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*He Pūrongo Arotake Mātauranga  
Ahurea Katorika ā Waho.*

*Catholic Special Character  
External Evaluation Report*

# **St Mary's School | Hato Mere Whanganui**

Evaluation conducted: 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> July 2024

Confirmed Report: 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2024



## School Details

**Name of School:** St Mary's School, Whanganui

**Address:** 30 London Street, Aramoho, Whanganui

**School type:** State Integrated Full Primary Yrs 1- 8

**Actual roll:** 252

**Maximum roll:** 260

**Non-preference maximum:** 13

**Actual non-preference number:** 9

**Roll based staffing entitlement:** 11.5

**Required number of Special Character CI 47 positions:** 7

**Filled number of Special Character CI 47 positions:** 7

**Principal:** Jacqui Luxton

**Director of Religious Studies:** Cath Daignault

**Presiding Member, School Board:** Ari Houshangi / Helena Anderson

**Parish Priest:** Father Craig Butler

**Assistant Parish Priest:** Father John Roberts

### Ethnicity Data:

Australian	1 Males	1 Females	2	OR 0.79%
Filipino	2 Males	3 Females	5	OR 1.98%
African/African Origins	0 Males	1 Females	1	OR 0.40%
Samoan	1 Males	1 Females	2	OR 0.79%
Fijian	1 Males	3 Females	4	OR 1.59%
Indian	26 Males	21 Females	47	OR 18.65%
NZ Maori	37 Males	24 Females	61	OR 24.21%
Other Pacific Isl Group	2 Males	1 Females	3	OR 1.19%
NZ European	66 Males	58 Females	124	OR 49.21%
British / Irish	1 Males	1 Females	2	OR 0.79%
Cook Isl Maori	0 Males	1 Females	1	OR 0.399999999999999%

## Evaluation Team

**Pauline Balm**

Evaluation for Development Advisor

**Candice Adams**

Catholic Education Advisor

## **The Aims of Catholic Special Character External Evaluation for Development**

The Catholic special character evaluation process produces a focused picture of the impact of Catholic schooling and the effectiveness of its goals on the lives of all tamariki and rangatahi<sup>1</sup>. The process seeks to determine whether they have encountered the living God revealed in Jesus Christ, grown in knowledge of Him and His Church, and as a result are forming a deep and lasting relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church<sup>2</sup>. The process also evaluates how the whole school community engages in authentic Catholic Christian witness and evangelisation.

The evaluation also investigates how the school is acting as kaitiaki of Catholic special character, including meeting its statutory compliances.

A collaborative, external evaluation process between school and the evaluators, helps the school to focus on and celebrate what it is doing well and identify next steps.

### **Introduction – St Mary’s School**

#### **Mission Statement**

Within Catholic belief and practice, our school will develop the abilities and special talents of each student.

#### **Charism Statement**

We see, do and say God’s mission with grace and love.

#### **Gospel Values : In Christ I Can**

Inclusion Āpiti  
Courtesy Whakaaro atawhai  
Integrity Ngākau pono  
Courage Māia

St Mary’s school was established by the Sisters of St Joseph whose mission was to provide an education for the children of the poor. St Mary’s School has a long history of relocating. In 1919 the school was located at the corner of Victoria Avenue and Ingestre Street. In 1927 St Mary’s moved to Hurworth, the site of an old Anglican boys’ school in Grey Street. In 1964 the school was off again, this time to the former Marist Brothers School in Wicksteed Street. Finally, in 1988, a newly built school named St Mary’s opened in Aramoho on the former Holy Infancy site, which is the site today.

St Mary’s School has a strong connection with the Josephite community. The school mission statement and Gospel values reflect the charism of the Josephite order. Staff carry on the Josephite tradition by providing quality educational opportunities where children’s spiritual, physical, emotional, cultural and mental gifts are nourished so that they can be all that God desires of them.

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<sup>1</sup> New Zealand Catholic Bishops’ Conference. *The Catholic Education of School Age Children*. Wellington:2014.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

## Progress with Recommendations from the 2019 Catholic Special Character Review for Development Report

### 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.***

The school leadership team has been working hard to monitor individual teacher planning so that it reflects the NZCBC time allocations for Religious Education (RE). This is evident in team leader check-ins, DRS observations, and the 2024 annual plan. The challenge for the school now is to ensure the authenticity of RE within the framework of the January 2024 government requirements for literacy and numeracy. This will remain a recommendation.

***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***

Since the 2019 review the School Board has signed up to the SchoolDocs policy platform, providing them with assurance and confidence that policies reflect current legislation and policies are on a three year review cycle. The Board utilises Kōtui policy updates and the NZCEO Governance Framework to ensure policies reflect decision making from a Catholic perspective.

***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.***

This statutory requirement is no longer applicable. The school is now compliant in this area, thus safeguarding and strengthening enrolment procedures.

### 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.***

Discussion around this recommendation is contained within the body of the report. The implementation of *Tō Tātou Whakapono Our Faith* provides an opportunity to, in a strategic manner, develop and implement schoolwide systems to support effective planning, tracking, assessment and evaluation.

***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.***

Following consultation and feedback from staff, Board and whānau, a Health curriculum statement has been adopted which reflects St Mary's School. This includes an overview of relationships and sexuality education across all year levels. The next step is to develop intentional units of work from Year 5 – 8 in relationships and sexuality education.

***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.***

Intentional teaching at the start of the school year around Saint Mary McKillop and the charism of the Sisters of St Joseph has strengthened and deepened within the school community.

## **Dimension 1: 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 is intentional and creative in the ways it strives to encourage and facilitate a personal relationship with Jesus Christ for tamariki, staff and whānau. This is a community who clearly knows what their mission is and this is lived out in their charism statement, ***We see, do and say God's mission with grace and love.***

Spiritual formation, gentle evangelisation, and committed and genuine faith-based leadership, all effectively contribute to how the goals of Catholic education in Aotearoa New Zealand are culturally and contextually prioritised.

### ***Spiritual Formation***

Ongoing spiritual formation that effectively assists this faith community to deepen their personal relationship with Christ is evident in the following:

- varied and rich, age and stage appropriate classroom prayer
- schoolwide weekly liturgies
- liturgical calendar prioritised throughout the school year
- intentional teaching of the school's ICIC Gospel values
- known and lived charism
- a 2024-2026 strategic goal that is centred on 'Embracing Faith: The Heart of Our Catholic Community'
- a commitment to meaningful incorporation of te reo Māori and tikanga Māori into Catholic special character

Collectively, these formation initiatives support tamariki and staff to deepen their understanding and application of the interconnectedness of faith, culture and life.

During focus group conversations, tamariki were confidently able to lead the group in prayer. This was not a 'staged' exercise, rather it reflected the support they are given during daily prayer routines to invite Jesus into their hearts. When talking to tamariki about this time, regardless of their age, some common themes about the impact of prayer emerged.

- *Prayer time is pivotal in developing our relationship with Christ.*
- *Prayer helps us get closer to God, helps us know God and through the variety of prayer experiences we are given, we learn there are many different ways to connect with God.*
- *Through prayer we are supported to find our own relationship with God.*
- *I didn't know how to pray before coming to St Mary's School – because of prayer I have become way closer to God.*

*Tamariki also shared that it is lovely to see the devotion their teachers have towards God.*

The ICIC Gospel values provide a Christ centred foundation for this whole school community to draw upon. They have become a shared language and the expected way young disciples of Christ live in the world. Intentional teaching of ICIC allows tamariki to;

- make connections between Gospel values, Jesus and Saint Mary Mackillop.
- consider how they can show Gospel values in action throughout the day.

ICIC adds value to the culture of St Mary's School because they are achievable and tangible - a connection between 'head, heart and hands.' The ICIC Gospel values are also visually present around the school providing opportunities for teachable moments in a variety of settings.

- *We are very good at teaching our Gospel values and in turn I hear tamariki and kaiako solving problems or having conversations that show they are encountering Christ. (staff)*
- *The ICIC values are a foundation of everything we teach and live everyday. During all lessons we try to intertwine the inclusion of everyone. Courage to put yourself out there and try new things, knowing that it is okay to make mistakes, as that is how we all learn. Integrity in all that we do, we are all one person but together we are one whole school and we all strive to love one another like Jesus taught us. Courtesy is being respectful to everyone and treating others the way we would like to be treated. (staff)*
- *Parents agree that tamariki are nurtured, encouraged and rewarded to live out the ICIC values authentically and see these being lived out beyond the school gates.*

All staff at St Mary's School are committed to giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in a way that is meaningful, intentional and genuine. This journey is longitudinal and an area of growth since 2019. The school is to be commended for the authentic weaving of tikanga through Catholic special character school wide practices, whilst holding respectfully to their local Katorika stories. The leadership team and support from two faith filled kaiako are supporting the whole school community in this.

The impact to date has been significant and voice from whānau Māori is testament to this;

- *St Mary's School has exceeded my expectations in the area of Matauranga Māori. I am Māori and the way the staff show and demonstrate that our culture is valued makes me deeply emotional (..) and makes me feel truly visible. All cultures are valued.*

As the diversity of St Mary's School community continues to grow, the school is acutely aware of providing encounter opportunities that reflect each child's cultural context. This will continue to be an area of development.

### ***Evangelisation***

Through practices and communications, the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the school's mission is effectively proclaimed. As a result, this faith community, that sits within the Aotearoa Catholic Church, journeys together. As first educators of the faith and in partnership with the school, parents are supported to walk alongside tamariki in their faith journey.

- The Special Character newsletter is explicit at making links between home and school providing liturgical information, Catholic theology and religious education learning.
- Working in partnership with the Catholic Parish of Whanganui, teachers holding Special Character positions journey alongside tamariki in their sacramental preparation. The roll audit conducted during this evaluation gave evidence of the movement of criteria within the preference roll. This shows how intentionally analysing preference data, with targeted invitations to whānau to learn more about sacramental programmes, and

inviting tamariki and whānau to join sacramental programmes is having an impact. The DRS also shared conversations initiated by tamariki seeking baptism because of their experiences at school.

- Because of their commitment and witness to Catholic special character, staff are intentional in planning activities with a Catholic lens. For example Lunch with a Loved One and the school's Matariki Liturgy followed by a shared breakfast. This signals for tamariki a natural integration of faith and life.
- Scheduled school Masses at St Mary's Church and weekly attendance at St Joseph's Chapel Mass at Cullinane College are further ways tamariki and whānau are encouraged to participate in the parish and eucharistic community.

The school is constantly looking for opportunities to further engage whānau in the faith journey of their tamariki as prioritised in the 2024 Annual Plan.

Whānau voice gave insight into how tamariki, who are also teachers of the faith, connect the faith life of school to home.

- *My daughter is our teacher – we both now enjoy going to mass – this has added value to my life.*
- *He often returns home singing songs of worship, praise and of God's creation.*
- *Do you know Jesus will always love us? They often retell stories of the Bible to our family, they come home and share about Jesus, discussions around what they are currently learning at school about God in our life.*
- *Keen to participate in the Mass, proud to be receiving the sacraments, wanting to pray at night.*
- *Discussions around what they are currently learning at school about God in our life, being kind and inclusive to everyone, being grateful for our blessings.*

### ***Faith-based Leadership***

The faith-based leadership of the Principal and DRS effectively shapes St Mary's School vision and direction. Genuine and ongoing encounters with Christ are prioritised because faith is not only foundational to their leadership but who they are as committed Christians. This is further reflected in the interactions they have with tamariki, staff and whānau – described as warm, humble and authentic. Genuine accompaniment of others in all stages of life's journey is a defining characteristic of the leadership of both the Principal and DRS.

Modelling Jesus' servant leadership, the Principal is a rock for this community. As an advocate for tamariki she is responsive with her actions, always keeping the dignity of individuals at the centre of her decision making. As a result, leadership has a positive and affirming impact on the culture of the school where staff, tamariki and whānau feel valued, known and cared for. An example of this was during Covid-19; *"during Covid the Principal was a massive anchor – we were scared but she was common sense and positive. Her advice to tend to the hearts of our tamariki and they will be fine meant by doing this she tended to ours."* (parent)

A significant area of growth has been the intentional focus and commitment to the development of leadership capability amongst the staff. External leadership mentoring and coaching for the Senior Leadership Team, which includes syndicate leaders has resulted in a team model of decision making and leadership.

Further opportunities, for example sharing the leadership of Monday liturgies, has allowed all staff to move from being passive attendees to active contributors and leaders of Catholic special character. This distributive leadership model promotes an ethos that enables all to succeed at St Mary's School and authentically contribute to the school's mission.

Teachers who hold special character Schedule 6: Cl 47 positions are intentional in witnessing to their role, so Catholic special character is safeguarded and strengthened formally and informally. An example of this is the ongoing commitment to leading parish sacramental programmes and contributing to regular special character meetings.

A faith-based vision for St Mary's School is promoted by all staff. What became apparent from collating the voice of staff is the depth of understanding regarding their responsibility to bring faith to the forefront in their various roles. Their comments were genuine and authentic in their desire to accompany tamariki in their faith journey.

- *I enjoy working and forming wonderful relationships with all students, knowing and understanding these are God's children.*
- *I want to help tamariki feel safe, loved and enjoy their learning. I enjoy using and reading my Teacher Faith Diary.*
- *Be a witness to students of how I love God. Teach RE with a passion.*
- *Whatever I do, I do it like I am doing it for God. Be a role model to staff and students by living the Gospels.*

Tamariki are supported and encouraged to be faith leaders across all aspects of school life. Standing tall in their faith, they can talk honestly about the ways they are supported to grow closer to Christ and live this faith out in practical ways.

## **Dimension 2: Mā te Mātauranga ka Tipu: 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 and Principal are fully committed to assisting the St Mary's School community to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Jesus Christ, His teachings and the Catholic Church. They are effective in this because it is evident that teaching and learning about Jesus is not just found in RE but throughout the wider Catholic curriculum, and that this learning is visible to whānau.

### **Leadership**

The DRS is a key member of the senior leadership team and is an experienced curriculum leader. Through her formal and informal observations and regular RE team meetings, the DRS is aware of how RE is taught across the school, the strengths each teacher brings and where they need support. Targeted professional development on *Tō Tatou Whakapono Our Faith* and Catholic special character is provided through whole staff meetings, team meetings and 1-1 support. New staff are inducted by the Principal and DRS into the Catholic special character of the school, with ongoing guidance provided. One new teacher commented that it was the most supported she had ever been in a new school.

Both the Principal and the DRS believe that RE plays a critical role in achieving the purpose of a Catholic school and that the achievement objectives are best taught as a stand-alone subject. There is plenty of evidence that systems are in place to monitor the NZCBC time allocations for RE and the school is working hard at this. The recent Ministry of Education compulsory teaching requirements for maths, reading and writing are welcomed by the principal, however, this has also presented new challenges to ensure the authenticity of RE within this framework. The senior leadership team are conscious that this is still an evolutionary space for them and so the monitoring of the NZCBC time allocations for RE will remain a recommendation of this report.

### **RE Curriculum**

Tamariki can articulate the learning they are doing in RE. Across all the groups of students spoken to and in the online student survey it is obvious that teaching and learning in RE is grounded in the person of Jesus. Pertinent responses to the question posed, "How has RE helped you in your life?" include:

- *Knowing we are part of God's big family. (Y2)*
- *So I know that Jesus is real. (Y3)*
- *RE has helped me by learning more and becoming closer to Jesus, God and the saints. (Y5)*
- *RE helps me become closer to Jesus. I have started to understand more about Jesus. (Y7)*
- *RE has helped me in life become a better person and get closer to God. (Y8).*

The voice gathered supports the DRS's view about the impact of RE teaching and learning in the school. That is, the children are starting to understand God as Trinity and that they know they are loved. And through understanding what sort of person Jesus was, they are challenged to be like him in their words and actions. One parent wrote, "*Both my children love learning about God and Jesus and will often ask me questions and wonderings they have.*" Other parent comments concur that the school "*supports the growth and knowledge of our children in their connection to Jesus*". A strength of the school is, "*supporting kids to grow in knowledge of Jesus*" and "*supporting kids to get familiar with events in Jesus' life.*" Jesus, therefore, is at the centre of the learning in RE at St Mary's School.

Seesaw digital portfolios are used effectively to include whānau in school life, and to show a child's ongoing learning journey in all curriculum areas, including RE. One staff member shared that, "through Seesaw posts I can share the children's learning [in RE] and the feedback is always so positive." Another way the school does this is through the My Faith Student Diaries and My Faith Reading Logs. One whānau member mentioned these as a positive aspect of the school. The school's Curriculum Delivery Guide states that 'teaching and learning centres around tapping into what makes each student unique and helping them shine'. At the beginning of the year whānau are asked to share "your child through your eyes," including values and qualities that are important to your whānau and community, and any cultural, spiritual, ethnic and community celebrations they take part in. This is one way that kaiako begin to create an environment where everyone feels valued. Another way kaiako do this is by weaving mātauranga Māori, local curriculum and Te Reo Māori throughout the curriculum.

At a strategic level, the 2024 annual plan includes the implementation of *Tō Tātou Whakapono Our Faith* and progress is reported to the Board at regular intervals by the DRS. Kaiako in Years 1 - 6 are teaching from *Tō Tātou Whakapono Our Faith*, with the Year 5 and 6 teachers currently using the Year 3 and 4 resources. In 2025 the Year 7 and 8 kaiako will join in the roll out of the Year 5 and 6 curriculum. The willingness of the DRS to allow staff to enjoy the 'newness' of the experience as a team, means that there is a collective sense of moving forward. Staff feedback indicates kaiako are enthusiastic about the content and direction of the new RE curriculum. Teams meet before each RE unit and discuss the achievement objectives and ways of assessing. Whānau are receiving relevant information about RE with a focus on both academic and affective learning.

For St Mary's School, the impact of Covid 19 and *Tō Tātou Whakapono Our Faith* has meant that the systems and structures that were previously in place to support cohesion across the school in RE, are going through a time of change. There are two sets of RE planning templates being used, one for the old curriculum and one for the new. Kaiako assess student progress and achievement in RE, however, there is no evaluation process at the end of a unit. Consequently, the reports to the Board discuss progress on the new RE curriculum rather than a schoolwide analysis of assessments and teacher evaluations.

The implementation of *Tō Tātou Whakapono Our Faith* provides an opportunity to, in a strategic manner, develop and implement schoolwide systems to support effective planning, tracking, assessment and evaluation. Next steps could include:

- **Develop, trial and implement a school wide RE unit overview template.** This will support a shared understanding of the achievement objectives and key learning intentions before kaiako then plan for the needs and interests of their own class.
- Implement a **tracking** system of achievement objectives for each team, including RE achievement objectives from integrated units.
- Ensure that assessment data feeds into an **evaluative process** at the end of a unit to further inquire into the impact of teacher actions on student learning, to enhance student outcomes.
- Using data gathered from the evaluations, **report on progress and achievement in RE to the Board.**

## ***Catholic Curriculum***

Each team intentionally integrates a Catholic worldview by planning termly integrated units. A rich, broad topic is chosen, then links are made to different curriculum areas, including RE and Catholic special character. Each year begins with Whanganuitanga: an exploration of identity as people living in Aotearoa and Whanganui – Ko au to awa, ko te awa ko au. Throughout this unit there are opportunities to explore the Catholic heritage and identity of Whanganui. In 2019, all staff completed the Catholic Social Teaching Te Kupenga paper. Staff, therefore, have foundational knowledge that could be more intentionally applied to the integrated units. The Year 5 and 6 Kia Noho Hāhi theme in *Tō Tātou Whakapono Our Faith*, will further support this when it becomes available.

Over the past few years, the school has been fortunate to be part of the Healthy Active Learning initiative. This has been facilitated by Sport Whanganui who have been keen to integrate their approach with the school's Catholic special character. As a result, teaching and learning in Health has been a priority in the school, with expert support being provided to staff. The benefits of being involved in the programme have been extensive, with support and mentoring in curriculum development, behaviour management and professional development on significant issues such as trauma. Following consultation and feedback from staff, Board and whānau, St Mary's School has a Health curriculum statement that reflects their context. This includes an overview of relationships and sexuality education across all year levels. The school utilises the Life Education external provider annually and currently teaches a unit on pubertal change every two years for Year 7 and 8 students. The next step is to develop intentional units of work across Year 5 – 8 in relationships and sexuality education.

### **Next steps**

Continue to look for opportunities to integrate Catholic special character into integrated units, including more intentional teaching and learning around Catholic Social Teaching.

Develop intentional units of work from Year 5 – 8 in relationships and sexuality education.

### **Recommendations**

The school has been working hard to monitor individual teacher planning so that it reflects the NZCBC time allocations for Religious Education. The challenge for the school now is to ensure the authenticity of RE within the framework of the January 2024 government requirements for literacy and numeracy.

The implementation of *Tō Tātou Whakapono Our Faith* provides an opportunity to, in a strategic manner, develop and implement schoolwide systems to support effective planning, tracking, assessment and evaluation.

### **Dimension 3: Te Whakaatu Karaitiana-Christian Witness**

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

Jesus' message of love, mercy and justice is lived out in both word and deed at St Mary's School. Effectively providing hope-filled Christian witness empowers this community to integrate faith and life.

#### ***Catholic School Community***

The Catholic concept of community is evidenced on a daily basis in the school through the co-operation of all members of St Mary's School as sisters and brothers in Christ.

- *"Being here is like walking into a big hug. I feel listened to and not judged. Warmth, love acceptance – you can tell a lot about the culture of a school by those who run it - all teachers consistently emulate values - sense of belonging a family - our children can be who they are - here is a safe place where holistically our children are looked after - they are known here - individually." (parent)*
- *We foster a community that desires everyone to feel valued so their dignity is respected, seen and heard. (staff member)*
- *We have a school where children see the needs of others and pray for them. They are also aware of the things they are grateful for and give thanks to these. (staff member)*
- *Togetherness, loving, family, respectful, caring (students)*

Intrinsically connected to the impact the ICIC Gospel values is having on this Catholic community, is the reworked charism statement, *"We see, do and say God's mission with grace and love."* With a stronger sense of ownership from tamariki and staff, the dialogue that sits alongside this statement is more natural because the statement makes sense to tamariki and connections are able to be made between this and ICIC. At the end of the school day when classes pray, *"Let's go into the world to see, do and say God's mission with grace and love,"* tamariki are empowered to make a difference, to take the message of Christ into the world and integrate faith and life.

Systems and structures are in place that allow tamariki to flourish and to know they are part of something bigger beyond school. The school is active in promoting the message that as a school St Mary's is part of the parish of Whanganui. School masses once a term, a commitment to parish based sacramental programmes and an ease of calling on parishioners to support the school is a tangible reminder to tamariki that together 'we are Church'.

## ***Partnership and Collaboration***

St Mary's School recognises that education is a collaborative responsibility. They work hard at being transparent with their community and are creative in the many ways whānau are invited to engage with school life. Key stakeholders who make up this community include; Whanganui iwi, mana whenua, whānau, the Catholic Parish of Whanganui, Catholic school colleagues, the founding religious congregation, the Sisters of St Joseph, the Proprietor and the Palmerston North Catholic Education Office. Building and strengthening relationships with each of these key stakeholders continues to be a priority for St Mary's School.

A longitudinal commitment to bicultural partnership is demonstrated by all staff at St Mary's School by continuing to expand their capability, knowledge and confidence around Tikanga Māori, Mātauranga Māori and Te Reo Māori. All staff have completed Level 1 through Te Ahu o Te Reo Māori, with a number continuing with Level 2, and three staff members who on completion of Level 3 have enrolled in Level 4. Tamariki commented on the noticeable increase of Te Reo spoken in class and that culture is naturally woven through parts of school life, for example termly welcomes for new whānau and tamariki. Tamariki Māori spoke about the pride and the happiness they feel when this occurs.

The school's kapahaka programme is also teacher led which is effectively helping all tamariki and staff in their journey.

In a similar way, the School Board is in the early stages of unpacking the Hautū Tool, reflecting their desire to evaluate how culturally responsive St Mary's School is for whānau Māori and tamariki Māori. With support from the Takitini Across School Lead, St Mary's School is committed to establishing authentic engagement with iwi. A further hope is to have Māori representation on the Board at the next election.

In acknowledging the growing cultural diversity within the school, intentional conversations and actions are beginning to take shape so everyone has a sense of belonging. To support the school in this journey, the Leadership Team is encouraged to reach out to Catholic schools across the Diocese who have been on a similar journey.

## ***Pastoral Care***

For tamariki at St Mary's School education occurs in a safe, nurturing environment. Supported by a strong pastoral care network results in each member of this community being known, respected, cared for and aware they are loved unconditionally by God. In a similar way, staff feel affirmed and appreciated, with their well-being supported.

- *These are very hard times for some whānau. Insecurities and poverty have created anxieties on unprecedented scales and ensuring that our kids are resilient is setting them up to be able to manage with the onslaught of reality while being positive and hopeful. It is a big job for teachers whose profession has far evolved from the primary purpose which was to teach a curriculum. Nurturing the spiritual and emotional wellbeing is profoundly understood at St Mary's by their staff and led by our principal. (parent)*

There is a culture of care at St Mary's School which is characterised by intentionally prioritising the dignity of all. This culture aims to enable all tamariki to thrive so they can be the best possible version of themselves God created them to be. This is evident in the following initiatives;

- Kaitakawaenga Mentoring
- A behaviour plan grounded in restorative justice
- Reset Room
- Assemblies – opportunities to reward and celebrate tamariki
- Leadership opportunities for Years 5 – 8 (Service Group/Student Council)

These opportunities are effective because they support tamariki to develop life skills that contribute to the St Mary's School culture of care.

The Reset Room is an initiative that illustrates St Mary's School creatively responding to the learning environment for tamariki and staff, while keeping the dignity of each learner intact. Parent voice talked about the Reset Room giving tamariki skills to regulate themselves beyond the school environment. Tamariki shared that the Reset Room is making a tangible difference, not just to them but to the greater learning environment at school.

- *The reset room helps us because we get words of encouragement from teachers that show we all have a part to play to improve what happens at school. Time in the Reset room really does make a difference to our behaviour and our learning.*

### **Service and Outreach**

As a Christian community St Mary's School effectively responds to the call to care for others and to work for justice and equality. Service and outreach are explicitly based on the ICIC Gospel values and are a lived out reflection of the charism statement.

Many examples given by tamariki show a connection between what they do and how they are trying to be like Jesus, following in His footsteps. The school's well established Service Programme continues to provide many opportunities for tamariki to make a difference in people's lives regardless of their age. This is a powerful and rewarding experience for young people – being able to see beyond themselves to the needs of others and the needs of the environment. This is a strength of St Mary's School, and they are commended for this.

### **Next Steps for Development**

In acknowledging the growing cultural diversity within the school, intentional conversations and actions are beginning to take shape so everyone has a sense of belonging. To support the school in this journey, the Leadership Team is encouraged to reach out to Catholic schools across the Diocese who have been on a similar journey.

#### **Dimension 4: Te Kaitiakitanga me te Whakapakari I te Tuakiri Katorika-Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Special Character**

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

In its stewardship and its compliance with legal obligations St Mary's School leadership and governance safeguard and strengthen its Catholic identity. In doing so Catholic special character is kept alive, vibrant and aligned with the goals of Catholic education.

##### **Stewardship**

The vision and direction for St Mary's School as reflected in the 2024 – 2026 Strategic and Annual Plan, clearly and explicitly safeguards Catholic special character. Goals are developmental and align to the disciple's journey, however, there are a considerable number of actions in total under Catholic special character. Given the continued implementation of *Tō Tatou Whakapono Our Faith*, along with the Government's literacy and numeracy requirements, the school leadership team is encouraged to prioritise for 2025, actions that are developmental and manageable for all involved.

With the adoption of SchoolDocs as the Board's policy platform, the good practice of using the NZCEO/NZSTA Governance Framework as a cross reference when reviewing policies is being followed. This ensures decision making at a Board level is from a Catholic perspective. This has not only resulted in the Board being more deliberate in their use of language but has also added to the quality and depth of discussion.

The Board's own Governance Framework which outlines processes and procedures that define how they operate as a Board of a Catholic School, for example Board Induction, is yet to be developed. It will be a recommendation of this report that the following steps be taken.

- The Board is to utilise the NZCEO Handbook [School Boards – NZCEO Handbook](#) Part A, B and C. These policies can be easily adapted to reflect the St Mary's School context and uploaded onto the centralised SchoolDocs platform into the [Governance Documents](#) section.
- Ensure these Governance Policies are reviewed at the start of each Board year by including them in the Board work plan.
- The Board is to ensure the adopted Code of Conduct for Catholic State Integrated School Board Members as developed by NZCEO in response to Te Mahau Code of Conduct, is linked to the [Governance Document](#) section.

Through annual zoom reporting to the PNCEO and attendance at Diocesan Board training opportunities, the Proprietor is assured that in the areas of special character, employment, enrolment and property his interests are being protected. The Board is commended for their diligence.

##### **Employment**

Through ongoing practical support, the Board values the contribution that all staff make to the faith and learning environment at St Mary's School. As a result, staff feel affirmed and appreciated.

This report would like to acknowledge the generous resource allocated to Religious Education and Religious Education Curriculum Delivery. This shows the Board's ongoing commitment to staff professional development and Religious Education.

### ***Professional Development***

To deepen their understanding of roles and responsibilities as members of a Catholic school Board, the Board has begun to prioritise time at the start of each meeting for their own formation. The Principal is currently leading the Board in formation around *Tō Tatou Whakapono Our Faith*. Attendance at Diocesan Board formation workshops is a further example of the Board's commitment to growing in their capacity and capability to govern with a Catholic lens. However, there is currently no board workplan in place to guide the Board in their work. It is a recommendation that the Board develop a workplan which among other things, will support the new Presiding Member with a schedule of essential Board tasks and provide an overview of professional development across the year. One way the Board can safeguard the Principal's well-being is to take leadership of this formation time. The PNCEO School Board Training Resource website <https://tumanako.pndiocese.org.nz/2023/02/school-board-training/> is a useful place to find resources to support with this formation.

### ***Legal Obligations***

The school is compliant with its Integration Agreement regarding:

- the number of Schedule 6: Clause 47 Education and Training Act 2020 (Cl 47) (previously S464) positions held (excluding principal and DRS) compared with number or percentage of Cl 47 positions specified in the Integration Agreement or the supplementary schedule.
- the appointments committees contains at least one Proprietor's Appointee for all permanent appointments including Principal, DRS and teaching positions.
- Maximum roll compared with actual roll at time of evaluation.
- Number of preference students / non-preference students.
- The Board consults, communicates, and works with the Proprietor to ensure Catholic special character is safeguarded and strengthened.

### ***Enrolment***

There has been a change in the enrolment procedure since the 2019 Catholic special character review. Granting of preference sits with Bishop's Agents supported by the Manager of the Catholic Education Office. The school's office manager ensures preference certificates are sent to the Parish Office.

## Catholic Special Character

### Roll Audit

School: St Marys' School Whanganui

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> July 2024

Maximum Roll: 260

Actual: 253

Non-Preference Maximum *as per Integration Agreement*: 13

Actual: 10 (26 % of max roll)  
(25.3 % of actual roll)

Preference Criteria	Number of Students	% actual roll
5.1	115	45.5%
5.2	14	5.5%
5.3	58	22.9%
5.4	54	21.3%
5.5	2	0.8%
Preference with no criteria	1	0.4%
<b>Total of signed preference roll</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>253</b>
Non-Preference Roll	10	25.3%
International Fee Paying Students	0	0%

The PNCEO Education Manager would like to congratulate the Office Administrator at St Mary's School for setting up excellent enrolment systems and structures and for having everything so easy to access and well organised.

## Next Steps for Development

Given the continued implementation of *Tō Tatou Whakapono Our Faith*, along with the Government's literacy and numeracy requirements, the school leadership team is encouraged to prioritise for 2025, actions that are developmental and manageable for all involved.

## Recommendations

The Board's own Governance Framework which outlines processes and procedures that define how they operate as a Board of a Catholic School, for example Board Induction, is to be developed. It will be a recommendation of this report that the following steps be taken.

- The Board is to utilise the NZCEO Handbook [School Boards – NZCEO Handbook](#) Part A, B and C. These policies can be easily adapted to reflect the St Mary's School context and uploaded onto the centralised SchoolDocs platform into the [Governance Documents](#) section.
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The Board is to develop a workplan which among other things will support the new Presiding Member with a schedule of essential Board tasks and provide an overview of professional development across the year. One way the Board can safeguard the Principal's well-being is to take leadership of this formation time. The PNCEO School Board Training Resource website <https://tumanako.pndiocese.org.nz/2023/02/school-board-training/> is a useful place to find resources to support with this formation.

## **Catholic Special Character Evaluation Report Summary**

### **Areas of growth since the 2019 review report**

Gospel stories and the Josephite Charism have been intentionally woven into the schools ICIC Gospel values.

A distributive leadership model has provided opportunities for teachers to more intentionally support the Principal and DRS in the leadership of Catholic special character.

Pastoral Care initiatives such as the Reset Room have made a tangible difference to the learning environment and culture of the school.

Authentic weaving of tikanga through Catholic special character school wide practices, whilst holding respectfully to local Katorika stories.

With the adoption of SchoolDocs as the Board's policy platform, the good practice of using the NZCEO/NZSTA Governance Framework as a cross reference when reviewing policies is being followed. This ensures decision making at board level is from a Catholic perspective.

To deepen their understanding of roles and responsibilities as members of a Catholic school board, the Board has begun to prioritise time at the start of each meeting for their own formation.

The implementation of *Tō Tātou Whakapono Our Faith* is a strategic focus for the school. Kaiako are enthusiastic about the content and direction of the new RE curriculum.

With the support of Sport Whanganui and being part of the Healthy Active Learning initiative, teaching and learning in Health has been a priority in the school. Following consultation and feedback from staff, board and whānau, St Mary's School has a Health curriculum statement that reflects their context.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Dimension 2: Mā te Mātauranga ka Tipu: Growth in Knowledge**

The school has been working hard to monitor individual teacher planning so that it reflects the NZCBC time allocations for Religious Education. The challenge for the school now is to ensure the authenticity of RE within the framework of the January 2024 government requirements for literacy and numeracy.

The implementation of *Tō Tātou Whakapono Our Faith* provides an opportunity to, in a strategic manner, develop and implement schoolwide systems to support effective planning, tracking, assessment and evaluation.

#### **Dimension 4: Te Kaitiakitanga me te Whakapakari I te Tuakiri Katorika-Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Special Character**

The Board's own Governance Framework which outlines processes and procedures that define how they operate as a Board of a Catholic School, for example Board Induction, is to be developed. It will be a recommendation of this report that the following steps be taken.

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The Board is to develop a workplan which among other things will support the new Presiding Member with a schedule of essential board tasks and provide an overview of professional development across the year. One way the Board can safeguard the Principal's well-being is to take leadership of this formation time. The PNCEO School Board Training Resource website <https://tumanako.pndiocese.org.nz/2023/02/school-board-training/> is a useful place to find resources to support with this formation.

The evaluation team is confident that St Mary's School has the willingness and ability to address these recommendations fully before the next external evaluation. The Catholic Education Office staff will assist the Principal, Board and staff in creating a Catholic special character development plan to address these recommendations.

The evaluation team thank the community of St Mary's School for the welcome, hospitality and cooperation extended to them and for the opportunity to experience the way that they safeguard and strengthen Catholic special character. The organisation and preparation for the external evaluation by the school is greatly appreciated.

**Pauline Balm**



**Evaluation for Development Advisor**

**Teresa Edwards**



**Manager Catholic Schools**