



CATHOLIC SCHOOLS EDUCATION SERVICES

Catholic Special Character Review for Development Report

**Āhuatanga Katorika Kaupapa Arotake
Me Te Ahu Whakamua**

Report on the external review visit for

St Theresa's Catholic School Plimmerton

Review conducted on 8th March 2018 by:

**Francis Wafer
External Reviewer
CSES**

**Alan Grant
Primary Schools Religious
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Summary Page

St Theresa's Catholic School is a caring and supportive community that models Christ's message. It has a strong Catholic culture, centred on the life of Christ and this is evident in the warm, respectful relationships shared by all.

The Director of Religious Studies provides thoughtful and effective leadership in supporting the staff as they deliver the Religious Education. She is well supported by the principal and the parish priest who meet with her to plan liturgical celebrations. She is committed to developing an inclusive, welcoming culture for all, that lives that "encounter with Christ."

The school model translates its mission statement '*To live, learn and love with Jesus, being the best, we can be,*' into practical terms through its evangelisation and pastoral care programmes.

The national Religious Education programme is being implemented and lessons observed by the reviewers were well planned, engaging, thoughtful and enjoyable.

The board of trustees (Bot) is effectively led by a knowledgeable and hardworking, committed chairperson. He works closely with the proprietor's appointees and other board members to ensure that all the decision-making, strategic planning and prioritising is viewed from a Catholic Character perspective.

The school enjoys a very close relationship with the parish and this is reflected in all their celebrations, liturgies and masses. The school has a particularly strong connection with the parish priest, Fr Maurice Carmody, who is an important, visible presence throughout school life.

The school community works ceaselessly to maintain and strengthen relationships by finding ways to encourage school families to participate regularly in school/parish celebrations.

The reviewers were grateful for the warm, open and welcoming atmosphere we found at St Theresa's and we are confident the school will continue to grow that "encounter with Christ", through its relationships, worship and Religious Education.

School Information

Name	St Theresa's Catholic School
Address	James Street Plimmerton
School Type	Co-educational primary years 1-6
Decile	10
Actual Roll	184
Maximum Roll	212
Non-preference Maximum	5% - 12
Actual non-preference	12
Roll based staffing entitlement	10.3
Ethnic Composition	
	NZ European 57%
	Maori 16 %
	Pasifika 10%
	Asian 6%
	Other 11%
Principal	Donna McDonald
Director of Religious Studies	Angela Cole
BOT Chairperson	John Mallon
Parish Priest	Maurice Carmody

Report Format

The External Review process is based on the requirements of the National System of Review and Development on Catholic Special Character that came into effect at the end of 2017.

The written report looks at Catholic Character using the four key dimensions:

Encounter with Christ- The Tutaki Ki A Te Karaiti

Growth in Knowledge – Te Whakatupu Ma Te Matauranga

Christian Witness – Te Whakaaktu Karaitiana

Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Character-

Te Kaitiakitanga Me To Whakapakari Te Tuakiri Ka Katorika

The written report has an Overview, which highlights the successes of the school and indicates any Key Recommendations.

The body of the report is written under the headings of the four dimensions.

Areas of Success and Opportunities for Development are highlighted.

Recommendations from the 2014 review

1. Continue to offer the sacrament of baptism to eligible students through the joint parish/school initiative.
2. Give staff the opportunity to attend the 'Understanding Sexuality' paper and to re-visit the Myself and Others module so that both can be aligned and programmes developed for both junior and senior students.
3. Continue to involve parents in learning and supporting their children to understand the traditional faith practices and prayers of the Catholic Church.
4. Further develop the prayer life of the school.

Review Report

Encounter with Christ- The Tūtaki Ki A Te Karaiti

Areas of Success

Spiritual Formation

In the main the staff within the school have impressive records of professional development and the DRS and Principal continue to promote spiritual growth through internal and external workshops and qualifications.

The environment within the school reflects this sense of spirituality through the presence of sacred spaces within each classroom and the display of religious icons throughout the school.

The reviewers saw consistent evidence that the prayer life within the school is spiritual, diverse and grows the connection to God. Student leaders read from scripture and often taonga were used as a focus for prayer.

Evangelisation

The school has a very strong Sacramental programme that it runs in conjunction with the parish. In 2017 thirty-eight pupils undertook the programme, which initiated them into the sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation and the First Eucharist. Currently there are twenty-one students taking part in the programme.

The school and parish encourage parents to be an active part of this programme and conversations with parents confirmed that they had responded to this positively.

The school adds to this, by involving the parents and whanau in all their celebrations, liturgies and services.

The message of Christ underpins these gatherings, either explicitly by being proclaimed in prayer and song, or implicitly through respectful interactions and the modelling of Gospel virtues.

Faith-Based Leadership

The principal speaks with great conviction and passion about how she models the “encounter with Christ” for the school community and this can be clearly seen in her relationships with others. She works closely with the DRS, the parish priest and the Bot chair to grow the school as a community of faith.

The school regularly undertakes internal and external professional development and is currently taking part in RE501, Spirituality. This is to be commended as it gives the staff the opportunity to reflect on their own spirituality and the deeper understanding that flows from this has a positive impact within the classroom.

Growth in Knowledge – Te Whakatupu Mā Te Mātauranga

Areas of Success

Leadership

The principal and the DRS place Christ at the centre of all their interactions within the community and this is confirmed by the parish priest who speaks highly of their ability to lead by example.

They have a strong commitment to continuing professional development (PD), which impacts directly upon the staff and in turn promotes a growth in knowledge and positive engagement within the classes.

The school is committed to growing its Catholic Special Character through providing appropriate funding for resourcing and for professional development, and the BoT allocates funding budget to support this.

Religious Education

The school implements the nationally mandated Religious Education programme. The lessons seen by the reviewers were thoughtful, well-structured and linked into this year's Caritas theme. They engaged the classes in personal reflection and stimulated that growth in knowledge, which builds upon the encounter with Christ and leads to a more active Christian Witness.

The lessons were well paced, with a variety of activities that catered for individual learning and stimulated discussion. The students could make judgements based on prior learning but often were not clear on how this linked into Christ's message.

The school provides appropriately resourced, effective, teaching and learning programmes for Religious Education.

Currently the pedagogical process by which the teachers deliver the Religious Education curriculum is going through a transition, as the school moves towards a faith-centred integrated education curriculum. The DRS is the prime mover in this and works with the staff to develop long term plans for faith centred themes, which will form the basis for lesson planning.

The final document developed by the school does need to have clear and comprehensive guidelines and expectations for the planning, teaching and assessment of Religious Education, which support and promote a faith-centred integrated curriculum.

It might be timely to look at ways in which the staff can be supported to ensure that all aspects of the RE curriculum are covered during the three-year cycle and the NZCBC requirements on hours taught per week is met.

Catholic Curriculum

The school lives out the precepts of Catholic Social teaching in its responses to all and these can be seen clearly through the school values and charism.

The school has developed a values programme based upon Manaakitanga and Whanaungatanga, which the children can clearly articulate and explain. The children can also articulate the school's charism and are knowledgeable about the lives of Mary McKillop and St Therese of Lisieux.

However, though parents and students could speak knowledgably on the values and charism, they did not seem to be able to directly relate them to the life of Christ. The school began the review of its charism two years ago and it might now be timely to complete that review by drawing together the values and the charism and linking them directly to the message of Jesus.

Recommendations

During the process of developing the new faith centred integrated RE curriculum the school needs to develop a programme that has clear and comprehensive guidelines and expectations for the planning, teaching and assessment of Religious Education. This programme needs to assure staff they have taught all the key Achievement Aims and Objectives for each year within the three-year cycle.

During the school's review of its values programme and charism, it looks at ways to explicitly relate both directly to the Gospel and the life of Christ.

Christian Witness – Te Whakaatu Karaitiana

Areas of Success

Catholic School Community

The school is blessed in that a significant number of teaching staff are active members of their own Catholic faith communities and have been trained as Eucharist Ministers.

A particular feature of the school are its Buddy masses, which are held on a termly basis and partner classes of older and younger students. These bring students, parents, staff and the parish together in the celebration of the Word. The parish priest speaks warmly of how the school connects with parents and encourages them in growing their connection to God. He is a regular visitor to the school and speaks to classes on a weekly basis.

This promotes a more intimate relationship between the school and the parish, which fosters the growth of stronger links to the community and the results of this can be seen in the liturgies and masses, which are often parish/school celebrations.

The principal is a member of the parish council.

Partnership and Collaboration

The school provides clear and informative Catholic Special Character information through its website and newsletters, which always contain a faith centred inclusion.

In the last three years the school has regularly consulted with different groups of stakeholders and these show high degrees of student engagement and parent support for the school's Catholic Special Character.

The principal clearly articulates the school's Catholic Special Character ethos to new parents and the induction pack for new families is well thought out and comprehensive.

The school also is deeply committed to supporting and growing the New Zealand Sign Language. Large numbers of staff and students can sign effectively and the school employs a teacher aide, who is knowledgeable and proficient.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

The school has a strong commitment to living out the Treaty and this is reflected in all the school does. It welcomes new students with a powhiri and celebrates its leavers as a community with karakia and waiata.

Te reo is visible throughout the school and is particularly prominent as part of the impressive school entrance way, which welcomes all who arrive at the office. It is included on a daily basis as an important part of classroom prayer and into all aspects of teaching and learning.

The school also expresses its connection to Māori wairua, Spirituality, through its liturgies, celebrations and through its values programme. This is centred upon manaakitanga and whanaungatanga, with these values being prominently displayed throughout the school and regularly articulated within the classroom.

Pastoral Care

The school has a strong and respectful pastoral care programme that looks to support need in its many forms. There are processes in place to support families in crisis and to support those in financial need. The school links closely with the parish's St Vincent de Paul society and brings to their attention families in need, in a responsive and respectful manner.

The school also supports families in financial needs through sponsorship of attendance dues, payments for uniform and donations to pay for stationery.

The school's also very aware of staff health and well-being and takes great care to ensure that workloads are managed.

Service and Outreach

The school strongly supports Caritas and uses the resources it provides as an integral part of its teaching and learning programme.

This understanding of service is translated to the school's student leadership programme which has clear Catholic Character expectations and goals.

Currently the parish pastoral council is looking at how it responds to the priorities of service and outreach that were highlighted by the Synod. The principal is a member of this committee and is looking to work with the parish how best the school can support these new initiatives.

Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Character- Te Kaitiakitanga Me To Whakapakari Te Tuakiri Ka Katorika

Areas of Success

Stewardship

The school holds an annual review of Catholic Character during which it consults with stakeholders and the results of this are then reported to the Bot.

The reviewers commend the school for this and encourage them to continue to develop internal evaluation as a tool for focusing on how best to live out the school vision.

Each Bot meeting begins with a prayer and the first item on each agenda is related to the school's Catholic Character. These items generally deal with the visible evidence of the school's Catholic Character and while this is important it would be good to see the school reporting back to the Bot on its progression in relation to the annual Catholic Character goals.

The school has a constructive and detailed Charter with the school's Catholic Character goals clearly displayed. The community is currently being consulted as part of developing the next strategic plan and the Catholic Character goals which have emerged from this consultation are both robust and forward looking.

The Bot policies are reviewed on a regular basis. Currently the only reference to Catholic Character within the policies is the school's mission statement. It would be good to see this deepened in future, by linking each policy specifically to the life of Christ.

Employment

The school has a robust employment process that clearly sets out the expectations for applicants.

On joining the staff, the new members follow an induction programme and the staff handbook sets out the school's Catholic values and expectations with clarity.

Relationships between the staff, students and community are positive and affirming.

Currently not all the job descriptions within the school contain Catholic Special Character goals.

Each job description should have a Catholic Special Character element and each annual appraisal should have a Catholic Character goal for development.

Legal Obligations

The school has five tagged positions and a Catholic Character Committee that works with the Principal and DRS to plan liturgies, prepare masses and model Christ throughout the community.

The preference forms for the school are signed by the proprietor's agent and the school meets these requirements regarding its Integration Agreement.

The school submits its Proprietors Appointees annual reports and the school Attestation each year and it submitted its Health Curriculum for the Proprietors consultation in 2015.

It's not clear that the school is meeting the NZCBC compliance regarding the number of hours of RE taught per week. Ways to ensure this is achieved and monitored should be included as part of the review of the Religious Education programme which is currently in place.

Eight of the current staff have completed Understanding Sexuality and this includes all the schools Senior Management Team.

Recommendations for next steps as identified by the school and reviewers

1. As part of the long-term review of its strategic and annual plans, the school needs to look to ways in which it can engage the Bot in discussions which clearly identify the significant Catholic Character goals. Then build upon the existing self-review to develop an ongoing Catholic Character internal evaluation process to determine how the school goes about achieving these goals.
2. During the process of developing the new faith centred integrated RE curriculum the school needs to develop a programme that has clear and comprehensive guidelines and expectations for the planning, teaching and assessment of Religious Education. This programme needs to assure staff they have taught all the key Achievement Aims and Objectives for each year within the three-year cycle and that the school is assured that it is meeting the NZCBC requirement regarding the number of hours taught per week at each level in the school.
3. That as part of the school's review of its values programme and charism it looks at ways to explicitly relate both the values and the charism directly to the Gospel and the life of Christ.
4. As Bot policies are reviewed, each one is updated with a Catholic Character component that links it directly to the Gospel and to the teaching of Christ.
5. All staff job descriptions have a Catholic Character component.

The organisation and preparation by the school for this review was greatly appreciated. The Reviewers would like to thank St Theresa's School Community for the welcome extended to them and for the opportunity to visit and experience the Special Catholic Character of its school.

**Francis Wafer
CSES external reviewer
March 2018**