Aquilina

Participant's Consent Form

The Effect of the Catholic School Ethos on Students.

A case study.

I, the undersigned, give my consent to take part in the study conducted by Christopher Aquilina. This consent form specifies the terms of my participation in this research study.

1. I have been given written and/or verbal information about the purpose of the study; I have had the opportunity to ask questions, and any questions that I had were answered thoroughly and to my satisfaction.
2. I also understand that I am free to accept or refuse to participate, or to stop participation at any time without giving any reason and without any penalty. Should I choose to participate, I may choose to decline to answer any questions asked. Suppose I choose to withdraw from the study. In that case, any data collected from me will be erased as long as this is technically possible (for example, before it is pseudonymised or published), unless erasure of data would render impossible or seriously impair achievement of the research objectives, in which case it shall be retained in a pseudonymised form.
3. I understand that I have been invited to participate in an audio-recorded semi-structured interview in which the researcher will ask several pre-structured questions to analyse the current ways the school transmits its ethos to the students. I am aware that the semi-structured interview will take approximately thirty to forty-five minutes maximum. I understand that the interview is to be conducted in a place and at a time that is convenient for me.
4. I understand that my participation does not entail any known or anticipated risks.
5. I understand that there are no direct benefits to me from participating in this study. I also understand that this research may benefit others by providing valuable reflections on how the school may better communicate its ethos to students, and who, consequently, may benefit more from a Catholic school education.
6. I understand that, under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation, I have the right to access, rectify, and, where applicable, ask for the data concerning me to be erased.
7. I understand that all data collected will be erased on submission of the final copy to the University after all potential amendments have been completed.
8. I have been provided with a copy of the information letter and understand that I will also be given a copy of this consent form.
9. I am aware that, by marking the first tick box below, I am giving my consent for this interview to be audio recorded and converted to text as it has been recorded (transcribed).

MARK ONLY IF AND AS APPLICABLE

- I agree to this interview being audio recorded.

I do not agree to this interview being audio recorded.

10. I am aware that, by marking the first tick-box below, I am asking to review extracts from my interview transcript that the researcher would like to reproduce in research outputs, before these are published. I am also aware that I may ask for changes to be made if I consider these to be necessary.

MARK ONLY IF AND AS APPLICABLE

I would like to review extracts of my interview transcript that the researcher would like to reproduce in research outputs before these are published.

I would not like to review my interview transcript extracts that the researcher would like to reproduce in research outputs before they are published.

11. I am aware that my data will be pseudonymised; i.e., my identity will not be noted on transcripts or notes from my interview, but instead, a code will be assigned. The codes that link my data to my identity will be stored securely and separately from the data, on an encrypted hard drive on the researcher's password-protected computer, and only the researcher, and if needed, the supervisor and examiners, will have access to this information. Any hard-copy materials will be placed in a locked cabinet/drawer. Any material that identifies me as a participant in this study will be stored securely and destroyed once the final submission of the thesis has been made.

I have read and understood the above statements and agree to participate in this study.

Name of participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Christopher Aquilina

Parents' Information Sheet and Link for Opt-In Consent

Research Information Sheet (EN)

The Effect of the Catholic School Ethos on Students

Information about this study

This study forms part of a Master's research being conducted by Christopher Aquilina (christopher.aquilina.99@um.edu.mt) at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Malta. Your son is being cordially invited to take part in this quantitative OPT-IN research, which would require answering several mainly closed-ended questions in an online questionnaire, which should last approximately thirty minutes.

Eligibility

Their participation in this study is totally voluntary. You or they themselves may refuse to take part in the research, and they can stop their participation in this study at any time, without providing any justification. They are being invited to participate in this research since they attend St Michael School.

In case you would like to give your consent, kindly follow the link below to the OPT-IN form attached to this Research Information Sheet and fill it in by **10 November 2023**.

Aim of the research

This study aims to examine the students' experience of the Catholic ethos at St Michael School. With over seventy-five years of providing a Catholic education with a good ethos and clear mission statement, this research aims to understand whether these are still being translated into the everyday life of the school's students today. The benefit from this study will provide insights for the school administration on better transmitting its ethos to students and for the students themselves, who will experience more fully the unique character, through its particular ethos, that St Michael School may offer them.

Source of funding

No third-party organisation is financing any/or part of this research.

Risks

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study. However, if you feel something has gone wrong, or have any questions during or after the survey, please either contact me, the researcher, or my supervisor, Rev. Dr Carl Sultana.

Confidentiality

All answers will be aggregated, and there is no way for the reader of my dissertation to map any of the students' answers to themselves.

Data Protection Information

This study will record all their answers, and all data collected will be kept on an encrypted hard drive on a laptop to which only I have access and which will be password-protected.

The questionnaire is only accessible over HTTPS, and data is encrypted using a Let's Encrypt Authority certificate. The responsibility for this study rests entirely with the researcher listed above.

Once I submit my final version of the dissertation, I shall be deleting all the soft data from all my storage points. Considering I shall be storing sensitive data, I shall be applying military grade algorithms to shred all data. I shall be shredding the consent forms and any hardcopy notes I might have made during the project with a shredder machine. The virtual/physical shredding will take place upon submission of the final version of the dissertation.

If you, as the legal guardian and/or the young participant, wish to terminate the involvement in the research, I shall destroy any data which I have gathered about the child's participation prior to submission. Considering that the questionnaire is anonymous, once the participant has submitted their response, I am afraid there is no way I can trace back the data to the respondent. Under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and implementing national legislation, you have the right to access, rectify, and, where applicable, erase the data concerning your child.

Ethics review

Before any research is allowed to go ahead, it has to be checked by a Research Ethics Committee (REC). This proposed research is no exception. This research promises to abide by the thirteen principles outlined in the Research Code of Practice of the University of Malta. The Faculty REC (FREC) has made sure that this research is fair and meets the high ethical standards of the University of Malta. The approval is dated 19th October 2023. The Secretariat for Catholic Education and the school's headmaster have also approved this research on 22 June 2023 and 31 October, respectively.

Further research

As part of my research, I will be requiring a random group to proceed with qualitative research. I will be randomly selecting a student from each year group to form part of a post-survey focus group for a semi-structured interview. All research will be conducted on school premises. You have the option to allow your child to be contacted for further research by indicating your consent on the OPT-IN form, which can be accessed on the link below. The child will have the option to register their willingness to participate in this follow-up research by filling in the Student Assent Participation form only after obtaining parental consent.

Link to access online OPT-IN consent form

You are kindly invited to follow this link to access the OPT-IN consent form for your son to be able to participate in this research.

[https://forms.gle/DxDC\[REDACTED\]](https://forms.gle/DxDC[REDACTED])

Appeal to the Parent/carer

Please interpret second-person personal pronouns ("you", "we"), possessive determiners ("your", "our") and possessive pronouns ("yours", "ours") in this information sheet, as a conversation with the minor under your care, for whom you will be agreeing to be researched. Any right of voluntary termination which lies with your minor is automatically extended to you and vice versa.

Christopher Aquilina B. Ed. (Hons.), B.A. (Rel. Studies)

Student Participation Assent Form

Student Participation Assent Form

The Effect of the Catholic School Ethos on Students.
A case study.

I, the undersigned, give my assent to take part in the study conducted by Christopher Aquilina. This assent form specifies the terms of my participation in this research study.

1. I have been given written and/or verbal information about the purpose of the study; I have had the opportunity to ask questions, and any questions that I had were answered thoroughly and to my satisfaction.
2. I also understand that I am free to accept or refuse to participate, or to stop participation at any time without giving any reason and without any penalty. Should I choose to participate, I may choose to decline to answer any questions asked. Suppose I choose to withdraw from the study. In that case, any data collected from me will be erased as long as this is technically possible (for example, before it is pseudonymised or published), unless erasure of data would render impossible or seriously impair achievement of the research objectives, in which case it shall be retained in a pseudonymised form.
3. I understand that I have been invited to participate in an audio-recorded semi-structured focus group interview, together with four other students, in which the researcher will ask several questions to delve deeper into certain items from the student questionnaire. I am aware that the focus group interview will not be longer than forty-five minutes. I understand that the interview is to be conducted on the school premises at a convenient time during the school day.
4. I understand that my participation does not entail any known or anticipated risks.
5. I understand that there are no direct benefits to me from participating in this study. I also understand that this research may benefit others by providing valuable reflections on how the school may better communicate its ethos to students, and who, consequently, may benefit more from a Catholic school education.
6. I understand that, under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation, I have the right to access, rectify, and, where applicable, ask for the data concerning me to be erased.
7. I understand that all data collected will be erased on submission of the final copy to the University after all potential amendments have been completed.
8. My parents and I have been provided with a copy of the information letter and understand that I will also be given a copy of this assent form.

9. I am aware that, by marking the first tick box below, I am giving my assent for this interview to be audio recorded and converted to text as it has been recorded (transcribed).

MARK ONLY IF AND AS APPLICABLE

- I agree to this interview being audio recorded.
- I do not agree to this interview being audio recorded.
10. I am aware that focus group discussions should be considered confidential and that I should not disclose details of those participating and/or of the nature of the discussions to others.
11. I am aware that my data will be pseudonymised; i.e., my identity will not be noted on transcripts or notes from my interview, but instead, a code will be assigned. The codes that link my data to my identity will be stored securely and separately from the data, in an encrypted file on the researcher's password-protected computer, and only the researcher, and if needed, the supervisor and examiners, will have access to this information. Any hard-copy materials will be placed in a locked cabinet/drawer. Any material that identifies me as a participant in this study will be stored securely and destroyed once the final submission of the thesis has been made.

I have read and explained the above statements and agree to participate in this study.

Name of participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent/guardian of participant's contact email: _____

Parent/guardian of participant's contact number: _____

Christopher Aquilina

Appendix 5

Results of the Friedman Test on Survey Data

The results of the Friedman test below were used to compare mean rating scores (Likert scale) between several related statements. These mean rating scores range from 0 to 4, where 0 corresponds to 'strongly disagree' or 'not important' or 'never' and 4 corresponds to 'strongly agree' or 'very important' or 'always'.

Section 4: School Ethos

| School Ethos | Mean | Std. Deviation | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|------|----------------|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|
| Prior seeking of the school ethos | 2.17 | 1.013 | 8.5% | 8.9% | 49.1% | 23.9% | 9.6% |
| I don't feel welcomed at school | 0.53 | 0.897 | 66.9% | 19.8% | 8.1% | 3.8% | 1.4% |
| Jesus is our model | 3.23 | 0.902 | 2.7% | 2.0% | 9.2% | 41.6% | 44.4% |
| Staff live virtue of humility | 2.71 | 1.042 | 3.4% | 11.6% | 17.7% | 45.4% | 21.8% |
| Staff live virtue of meekness | 2.74 | 0.954 | 2.0% | 9.9% | 19.5% | 48.8% | 19.8% |
| I don't feel God's presence | 1.11 | 1.205 | 41.6% | 26.6% | 16.7% | 9.6% | 5.5% |
| Important to pray to St Michael | 2.89 | 1.161 | 5.5% | 9.9% | 10.9% | 37.9% | 35.8% |
| The school doesn't encourage to develop talents | 0.97 | 1.167 | 46.4% | 28.7% | 10.2% | 10.6% | 4.1% |
| School helps me reach full potential | 3.10 | 1.037 | 3.4% | 6.5% | 9.2% | 38.6% | 42.3% |

$\chi^2(8) = 1036.57, p < 0.001$

Section 5: Catholic Religiosity

| Catholic Religiosity | Mean | Std. Deviation | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|------|----------------|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|
| Ample opportunities for Mass | 3.45 | 0.727 | 0.0% | 2.4% | 6.8% | 34.5% | 56.3% |
| Lessons begin with prayer | 1.84 | 1.240 | 12.3% | 39.9% | 7.8% | 31.1% | 8.9% |
| Religion lessons don't help me in life | 0.94 | 1.107 | 45.1% | 30.7% | 13.3% | 6.8% | 4.1% |
| Confession year round | 3.04 | 0.841 | 0.7% | 5.5% | 12.6% | 51.2% | 30.0% |
| St George Preca is important at school | 3.20 | 0.925 | 1.7% | 4.4% | 10.9% | 37.5% | 45.5% |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|------|-------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| Staff as faith models at school | 2.58 | 1.094 | 6.5 % | 8.9 % | 23.5 % | 42.0 % | 19.1 % |
| Encouraged to be honest | 3.16 | 0.879 | 2.0 % | 3.8 % | 8.2 % | 48.1 % | 37.9 % |
| School doesn't Inspire to be kind | 0.75 | 1.086 | 54.6% | 30.4% | 4.4% | 6.1% | 4.5% |
| Experience Jesus as friend through teachers | 2.65 | 1.181 | 7.8% | 10.6% | 14.7% | 43.0% | 23.9% |
| School did not help me to be better Catholic | 1.02 | 1.260 | 48.1% | 24.9% | 10.6% | 9.6% | 6.8% |
| Understand better MUSEUM values | 2.87 | 1.018 | 3.1% | 8.2% | 15.7% | 44.4% | 28.7% |
| School helps my faith | 2.85 | 1.078 | 4.4% | 9.2% | 12.3% | 45.1% | 29.0% |
| School difficult to be identified as Catholic | 0.70 | 1.085 | 61.8% | 20.1% | 8.2% | 6.5% | 3.4% |
| From school I've learnt to be a good Catholic | 3.45 | 0.727 | 3.4% | 6.1% | 8.2% | 46.5% | 35.8% |
| Respected only if you're Catholic | 1.84 | 1.240 | 60.1% | 15.4% | 12.5% | 6.5% | 5.5% |
| Teachers never speak about God + religion | 0.94 | 1.107 | 61.8% | 20.1% | 8.2% | 6.5% | 3.4% |

$\chi^2(15) = 2086.56, p < 0.001$

Section 6: School Services

| School Services | Mean | Std. Deviation | Not Important | Slightly Important | Moderately Important | Important | Very Important |
|---------------------------------|------|----------------|---------------|--------------------|----------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Religious services | 3.02 | 1.085 | 3.4% | 7.8% | 13.7% | 33.4% | 41.7% |
| School activities | 3.29 | 0.945 | 2.0% | 3.8% | 10.6% | 30.0% | 53.6% |
| Live-ins | 3.45 | 0.861 | 0.7% | 3.8% | 9.2% | 22.5% | 63.8% |
| Family activities | 2.97 | 1.155 | 4.4% | 8.9% | 14.7% | 29.0% | 43.0% |
| Christmas voluntary activities | 2.89 | 1.049 | 2.7% | 8.2% | 20.1% | 35.5% | 33.5% |
| Caring school staff | 3.39 | 0.939 | 2.4% | 2.7% | 9.6% | 24.2% | 61.1% |
| Presence of MUSEUM members | 2.77 | 1.132 | 5.8% | 6.5% | 23.9% | 32.8% | 31.0% |
| Presence of non-MUSEUM members | 2.20 | 1.183 | 9.9% | 16.0% | 34.5% | 23.5% | 16.1% |
| Chaplain service | 3.01 | 1.208 | 4.8% | 10.6% | 11.9% | 24.6% | 48.1% |
| Guidance teachers service | 3.40 | 0.892 | 1.0% | 4.4% | 8.2% | 25.9% | 60.5% |
| Professionals service | 3.00 | 1.112 | 3.1% | 8.2% | 18.4% | 25.9% | 44.4% |
| St Michael is a Catholic school | 3.28 | 1.009 | 2.4% | 5.1% | 10.9% | 25.3% | 56.3% |
| St Michael's run by SDC | 3.01 | 1.115 | 4.1% | 6.1% | 18.4% | 27.4% | 44.0% |

$\chi^2(12) = 437.64, p < 0.001$

Section 7: School Life

| School Life | Mean | Std. Deviation | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|------|----------------|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|
| I feel I'm part of a family | 2.89 | 1.136 | 6.5% | 6.8% | 10.9% | 42.7% | 33.1% |
| I'm encouraged to join an activity | 3.12 | 0.961 | 2.0% | 6.1% | 9.9% | 41.3% | 40.7% |
| Academic success is a priority | 2.94 | 1.037 | 2.7% | 8.9% | 14.0% | 41.0% | 33.4% |
| Teachers participate with students in activities | 3.16 | 0.914 | 2.0% | 4.4% | 9.2% | 43.7% | 40.7% |
| I don't feel loved at school | 0.88 | 1.139 | 51.2% | 24.9% | 13.3% | 5.8% | 4.8% |
| I would encourage others to enrol at SMS | 3.15 | 0.997 | 3.8% | 3.1% | 11.3% | 37.8% | 44.0% |
| Fair play is encouraged | 2.99 | 1.045 | 5.1% | 3.4% | 14.0% | 42.3% | 35.2% |
| I can always find someone to talk to for problems | 3.23 | 0.915 | 1.7% | 4.1% | 10.2% | 37.2% | 46.8% |
| Feeling of charity at school | 2.96 | 0.994 | 2.4% | 7.2% | 15.4% | 42.0% | 33.0% |
| I feel I cannot grow at this school | 0.92 | 1.234 | 52.2% | 24.2% | 8.9% | 8.2% | 6.5% |
| High importance is given to whole wellbeing | 3.00 | 1.022 | 3.4% | 4.1% | 19.5% | 35.5% | 37.5% |
| I'm happy being part of the school | 3.29 | 1.005 | 3.1% | 4.1% | 9.2% | 27.6% | 56.0% |
| I'm treated fairly at school | 2.85 | 1.164 | 5.8% | 8.5% | 15.7% | 34.8% | 35.2% |
| At least one teacher I feel comfortable to talk with | 3.39 | 0.972 | 2.7% | 3.4% | 8.5% | 22.9% | 62.5% |
| Teachers care about you | 3.13 | 0.927 | 2.0% | 3.8% | 13.7% | 40.3% | 40.2% |
| Teachers want to know me as a person | 2.83 | 1.054 | 3.1% | 8.9% | 20.5% | 37.5% | 30.0% |
| Difficult to name a person I admire | 1.15 | 1.228 | 39.2% | 29.7% | 15.0% | 9.2% | 6.9% |
| Administrators are easy to talk to | 2.77 | 1.192 | 7.2% | 7.8% | 18.1% | 34.1% | 32.8% |

$\chi^2(17) = 1460.14, p < 0.001$

Section 8: Approachability of School Staff

| Approachability of School Staff | Mean | Std. Deviation | Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Always |
|---------------------------------|------|----------------|-------|--------|-----------|-------|--------|
| Headmaster | 2.47 | 1.201 | 5.1% | 17.1% | 30.4% | 20.4% | 27.0% |
| Assistant Head | 2.92 | 1.034 | 1.7% | 9.9% | 17.7% | 36.2% | 34.5% |
| School chaplain | 3.00 | 1.133 | 3.4% | 8.2% | 19.1% | 23.9% | 45.4% |
| Guidance Teacher | 2.70 | 1.339 | 9.6% | 11.9% | 15.4% | 24.9% | 38.2% |
| School counsellor | 1.66 | 1.480 | 32.8% | 17.1% | 18.4% | 15.0% | 16.7% |
| Year Class Teacher | 2.49 | 1.302 | 9.2% | 14.7% | 23.2% | 23.2% | 29.7% |
| Teachers (general) | 2.80 | 1.174 | 4.4% | 10.9% | 21.2% | 27.0% | 36.5% |
| LSEs (general) | 2.17 | 1.359 | 16.0% | 15.7% | 24.6% | 22.5% | 21.2% |

$\chi^2(7) = 330.12, p < 0.001$

Section 9: Discipline

| Approachability of School Staff | Mean | Standard Deviation | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|------|--------------------|-------------------|----------|-----------|-------|----------------|
| Rules and regulations clearly explained | 3.02 | 0.965 | 2.7% | 6.5% | 9.6% | 48.5% | 32.7% |
| Firm but fair atmosphere | 2.94 | 0.986 | 2.7% | 5.5% | 18.8% | 41.0% | 32.0% |
| Correction for my benefit | 3.00 | 1.019 | 3.1% | 6.5% | 13.7% | 40.6% | 36.1% |
| Teachers correct privately not in public | 1.80 | 1.250 | 16.7% | 29.4% | 21.2% | 22.5% | 10.2% |
| Easy to talk to who's in charge of discipline | 2.71 | 0.983 | 3.1% | 7.8% | 24.9% | 43.3% | 20.9% |
| I strive to be the best person | 3.17 | 0.918 | 1.7% | 4.4% | 11.3% | 39.9% | 42.7% |
| It's easy to respect the teachers | 2.82 | 1.110 | 4.1% | 9.9% | 18.1% | 36.2% | 31.7% |
| Teachers don't respect students | 1.11 | 1.279 | 45.4% | 23.5% | 12.6% | 11.9% | 6.6% |
| School instils need to be responsible | 3.27 | 0.892 | 1.4% | 3.4% | 11.3% | 34.5% | 49.4% |

$\chi^2(8) = 701.61, p < 0.001$

Appendix 6

Results of the Kruskal-Wallis Test by Year Group

Findings from the Kruskal-Wallis Test comparing the mean scores and standard deviation of the different year groups for each survey item.

| | Year Group | N | Mean | Std. Dev. | P-value |
|---|------------|----|------|-----------|---------|
| 4. School Ethos | | | | | |
| Prior seeking of school ethos | Year 07 | 60 | 2.37 | 0.901 | 0.086 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 2.31 | 0.941 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.13 | 0.992 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.25 | 1.062 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 1.82 | 1.103 | |
| I don't feel welcomed at school | Year 07 | 60 | 0.50 | 0.911 | 0.241 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 0.36 | 0.753 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 0.52 | 0.931 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 0.75 | 1.139 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 0.56 | 0.742 | |
| Jesus is our model | Year 07 | 60 | 3.48 | 0.854 | <0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.41 | 0.883 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.16 | 0.954 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.96 | 1.010 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 3.08 | 0.737 | |
| Staff live virtue of humility | Year 07 | 60 | 3.03 | 0.956 | 0.008 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 2.79 | 1.082 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.63 | 1.036 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.63 | 1.084 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.44 | 0.992 | |
| Staff live virtue of meekness | Year 07 | 60 | 2.87 | 0.892 | 0.146 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 2.93 | 0.946 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.68 | 0.947 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.60 | 1.067 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.61 | 0.918 | |
| I don't feel God's presence | Year 07 | 60 | 0.78 | 1.121 | <0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 0.75 | 1.150 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 1.02 | 1.184 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 1.69 | 1.274 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 1.41 | 1.086 | |
| Important to pray to St Michael | Year 07 | 60 | 3.23 | 1.031 | <0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.15 | 0.946 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.00 | 1.136 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.60 | 1.250 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.39 | 1.242 | |
| The school doesn't encourage to develop talents | Year 07 | 60 | 0.67 | 1.036 | <0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 0.79 | 1.097 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 0.84 | 1.081 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 1.46 | 1.414 | |

| | | | | | |
|--|---------|----|------|-------|--------|
| | Year 11 | 61 | 1.21 | 1.097 | |
| School helps me reach full potential | Year 07 | 60 | 3.40 | 0.764 | 0.002 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.36 | 0.932 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.92 | 1.112 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.83 | 1.277 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.93 | 0.981 | |
| 5. Catholic Religiosity | | | | | |
| Ample opportunities for Mass | Year 07 | 60 | 3.42 | 0.671 | 0.284 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.54 | 0.721 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.35 | 0.845 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 3.35 | 0.729 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 3.56 | 0.646 | |
| Lessons begin with prayer | Year 07 | 60 | 2.23 | 1.226 | 0.007 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 1.82 | 1.298 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 1.95 | 1.224 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 1.79 | 1.202 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 1.41 | 1.131 | |
| Religion lessons don't help me in life | Year 07 | 60 | 0.68 | 0.948 | <0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 0.77 | 1.146 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 0.87 | 1.024 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 1.65 | 1.229 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 0.89 | 1.002 | |
| Confession year round | Year 07 | 60 | 3.02 | 0.948 | 0.484 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.07 | 0.910 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.10 | 0.665 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 3.13 | 0.959 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.93 | 0.727 | |
| St George Preca is important at school | Year 07 | 60 | 3.60 | 0.718 | <0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.41 | 0.739 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.35 | 0.765 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.85 | 1.111 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.74 | 0.998 | |
| Staff as faith models at school | Year 07 | 60 | 2.62 | 0.825 | 0.861 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 2.69 | 1.041 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.51 | 1.243 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.65 | 1.194 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.48 | 1.149 | |
| Encouraged to be honest | Year 07 | 60 | 3.33 | .681 | 0.072 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.31 | 0.765 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.16 | 0.919 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.83 | 1.078 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 3.10 | 0.889 | |
| School doesn't Inspire to be kind | Year 07 | 60 | 0.67 | 1.188 | <0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 0.41 | 0.864 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 0.71 | 1.023 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 1.31 | 1.401 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 0.79 | 0.777 | |
| Experience Jesus as friend through trs | Year 07 | 60 | 3.07 | 0.989 | <0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 2.82 | 1.245 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.65 | 1.138 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.27 | 1.300 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.34 | 1.094 | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---------|----|------|-------|--------|
| School did not help me to be better Catholic | Year 07 | 60 | 0.95 | 1.383 | <0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 0.56 | 1.041 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 1.05 | 1.275 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 1.19 | 1.214 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 1.39 | 1.242 | |
| Understand better values MUSEUM | Year 07 | 60 | 3.07 | 0.918 | <0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.05 | 1.071 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.10 | 0.817 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.54 | 1.110 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.54 | 1.042 | |
| School helps my faith | Year 07 | 60 | 3.25 | 0.816 | <0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.08 | 1.100 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.03 | 0.967 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.46 | 1.166 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.34 | 1.063 | |
| School difficult to be identified as Catholic | Year 07 | 60 | 0.75 | 1.202 | 0.031 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 0.51 | 0.906 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 0.49 | 0.965 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 0.92 | 1.217 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 0.87 | 1.103 | |
| From school I've learnt to be a good Catholic | Year 07 | 60 | 3.25 | 1.002 | 0.008 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.21 | 0.951 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.08 | 0.938 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.67 | 1.209 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.97 | 0.836 | |
| Respected only if you're Catholic | Year 07 | 60 | 0.70 | 1.124 | 0.006 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 0.44 | 0.975 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 1.02 | 1.314 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 1.10 | 1.341 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 0.89 | 1.185 | |
| Teachers never speak about God + religion | Year 07 | 60 | 0.90 | 1.037 | 0.006 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 0.89 | 1.066 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 0.90 | 0.995 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 1.35 | 1.280 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 1.33 | 0.926 | |
| 6. School Services | | | | | |
| Religious services | Year 07 | 60 | 3.60 | 0.669 | <0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.21 | 0.985 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.10 | 0.928 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.44 | 1.270 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.64 | 1.170 | |
| School activities | Year 07 | 60 | 3.32 | 0.854 | 0.640 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.30 | 0.901 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.22 | 1.039 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 3.15 | 1.130 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 3.46 | 0.808 | |
| Live-ins | Year 07 | 60 | 3.62 | 0.715 | 0.016 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.57 | 0.805 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.51 | 0.780 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 3.08 | 1.108 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 3.39 | 0.842 | |
| Family activities | Year 07 | 60 | 3.45 | 0.746 | 0.004 |

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------|----|------|-------|--------|
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.08 | 0.971 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.97 | 1.191 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.58 | 1.427 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.70 | 1.229 | |
| Christmas voluntary activities | Year 07 | 60 | 3.22 | 0.804 | 0.006 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.08 | 0.954 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.84 | 1.167 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.58 | 1.217 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.66 | 0.981 | |
| Caring school staff | Year 07 | 60 | 3.52 | 0.792 | 0.410 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.51 | 0.829 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.33 | 1.000 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 3.35 | 1.082 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 3.23 | 0.990 | |
| Presence of MUSEUM members | Year 07 | 60 | 3.02 | 0.892 | <0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.16 | 0.986 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.92 | 1.112 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.44 | 1.236 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.23 | 1.175 | |
| Presence of non-MUSEUM members | Year 07 | 60 | 2.27 | 1.233 | 0.293 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 2.28 | 1.142 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.37 | 1.209 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 1.85 | 1.271 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.15 | 1.046 | |
| Chaplain service | Year 07 | 60 | 3.43 | 0.871 | <0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.23 | 0.956 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.97 | 1.204 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 3.13 | 1.178 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.31 | 1.455 | |
| Guidance teachers service | Year 07 | 60 | 3.55 | 0.832 | 0.400 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.44 | 0.786 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.24 | 1.103 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 3.46 | 0.771 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 3.34 | 0.892 | |
| Professionals service | Year 07 | 60 | 3.17 | 1.011 | 0.027 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.28 | 0.897 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.95 | 1.224 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.98 | 1.139 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.64 | 1.184 | |
| St Michael is a Catholic school | Year 07 | 60 | 3.63 | 0.712 | <0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.38 | 0.986 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.49 | 0.669 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 3.02 | 1.139 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.82 | 1.245 | |
| St Michael's run by SDC | Year 07 | 60 | 3.25 | 0.985 | <0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.30 | 0.989 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.30 | 0.944 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.69 | 1.223 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.44 | 1.177 | |
| 7. School Life | | | | | |
| I feel I'm part of a family | Year 07 | 60 | 3.35 | 0.777 | <0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.03 | 1.169 | |

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|---|---------|----|------|-------|--------|
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.70 | 1.213 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.46 | 1.352 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.84 | 0.969 | |
| I'm encouraged to join an activity | Year 07 | 60 | 3.43 | 0.745 | 0.011 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.07 | 1.063 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.00 | 0.984 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.81 | 1.104 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 3.25 | 0.809 | |
| Academic success is a priority | Year 07 | 60 | 3.22 | 0.904 | 0.016 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.08 | 1.069 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.81 | 0.965 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.63 | 1.214 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.89 | 0.985 | |
| Teachers participate with students in activities | Year 07 | 60 | 3.20 | 0.898 | 0.818 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.20 | 0.910 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.16 | 1.019 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 3.00 | 1.031 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 3.23 | 0.716 | |
| I don't feel loved at school | Year 07 | 60 | .92 | 1.293 | 0.280 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | .80 | 1.181 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | .70 | 0.961 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 1.15 | 1.271 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | .90 | 0.978 | |
| I would encourage others to enrol at SMS | Year 07 | 60 | 3.50 | 0.748 | 0.006 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.18 | 1.008 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.17 | 0.959 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.88 | 1.248 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.98 | 0.940 | |
| Fair play is encouraged | Year 07 | 60 | 3.42 | 0.829 | <0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.16 | 0.800 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.97 | 1.121 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.67 | 1.117 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.67 | 1.151 | |
| I can always find someone to talk to for problems | Year 07 | 60 | 3.35 | 0.799 | 0.351 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.23 | 1.007 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.29 | 0.941 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 3.21 | 0.944 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 3.08 | 0.881 | |
| Feeling of charity at school | Year 07 | 60 | 3.23 | 0.810 | 0.022 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 2.82 | 1.162 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.16 | 0.902 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.77 | 1.115 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.79 | 0.897 | |
| I feel I cannot grow at this school | Year 07 | 60 | .82 | 1.308 | 0.016 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | .70 | 1.145 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | .79 | 1.080 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 1.29 | 1.368 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 1.10 | 1.234 | |
| High importance is given to whole wellbeing | Year 07 | 60 | 3.25 | 0.795 | 0.284 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 2.92 | 1.069 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.06 | 1.030 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.81 | 1.266 | |

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|--|---------|----|------|-------|--------|
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.90 | 0.926 | |
| I'm happy being part of the school | Year 07 | 60 | 3.63 | 0.712 | 0.005 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.36 | 1.065 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.25 | 0.967 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.96 | 1.304 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 3.20 | 0.872 | |
| I'm treated fairly at school | Year 07 | 60 | 3.13 | 1.016 | 0.132 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 2.92 | 1.100 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.87 | 1.157 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.65 | 1.376 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.64 | 1.155 | |
| At least one teacher I feel comfortable to talk with | Year 07 | 60 | 3.47 | 0.892 | 0.542 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.44 | 0.922 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.22 | 1.069 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 3.33 | 1.038 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 3.48 | 0.942 | |
| Teachers care about you | Year 07 | 60 | 3.28 | 0.825 | 0.164 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.28 | 0.897 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.10 | 0.928 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.92 | 1.108 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 3.03 | 0.875 | |
| Teachers want to know me as a person | Year 07 | 60 | 2.97 | 1.008 | 0.303 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 2.93 | 1.047 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.87 | 1.070 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.65 | 1.211 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.67 | 0.944 | |
| Difficult to name a person I admire | Year 07 | 60 | 1.32 | 1.334 | 0.276 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 0.90 | 1.060 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 1.03 | 1.204 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 1.25 | 1.361 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 1.26 | 1.182 | |
| Administrators are easy to talk to | Year 07 | 60 | 3.10 | 1.053 | 0.052 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 2.89 | 1.002 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.41 | 1.421 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.67 | 1.136 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.80 | 1.209 | |
| 8. Approachability of School Staff | | | | | |
| Headmaster | Year 07 | 60 | 3.03 | 1.057 | <0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 2.72 | 1.113 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.06 | 1.176 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.42 | 1.200 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.13 | 1.204 | |
| AH | Year 07 | 60 | 3.23 | 0.927 | 0.003 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 2.97 | 0.983 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.49 | 1.176 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.92 | 0.895 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 3.00 | 1.017 | |
| School chaplain | Year 07 | 60 | 3.07 | 1.023 | 0.784 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.11 | 1.002 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.78 | 1.325 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 3.06 | 1.080 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.98 | 1.190 | |

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|---|---------|----|------|-------|--------|
| Guidance Teacher | Year 07 | 60 | 2.78 | 1.342 | 0.114 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 2.92 | 1.242 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.38 | 1.442 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.88 | 1.378 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.61 | 1.255 | |
| School counsellor | Year 07 | 60 | 2.03 | 1.473 | 0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 2.02 | 1.478 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 1.57 | 1.532 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 1.65 | 1.591 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 1.03 | 1.125 | |
| Year Class Teacher | Year 07 | 60 | 2.93 | 1.191 | <0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 2.89 | 1.066 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.38 | 1.442 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.06 | 1.311 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.13 | 1.258 | |
| Teachers (general) | Year 07 | 60 | 3.12 | 1.223 | 0.062 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 2.84 | 1.098 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.60 | 1.225 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.71 | 1.220 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.74 | 1.079 | |
| LSEs (general) | Year 07 | 60 | 2.75 | 1.284 | <0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 2.44 | 1.259 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 1.86 | 1.354 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 1.94 | 1.390 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 1.84 | 1.306 | |
| 9. Discipline | | | | | |
| Rules and regulations are clearly explained | Year 07 | 60 | 3.48 | 0.676 | <0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.26 | 0.835 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.94 | 1.091 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.63 | 1.044 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.72 | 0.897 | |
| Firm but fair atmosphere | Year 07 | 60 | 3.28 | 0.825 | 0.002 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.07 | 0.964 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.95 | 1.023 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.69 | 1.114 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.67 | 0.908 | |
| Correction for my benefit | Year 07 | 60 | 3.30 | 0.869 | <0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.23 | 0.973 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.98 | 1.055 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.58 | 1.088 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.84 | 0.986 | |
| Teachers correct privately, not in public | Year 07 | 60 | 2.35 | 1.233 | <0.001 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 1.84 | 1.227 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 1.86 | 1.378 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 1.48 | 1.031 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 1.43 | 1.132 | |
| Easy to talk to the person who is in charge of discipline | Year 07 | 60 | 2.93 | 0.899 | 0.148 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 2.70 | 0.972 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.70 | 1.057 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.40 | 1.162 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.75 | 0.789 | |
| I strive to be the best person | Year 07 | 60 | 3.60 | 0.527 | <0.001 |

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| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.34 | 0.892 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.03 | 0.983 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 3.06 | 1.080 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.82 | 0.866 | |
| It is easy to respect the teachers | Year 07 | 60 | 3.10 | 0.951 | 0.003 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.08 | 1.069 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 2.76 | 1.027 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 2.29 | 1.414 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 2.74 | 0.964 | |
| Teachers do not respect students | Year 07 | 60 | 0.95 | 1.407 | 0.004 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 0.74 | 1.153 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 1.22 | 1.301 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 1.46 | 1.398 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 1.23 | 1.055 | |
| School instils the need to be responsible | Year 07 | 60 | 3.48 | 0.813 | 0.022 |
| | Year 08 | 61 | 3.41 | 0.864 | |
| | Year 09 | 63 | 3.13 | 1.008 | |
| | Year 10 | 48 | 3.10 | 0.928 | |
| | Year 11 | 61 | 3.21 | 0.798 | |

Appendix 7

Results of the Kruskal-Wallis Test by Religious Affiliation

Findings from the Kruskal-Wallis Test comparing the mean scores and standard deviation of the different religious affiliations for each survey item.

| | Religious Affiliation | N | Mean | Std. Dev. | P-value |
|--|-------------------------|-----|------|-----------|---------|
| School Ethos | | | | | |
| Prior to seeking the school ethos | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 2.23 | 1.023 | 0.023 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 1.92 | 0.871 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.44 | 1.094 | |
| | Other | 11 | 1.64 | 1.027 | |
| I do not feel welcome at school | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 0.45 | 0.859 | 0.019 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 0.63 | 0.815 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 1.06 | 1.181 | |
| | Other | 11 | 0.82 | 1.250 | |
| Jesus is our model | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.40 | 0.787 | <0.001 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.75 | 0.887 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 3.06 | 1.124 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.09 | 1.221 | |
| Staff live by virtue of humility | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 2.78 | 1.037 | 0.063 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.56 | 0.965 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.56 | 1.209 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.09 | 1.044 | |
| Staff live by virtue of meekness | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 2.71 | 1.004 | 0.816 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.77 | 0.857 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.94 | 0.680 | |
| | Other | 11 | 3.00 | 0.632 | |
| I do not feel God's presence | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 0.94 | 1.147 | <0.001 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 1.54 | 1.254 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 1.31 | 1.138 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.09 | 1.375 | |
| Important to pray to St Michael | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.04 | 1.087 | <0.001 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.42 | 1.269 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.94 | 0.998 | |
| | Other | 11 | 1.82 | 1.328 | |
| The school does not encourage the development of talents | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 0.90 | 1.175 | 0.036 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 1.06 | 1.060 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 1.63 | 1.258 | |
| | Other | 11 | 1.09 | 1.136 | |
| School helps me reach my full potential | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.19 | 0.965 | 0.067 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.77 | 1.207 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.81 | 1.109 | |
| | Other | 11 | 3.09 | 1.300 | |
| Catholic Religiosity | | | | | |
| Ample opportunities for Mass | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.51 | 0.653 | 0.058 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 3.42 | 0.794 | |

| | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------|-----|------|-------|--------|
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.94 | 1.063 | |
| | Other | 11 | 3.09 | 0.944 | |
| Lessons begin with prayer | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 1.85 | 1.274 | 0.264 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 1.69 | 1.151 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.38 | 1.088 | |
| | Other | 11 | 1.64 | 1.027 | |
| Religion lessons do not help me in life | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 0.85 | 1.089 | 0.041 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 1.10 | 1.057 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 1.38 | 1.147 | |
| | Other | 11 | 1.36 | 1.433 | |
| Confession year-round | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.06 | 0.859 | 0.406 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 3.13 | 0.672 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.81 | 0.834 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.73 | 1.104 | |
| St George Precaria is important at school | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.33 | 0.859 | <0.001 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.88 | 1.003 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 3.00 | 1.095 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.45 | 0.934 | |
| Staff as faith models at school | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 2.65 | 1.037 | 0.238 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.52 | 1.203 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.31 | 1.138 | |
| | Other | 11 | 1.91 | 1.446 | |
| Encouraged to be honest | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.22 | 0.846 | 0.154 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 3.04 | 1.010 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.94 | 0.772 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.82 | 0.982 | |
| School does not inspire to be kind | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 0.75 | 1.126 | 0.448 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 0.65 | 0.812 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 1.06 | 1.289 | |
| | Other | 11 | 0.91 | 1.044 | |
| Experience Jesus as a friend through the trs | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 2.74 | 1.144 | 0.042 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.25 | 1.296 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.88 | 0.957 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.18 | 1.328 | |
| School did not help me to be a better Catholic | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 0.89 | 1.219 | 0.004 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 1.23 | 1.207 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 1.25 | 1.238 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.27 | 1.618 | |
| Understand better MUSEUM values | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 2.98 | 0.995 | 0.005 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.71 | 0.922 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.56 | 0.964 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.00 | 1.414 | |
| School helps my faith | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 2.97 | 1.029 | 0.004 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.50 | 1.167 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.75 | 0.856 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.09 | 1.375 | |
| School is difficult to identify as Catholic | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 0.61 | 1.046 | 0.019 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 0.77 | 1.077 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 1.19 | 1.276 | |
| | Other | 11 | 1.27 | 1.348 | |
| | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.13 | 0.958 | <0.001 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.90 | 1.057 | |

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|--|-------------------------|-----|------|-------|--------|
| From school, I have learnt to be a good Catholic | Christian Denomination | 16 | 3.19 | 0.834 | |
| | Other | 11 | 1.91 | 1.044 | |
| Respected only if you are Catholic | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 0.77 | 1.197 | 0.312 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 0.90 | 1.171 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 1.00 | 1.155 | |
| | Other | 11 | 1.27 | 1.555 | |
| Teachers never speak about God + religion | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 0.99 | 1.056 | 0.024 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 1.13 | 1.024 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 1.25 | 1.238 | |
| | Other | 11 | 1.91 | 1.044 | |
| School Services | | | | | |
| Religious services | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.22 | 0.914 | <0.001 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.31 | 1.257 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 3.31 | 0.704 | |
| | Other | 11 | 1.73 | 1.679 | |
| School activities | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.31 | 0.937 | 0.650 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 3.25 | 1.042 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 3.44 | 0.727 | |
| | Other | 11 | 3.00 | 1.000 | |
| Live-ins | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.48 | 0.854 | 0.057 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 3.29 | 0.849 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 3.63 | 1.025 | |
| | Other | 11 | 3.27 | 0.786 | |
| Family activities | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.11 | 1.053 | 0.010 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.42 | 1.334 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.88 | 1.408 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.91 | 1.300 | |
| Christmas voluntary activities | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.00 | 1.007 | 0.011 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.65 | 1.120 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.38 | 1.258 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.45 | 0.820 | |
| Caring school staff | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.40 | 0.922 | 0.331 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 3.38 | 1.003 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 3.56 | 0.727 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.91 | 1.221 | |
| Presence of MUSEUM members | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 2.90 | 1.056 | 0.003 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.40 | 1.198 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.81 | 1.223 | |
| | Other | 11 | 1.73 | 1.421 | |
| Presence of non-MUSEUM members | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 2.22 | 1.195 | 0.211 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.29 | 1.091 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 1.94 | 1.340 | |
| | Other | 11 | 1.64 | 1.027 | |
| Chaplain service | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.09 | 1.148 | 0.196 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.71 | 1.398 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 3.19 | 0.834 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.36 | 1.629 | |
| Guidance teachers service | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.40 | 0.854 | 0.578 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 3.44 | 1.050 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 3.50 | 0.816 | |
| | Other | 11 | 3.18 | 1.079 | |
| Professionals service | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 2.99 | 1.090 | 0.082 |

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| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.98 | 1.296 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 3.56 | 0.629 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.55 | 1.036 | |
| St Michael is a Catholic school | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.41 | 0.908 | <0.001 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.81 | 1.161 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 3.50 | 0.730 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.36 | 1.502 | |
| SDC runs St Michael's | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.15 | 1.007 | 0.012 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.63 | 1.282 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.75 | 1.238 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.27 | 1.555 | |
| School Life | | | | | |
| I feel I am part of a family | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.06 | 1.021 | <0.001 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.48 | 1.255 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.25 | 1.528 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.27 | 1.272 | |
| I am encouraged to join an activity | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.20 | 0.932 | 0.063 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.98 | 1.062 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.81 | 0.911 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.73 | 1.009 | |
| Academic success is a priority | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 2.93 | 1.052 | 0.863 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.85 | 1.111 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 3.19 | 0.750 | |
| | Other | 11 | 3.00 | 0.775 | |
| Teachers participate with students in activities | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.23 | 0.912 | 0.016 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 3.08 | 0.794 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.94 | 1.181 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.55 | 0.820 | |
| I do not feel loved at school | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 0.81 | 1.155 | 0.052 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 0.96 | 0.922 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 1.50 | 1.414 | |
| | Other | 11 | 1.00 | 1.095 | |
| I would encourage others to enrol at SMS | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.24 | 0.965 | 0.009 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 3.02 | 1.021 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.63 | 1.204 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.73 | 0.905 | |
| Fair play is encouraged | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.09 | 0.968 | 0.045 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.67 | 1.155 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 3.00 | 1.211 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.45 | 1.440 | |
| I can always find someone to talk to about problems | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.30 | 0.901 | 0.005 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 3.00 | 0.875 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 3.25 | 1.238 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.82 | 0.603 | |
| Feelings of charity at school | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.06 | 0.982 | 0.002 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.63 | 0.981 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 3.00 | 1.033 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.36 | 0.809 | |
| I feel I cannot grow at this school | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 0.79 | 1.145 | 0.015 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 1.19 | 1.331 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 1.56 | 1.504 | |
| | Other | 11 | 1.55 | 1.572 | |

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| High importance is given to the whole well-being | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.11 | 0.971 | 0.014 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.58 | 1.108 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.88 | 1.025 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.82 | 1.250 | |
| I'm happy being part of the school | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.38 | 0.968 | 0.030 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 3.10 | 0.951 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.81 | 1.424 | |
| | Other | 11 | 3.09 | 1.044 | |
| I'm treated fairly at school | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 2.91 | 1.160 | 0.350 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.69 | 1.114 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.50 | 1.414 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.91 | 1.044 | |
| At least one teacher I feel comfortable to talk with | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.43 | 0.982 | 0.381 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 3.25 | 0.934 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 3.31 | 1.014 | |
| | Other | 11 | 3.36 | 0.924 | |
| Teachers care about you | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.15 | 0.939 | 0.565 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 3.02 | 0.838 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 3.13 | 1.147 | |
| | Other | 11 | 3.27 | 0.786 | |
| Teachers want to know me as a person | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 2.83 | 1.046 | 0.799 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.75 | 1.062 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.94 | 1.237 | |
| | Other | 11 | 3.00 | 1.000 | |
| Difficult to name a person I admire | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 1.04 | 1.216 | 0.020 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 1.40 | 1.180 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 1.69 | 1.302 | |
| | Other | 11 | 1.36 | 1.362 | |
| Administrators are easy to talk to | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 2.83 | 1.169 | 0.449 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.52 | 1.271 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.75 | 1.291 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.82 | 1.168 | |
| Approachability of School Staff | | | | | |
| Headmaster | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 2.60 | 1.136 | 0.006 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 1.90 | 1.225 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.56 | 1.504 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.27 | 1.272 | |
| AH | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 2.97 | 1.007 | 0.154 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.63 | 1.123 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 3.13 | 1.088 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.82 | .982 | |
| School chaplain | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.04 | 1.127 | 0.099 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.85 | 1.148 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 3.31 | 1.014 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.36 | 1.206 | |
| Guidance Teacher | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 2.68 | 1.329 | 0.633 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.69 | 1.339 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.88 | 1.360 | |
| | Other | 11 | 3.00 | 1.612 | |
| School counsellor | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 1.66 | 1.461 | 0.207 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 1.56 | 1.500 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.25 | 1.483 | |

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| | Other | 11 | 1.18 | 1.722 | |
| Year Class Teacher | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 2.50 | 1.303 | 0.893 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.48 | 1.255 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.63 | 1.455 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.27 | 1.421 | |
| Teachers (general) | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 2.83 | 1.200 | 0.704 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.77 | 1.096 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.56 | 1.209 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.73 | 1.009 | |
| LSEs (general) | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 2.19 | 1.351 | 0.866 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.17 | 1.326 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.13 | 1.544 | |
| | Other | 11 | 1.82 | 1.537 | |
| Discipline | | | | | |
| Rules and regulations are clearly explained | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.09 | 0.926 | 0.074 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.83 | 0.953 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 3.06 | 1.063 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.36 | 1.362 | |
| Firm but fair atmosphere | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.05 | 0.959 | 0.007 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.58 | 1.007 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.88 | 1.088 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.55 | 0.934 | |
| Correction for my benefit | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.08 | 1.003 | 0.022 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.75 | 1.101 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 3.00 | 1.033 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.55 | 0.688 | |
| Teachers correct privately, not in public | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 1.86 | 1.245 | 0.516 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 1.56 | 1.319 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 1.75 | 1.291 | |
| | Other | 11 | 1.82 | 0.982 | |
| Easy to talk to the person who is in charge of discipline | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 2.77 | 0.977 | 0.058 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.54 | 0.944 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.81 | 1.167 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.18 | 0.874 | |
| I strive to be the best person | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.25 | 0.887 | 0.029 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.85 | 1.052 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 3.31 | 0.793 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.91 | 0.831 | |
| It is easy to respect the teachers | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 2.94 | 1.078 | 0.005 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 2.44 | 1.090 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.38 | 1.204 | |
| | Other | 11 | 2.64 | 1.286 | |
| Teachers do not respect students | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 1.07 | 1.292 | 0.628 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 1.23 | 1.207 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 1.25 | 1.342 | |
| | Other | 11 | 1.09 | 1.375 | |
| School instills the need to be responsible | Practicing Catholic | 218 | 3.39 | 0.848 | <0.001 |
| | Non-Practicing Catholic | 48 | 3.00 | 0.851 | |
| | Christian Denomination | 16 | 2.63 | 1.025 | |
| | Other | 11 | 3.00 | 1.095 | |

