



DIOCESE OF
PALMERSTON NORTH



CATHOLIC
EDUCATION
OFFICE

Te Rau Aroha
Diocesan Centre
33 Amesbury Street
Private Bag 11 012
Palmerston North 4442

T +64 6 354 1780
www.pndiocese.org.nz

COPY

**ĀHUATANGA KATORIKA KAUPAPA AROTAKE
TE PŪRONGO AROTAKE O WAHO**

**CATHOLIC SPECIAL CHARACTER
EXTERNAL REVIEW REPORT**

**St Mary's School
Whanganui**

**Review Visit
Confirmed Report**

**1-3 May 2019
26 July 2019**



REVIEW OF CATHOLIC SPECIAL CHARACTER

School Details

Board of Trustees Chairperson: Ari Housangi

Principal: Jacqui Luxton

Director of Religious Studies: Cathryn Daignault

Parish Priest: Fr Marcus Francis

The Catholic special character review of St Mary's Catholic School Whanganui was conducted by the Palmerston North Catholic Education Office (PNCEO) review team of:

Pauline Balm

Review and Development Advisor

Jane Dravitzki

Catholic Education Advisor (Primary)

Teresa Edwards

Manager of Catholic Schools

Ngā Whāinga O Te Arotake - Aims of the External Review

The New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference (NZCBC) wishes the review to show how effective the school is in handing on the faith and forming a new generation of Catholics; this includes, evaluating the efficacy of Religious Education and how the whole school community engages in authentic, Catholic Christian witness and evangelization.

The External Review process is based on the requirements of the *Catholic Special Character Review for Development* (Draft) that came into effect at the end of 2017.

In the review, schools are asked to consider and demonstrate the ways in which they provide for their students:

- an encounter with Christ, *Te Tūtaki ki ā te Karaiti*
- growth in knowledge, *Te Whakatupu mā te Mātauranga*, and
- the development of Christian witness, *Te Whakaatu Karaitiana*

The review also investigates stewardship including the stewardship of the relationship between the Church and the State, *Te Kaitiakitanga me te Whakapakari I te Tuakiri Katorika*.

Reviewers encourage and commend best practice, and work with the school to formulate opportunities to further strengthen and develop the Catholic culture.

Response to Recommendations from the 2016 Catholic Special Character Review

Statutory and Catholic Special Character Compliances

The school must ensure no student begins school without an appropriately completed preference certificate. Any student who does so is technically a non-preference student. Enrolment procedures have been reviewed. Continual monitoring of the enrolment process to ensure no student begins school without an appropriately completed preference certificate is required.

The school has recently appointed two teachers to S65 positions and requires one more position to be filled. They are aware that the next vacancy must be advertised as a S65 position.

The school is meeting its statutory requirements and is compliant with its number of teachers who hold S464 positions.

As a Health Curriculum statement and teaching scheme are developed, ensure they include statements that direct the curriculum to be taught from a Catholic perspective and include related Catholic teachings. A plan for teaching sexuality across the age groups also needs to be included.

The development of a St Mary's School Health and Physical Education Overview includes references to scripture, the school's values, the Religious Education Bridging Document and Catholic teachings. A review of the plan for teaching sexuality across the year levels will be a further recommendation. The PNCEO is available to assist.

Key Recommendations

The school should continue to identify how the Six Responsibilities can have a clearer connection to the Gospel and in particular the teaching of Jesus through parables.

The Six Responsibilities are no longer part of St Mary's School philosophy.

To meet the guidelines of the NZCBC (as per appendix 12 of the *Handbook and the Certification Handbook*) the school should:

- **Set Charter goals and develop policy and procedures to meet expectations on Certification.**
Charter goals and procedures have been set to meet expectations around Certification.
- **Plan for whole school and individual teacher professional development that will assist teachers in achieving Certification requirements.**
A professional learning formation plan is created at the commencement of each year. This is reflected in teachers' appraisals and reporting to the Board of Trustees.

As the school continues to develop its appraisal and performance management policy and procedures, ensure that it contains Catholic character goals and indicators for all staff. Goals around Certification, as above, would meet this requirement.

As the school has developed its appraisal and performance management policy and procedures there is evidence of Catholic character goals and indicators for all staff.

As identified by the school, planning, assessment, evaluation and reporting procedures need to be effectively implemented, monitored and reflected on so there is consistency over the school.

This continues to be a recommendation in this report. The Palmerston North Catholic Education Office (PNCEO) can support the leadership team in this area.

TE TŪTAKI KI A TE KARAITI – ENCOUNTER WITH CHRIST

How effectively does the school encourage and facilitate the development of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ who reveals the transforming love and truth of the living God?

St Mary's School has made an intentional effort to reset its culture, in response to the rapid roll growth since the 2016 Catholic Special Character review. As a result, there is a very clear vision of what Catholic spirituality is for this faith community. Central to this vision is the person of Jesus Christ and this is expressed in the reviewed values statement – ICIC In Christ I Can. Evident by the teachable moments of all kaiako and the language used by tamariki and kaiako, the values of inclusion, courage, integrity and courtesy are embedded throughout school life. These values are giving tamariki the opportunity and freedom to be the best person God created them to be.

Supported by the Principal, the DRS has created numerous opportunities for all members of this school community to be nourished on their faith journey. These include:

- Prayer bags
- Mass on the grass
- Date night with a King
- School Masses
- Sacramental programmes
- Prayer diaries for junior and senior tamariki
- Liturgy Team
- Service Team

These initiatives are invitational but encourage whānau to engage with their own faith journey and that of their tamariki. Literature sent home to whānau states, “we are planting the seed but need you to help it grow,” followed by opportunities that provide “fertilizer for the seed.”

The introduction of the Faith Diary for senior tamariki and the Reading Record for junior tamariki provide opportunities for dialogue between parent and child. Both resources are about growing knowledge in and understanding of; Catholic traditions, prayer and scripture. The books do so in an inviting manner which allow whānau to engage tamariki in a common faith language.

The link between home and school is strengthened by the intentional use of technology, for example; the school app, website and student portfolios. These applications allow Religious Education (RE) learning to be show cased and demonstrate how Catholic Character is nurtured and developed throughout the life of the school.

Prayer life at St Mary's is rich and varied, offering tamariki diverse ways to encounter and develop a relationship with Jesus. It is often facilitated in a way that makes links to learning key concepts of lessons or the liturgical year. Evident throughout the school was an intentional emphasis on the joy and resurrection of Jesus. The Easter season was highlighted by an enhancement of prayer spaces with all prayer tables adorned with butterfly prayer cloths, making a connection to the school's Easter resurrection liturgy.

The prayer life of the school is valued by tamariki who love expressing themselves through music and action songs, art, prayer books/journal, reading of Scripture, movement prayers, current events and creative ways of facilitation using Lego and buttons. Creativity is encouraged; one class had written their own grace to the tune of a popular song 'baby shark'

that included phrases from their school values whilst another wrote some of their favourite pieces of scripture on stones that were then taken home. Meditation and traditional prayers are also embraced and practised.

Tamariki understand the 'why' prayer is so important in their faith journey and shared with the review team how prayer brings them closer to Jesus and helps grow their relationship with Him. There was a genuine expression of joy when talking about inviting God into their day through prayer. Parents acknowledged that it is often their tamariki who are instrumental in growing the prayer life at home and encouraging the family to attend Mass together.

School wide kapa haka, waiata and Te Reo woven throughout the celebration of Mass, and weekly "Ruruku" developing across the school, allow all tamariki the experience of encounter through the lens of Māori wairua and katorikatanga.

The school is actively supporting the sacramental journey of each tamariki. Whānau are invited to information evenings and the school is instrumental, with support from the Catholic Parish of Whanganui, in developing programmes for tamariki and whānau. As a result, there is an increasing number of tamariki being baptised.

All staff at St Mary's are joy-filled role models for each other, the tamariki and this school community. Parents feel heard, acknowledged and welcomed. There is a culture of trust at St Mary's and this has been nurtured and developed by a staff who value community and the importance of belonging. Kaiako model the values that underpin 'In Christ I Can' and along with joyful liturgy and celebrations of the Church's year, there is a deepening understanding of what it means to be part of a Catholic community. This is a point of celebration for St Mary's as together they have reclaimed their Catholic identity and enriched the lives of their tamariki and whānau.

All kaiako are meeting the expectation of the NZCBC (The New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference) and are engaged in professional formation in Religious Education and Catholic Character and are working towards their next level of certification. A full staff commitment to attending Having Life to the Full (grounded in John 10:10) and engaging in papers through The Catholic Institute (TCI) is be commended.

The Principal and DRS work collaboratively to lead the development of Catholic Special Character at St Mary's School. They are faith filled leaders who are passionate about the person of Christ and integrating His message into all aspects of school life. Together they nurture the ongoing faith formation of all staff.

The Principal models servant leadership and as one staff member said, "as Jesus washed his disciples' feet," not as their superior but as their equal, so does our Principal." Both whānau and kaiako acknowledge the significant contribution the Principal has made to the culture of St Mary's School. She role models what it is to be an authentic faith leader through her own practice and witness in this school, the Parish of Whanganui and through her commitment to rebuild Whanganui City (WIN 1000).

Kaiako in S464 positions embrace the expectations required of them to support the Principal and DRS in safeguarding and strengthening Catholic character. They stated that one of the biggest joys of teaching in a Catholic school is to openly and unashamedly be who God created them to be and to be able to continue the mission of Jesus through their daily interactions with tamariki and whānau.

Next Steps

Explore ways to intentionally weave Gospel stories and the Josephite charism into 'In Christ I Can' to reinforce the teachable moments. This will enable all Kaiako and tamariki to make the same links and talk a shared language.

To support teachers in S464 positions in their Catholic formation and leadership, strategically develop opportunities that provide these teachers with responsibility for special character tasks. This would also provide support to the DRS and Principal in their various leadership roles.

TE WHAKATUPU MĀ TE MĀTAURANGA – GROWTH IN KNOWLEDGE

How effectively does the school assist its community to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Jesus Christ, his teachings and the Catholic Church?

The DRS is creative, passionate and a source of spiritual nourishment to tamariki, kaiako and the wider community. Her ability to express theological knowledge in warm and creative ways is a taonga to those she interacts and engages with in both formal and informal settings. Captivating liturgies, creative wall displays, informative and invitational content in newsletters and brochures and the rich dialogue at staff meetings are evidence that the DRS is developing a faith focussed culture within the school.

Personifying the joy of the Gospel, the energy and passion of the DRS is valued by this community. It is a source of inspiration to others as she accompanies them in their understanding of Catholic values, rituals and traditions and on their faith journey.

The DRS is supported by the Principal who also has a strong commitment to safeguarding and strengthening Religious Education (RE) and Catholic character of the school. Together, they have a collaborative vision and the strong relationships they build will provide the platform going forward for developing a more robust planning and assessment cycle through the school.

Relationships are strong at St Mary's. The Principal is relational and warm. Parents and kaiako commented that she makes them feel valued and listened to, emphasising her approachability and genuine care for others. The Principal reinforced how much she values the staff and there is an evident sense of joy and collegiality within staff relationships. Students described teachers as hardworking, joyful, fun and some as particularly knowledgeable and passionate about Religious Education (RE). One parent commented, "it is fantastic to see the staff really on fire for their faith". Kaiako are interpersonal and warm class climate and environments are safe, productive atmospheres for learning.

All kaiako are teaching the mandated Religious Education (RE) programme and some teachers are growing in confidence to adapt and enhance lessons using other resources. There was evidence of kaiako and tamariki using satellite maps to zoom into the Dead Sea to create their own class mind map of images to deepen their understanding of Jesus and the people of His time. Pedagogical practices to engage and support differentiation and faith discussions that link to the students' lives and world are evident. The Religious Education Bridging Document (REBD) has been a support with this.

Discussions and relationships are a key dimension to lessons and learning. Tamariki feel safe to ask questions and they are inquisitive. Meaningful contexts to hook the tamariki in and engage them in learning has become an important way of making connections for the children between faith and life. Older tamariki particularly, are looking for relevance to their learning

and what it means for society now. Rich displays of student learning in some classes reflect this engagement.

There has been a meaningful and robust appraisal system implemented. The DRS is now observing all teachers and giving full feedback and feed forward once a year. Teachers also set self-reflective goals which supports ownership of next steps.

Next Steps

School planning, assessment, evaluation and reporting procedures need to be effectively implemented, monitored and reflected on so there is consistency across the school.

A school wide review of the teaching of Sexuality across all year levels, along with supporting documentation, will allow for a consistent and progressive implementation of this important curriculum area.

As a result of consultation with the school leadership team, individual teacher planning is to reflect the NZCBC time allocations and requirements for Religious Education. Monitoring by the school leadership team will need to be ongoing to ensure there is a shared understanding and consistent practice by all kaiako.

There is evidence that some topic planning has the beginning links to Catholic concepts. The DRS has started the conversations with kaiako regarding how this can be further developed to strengthen the integration of faith and life. Continue to develop the intentional, Catholic lens at the planning stage of topics.

The use of waiata in prayer time is strong and evident. Discuss strategies for the use of Te Reo Maori and other languages in the classroom and wider school contexts. For example, a classroom word bank that accumulates words over the year could be useful in reinforcing learning and give kaiako and tamariki more confidence in recall and integration.

TE WHAKAATU KARAITIANA- CHRISTIAN WITNESS

How effectively does the school provide a hope-filled Catholic Christian witness which empowers its community members to integrate their faith and life?

Through the faith-based witness of all kaiako and the leadership of the Principal and DRS, St Mary's School provides an example of hope-filled, Catholic Christian witness to their community.

There is a genuine commitment from all kaiako to ensure tamariki are provided with the best possible example of what it means to belong to a Catholic community. Striving to ensure inclusivity is at the heart of this community and that it is genuine and ongoing, has resulted in parents and tamariki knowing they are welcome and listened to.

Restorative justice practices ensure that the dignity of each person is acknowledged and upheld and along with the Peer Mediation programme, tamariki are empowered with the life skills of problem solving that are centred on restoring the mana of each person. Kaiako are intentional in the manner in which they discuss the behavior of tamariki and this has also contributed to a culture of respectful relationships.

The wellbeing of all kaiako is paramount. Staff are a support to each other through their prayer life, the open-door policy of the Principal and through initiatives taken to celebrate the gifts of each staff member as valued members of this faith community. The Board of Trustees also acknowledge the importance of wellbeing and actively look at ways to offer support to staff.

The relationship between St Mary's School and the Catholic Parish of Whanganui continues to be fostered through school Masses and Sacramental programmes. The Parish Priests are welcomed by staff and tamariki both in the classroom and around the school grounds.

Displays and symbols within the school environment, many of which are reflections of tamariki artwork provide witness to the Catholic identity of St Mary's.

Through the commitment of the Principal and DRS to connect tamariki to the wider Catholic community in Whanganui, tamariki have a valued relationship with neighboring Cullinane College and other local Catholic primary schools. St Mary's was instrumental in organising a combined Mass for Catholic Schools Day, kaiako take part in the Commissioning Mass at the start of the school year and engage in professional learning opportunities with their Catholic colleagues at other schools.

Aware of their commitment to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the school year begins with a focus on Whanganuitanga – unpacking their local identity as people living in Aotearoa New Zealand. This place-based learning approach has been identified as an important step in building a sense of identity and belonging for all tamariki at St Mary's.

The growing confidence in kapa haka performance along with a renewed understanding of its meaning and importance with powhiri as the culture of welcome to new whānau, is an area of significant growth for this school community.

Grounded in Mark 10:45, 'For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many' the St Mary's Service Programme clearly outlines the call to be of service to the school and school families, the parish, the city of Whanganui, New Zealand and to the world. Tamariki are provided with many opportunities, led by the Student Service Team, to demonstrate the call that each person as a Christian is to take care of others and to work for justice and equality. Tamariki understand this call and explained that to be of service to others is to, "follow in the footsteps of Jesus."

Next Steps

To ensure the relationship between St Mary's and the Parish of Whanganui is developmental, collaborative and supportive continue to explore ways that give St Mary's School a voice in Parish strategic planning.

The development of a Sacred Space will provide an opportunity to reflect the cultural diversity within this community and the Josephite charism.

To further develop the weekly Eucharistic celebration with Cullinane College, consider inviting Cullinane students to share a buddy Mass with tamariki from St Mary's. This could allow some of the junior classes to attend Mass with support from College students and provide opportunities for tamariki to be more actively involved in the planning of Mass. This may also

assist with the transition from primary to secondary school and further strengthen the relationship between the two schools.

To further deepen the understanding of St Mary’s School identity and history, consider including in the Whanganuitanga resources that focus on the person of Mary McKillop and the charism of the Sisters of St Joseph.

TE KAITIAKITANGA ME TE WHAKAPAKARI I TE TUAKIRI KATORIKA-SAFEGUARDING AND STRENGTHENING CATHOLIC CHARACTER

How effectively does the school, in its stewardship, and its compliance with legal obligations, safeguard and strengthen its Catholic identity?

The Board of Trustees understand the vision and strategic direction of St Mary’s as a Catholic school and are committed to ensuring this is safeguarded. They are well informed about Catholic Character and their annual Proprietors reports are completed with a depth of understanding.

Strategic planning is focused on strengthening Catholic Character and annual goals are developmental.

Employment procedures are in line with the New Zealand Catholic Education Office guidelines. Job descriptions outline the responsibility for staff to actively support special character. Teachers who hold S464 positions have the addition of descriptors to their job descriptions that aim to provide assistance to the DRS.

Whilst Catholic Elaborations are included in appraisal documentation, the professional conversations and self-reflection by all staff on each of these elaborations is an identified next step.

The school is meeting the statutory compliances of its Integration Agreement with respect to the correct number of S464 positions held and consultation with the Proprietor through submission of annual Attestation and Proprietor’s Appointees reports.

A satisfactory audit of all students enrolled was conducted as part of this review. The whole school preference/non-preference details, at the time of the Catholic Special Character Review:

Maximum Roll: 260 **Actual Roll: 245**
Non-Preference Maximum (as per Integration Agreement: 5% of max roll (13)
Non-Preference actual number: 13

Preference Criteria	Number of Students	% actual roll
5.1	82	32
5.2	7	3
5.3	72	28
5.4	69	26
5.5	-	-
Preference with no criteria	2	.1
Total of signed preference roll	231	89
Non-Preference Roll	13	5

Next Steps

The school must continue to monitor its enrolment procedures to ensure no student begins school without an appropriately completed preference certificate. Any student who does so is technically a non-preference student.

Currently, the St Mary's School policy folder has several comprehensive procedural documents, which are not supported by overarching policies. It is recommended that the Board;

- works to identify the policies required that will clearly determine the direction for management/governance
- ensures all policies fulfil the requirements outlined by the 1989 Education Act
- ensures each policy and its corresponding procedure where appropriate, explicitly reflects Catholic Character so that decision making is from a Catholic perspective
- create a schedule that puts each policy with its corresponding procedure on a three-year review cycle

The PNCEO is available to assist the Board with policy development.

While there is evidence Catholic Character is being reviewed, the development of an annual plan for internal evaluation of Catholic character will enable good practice to be affirmed and identify next steps for growth in the areas of both Catholic Character and Religious Education. This evaluation could involve exploring one of the main dimensions of Catholic Character each year and engaging kaiako, tamariki, whānau and parish personnel in the evaluation discussion. A timetable of planned internal evaluation included in the school's strategic and annual plan will ensure consistency, along with practices that follow the school wide procedures of internal review.

As a Board, continue to grow in your own formation by allocating a short time in each meeting to break open a paragraph or section, from the *draft* Catholic Special Character Review for Development (2018 ed) document and the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference document, *The Catholic Education of School-Age Children*, and the Handbook for Boards of Trustees of New Zealand Catholic Integrated Schools (2016 ed).

The development of an induction programme for all trustees so key Board responsibilities are understood and reviewed on a regular basis is encouraged.

ST MARY'S SCHOOL WHANGANUI

CATHOLIC SPECIAL CHARACTER REVIEW

REPORT SUMMARY

Areas of growth since the last review report

A reviewed values statement – 'ICIC In Christ I Can' which is embedded throughout the school.

Initiatives that encourage whānau to engage with their own faith journey and that of their tamariki.

School wide kapa haka, waiata and Te Reo woven throughout the celebration of Mass, and weekly Ruruku developing across the school.

All kaiako are meeting the expectation of the NZCBC and are engaged in professional formation in Religious Education and Catholic Character and are working towards their next level of certification.

The Principal and DRS are faith filled leaders who are passionate about the person of Christ and integrating His message into all aspects of school life.

Restorative justice practices ensure that the dignity of each person is acknowledged and upheld.

Beginning the school year with a focus on Whanganuitanga – this place-based learning approach is an important step in building a sense of identity and belonging for all tamariki at St Mary's.

The St Mary's Service Programme clearly outlines the call to be of service to the school and school families, the parish, the city of Whanganui, New Zealand and to the world.

Statutory Compliances

Ensure individual teacher planning reflects the NZCBC time allocations and requirements for Religious Education. Monitoring by school leadership will need to be ongoing to ensure there is a shared understanding and consistent practice by all kaiako.

Currently, the St Mary's School policy folder has several comprehensive procedural documents which are not supported by overarching policies. It is recommended the Board;

- works to identify the policies required that will clearly determine the direction for management
- ensures all policies fulfil the requirements outlined by the 1989 Education Act
- ensures each policy and its corresponding procedure where appropriate, explicitly reflects Catholic Character so that decision making is from a Catholic perspective
- create a schedule that puts each policy with its corresponding procedure on a three-year review cycle

The school must continue to monitor its enrolment procedures to ensure no student begins school without an appropriately completed preference certificate. Any student who does so is technically a non-preference student.

Key Recommendations

School planning, assessment, evaluation and reporting procedures need to be effectively implemented, monitored and reflected on so there is consistency across the school.

A school wide review of the teaching of Sexuality across all year levels, along with supporting documentation will allow for a consistent and progressive implementation of this important curriculum area.

To further deepen the understanding of St Mary's School identity and history, consider including in the Whanganuitanga resources a focus on the person of Mary McKillop and the charism of the Sisters of St Joseph.

We are confident that the St Mary's School leadership team (BOT, Principal and DRS) have the willingness and ability to address both the recommendations and the next steps highlighted in this report.



Pauline Balm
Review and Development Advisor



Teresa Edwards
Manager Catholic Education Office