

# **ĀHUATANGA KATORIKA KAUPAPA AROTAKE ME TE AHU WHAKAMUA**

## **CATHOLIC SPECIAL CHARACTER REVIEW FOR DEVELOPMENT**

Report on an external review of

### **TE KURA O HATO MERE ST. MARY'S SCHOOL BLENHEIM**

**SEPTEMBER 2018**

**Review conducted on: 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> September**

**Review Team:**

**Zita Smith** (Lead Reviewer)

**Judith Ford** (Accompanying Principal Reviewer)

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## SCHOOL DETAILS

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**Name:** St Mary's School

**Address:** 3 Stephenson Street, Blenheim

**School Type:** State Integrated Co-educational Years 1-8

**Decile:** 6

**Roll:** 177

**Ethnic Composition (actual number and % to the nearest whole)**

Maori: 39 (22%)

Pasifika: 23 (13%)

NZ Pakeha: 64 (36%)

Filipino: 25 (14%)

Asian: 9 (5%)

LAAA: 6 (3.4%)

Other: 11 (6.6%)

**Principal:** Mr Patrick Dowling

**Director of Religious Studies:** Mrs Rosie Lamain

**BOT Chairperson:** Mrs Megan McKendry

**Parish Priest:** Father John Pearce

**Date of on-site review:** 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> September 2018

**Date of this report:** 5<sup>th</sup> October, 2018

The Catholic special character review of St. Mary's School was conducted by the Wellington Catholic Schools Education Service review team of:

**Zita Smith**  
*Reviewer*

**Judith Ford**  
*Accompanying Principal Reviewer*

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## **THE AIMS AND FRAMEWORK OF THE CATHOLIC SPECIAL CHARACTER REVIEW**

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The New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference wishes the review to show how effective the school is in handing on the faith and forming a new generation of Catholics, and how students have grown in faith as a result of the Religious Education programme.

The External Review process is based on the requirements found in the document, *"Catholic Special Character Review for Development", Aotearoa NZ Catholic Integrated Schools, NZ Catholic Office Ltd, 2017 (Draft).*

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

- Encounter with Christ - *Te Tūtaki ki ā Te Karaiti*
- Growth in Knowledge – *Te Whakatupu mā Te Matauranga*
- Christian Witness – *Te Whakaatu Karaitiana*
- Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Character - *Te Kaitiakitanga me te Whakapakari i te Tuakiri Katorika*

Reviewers encourage and commend best practice, and, working with the school, provide recommendations to further strengthen and develop the Catholic culture of the school.

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## REPORT SUMMARY

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St Mary's is a Year 1- 8 school located alongside the Catholic Church, St. Mary's Preschool and Mercy Room in Blenheim. It is part of the Star of the Sea Parish of Marlborough which encompasses six other churches and one other school. St. Mary's School students are drawn from diverse cultures in Blenheim and from throughout the greater Marlborough region. The Sisters of Mercy and the De la Salle Brothers, the two founding orders, have had an important role in determining the values of the school community.

The school's Mission Statement, *In Christ's Light*, symbolised by a lighthouse, and integrated with the Gospel Values derived from the Beatitudes, form the foundation of the school's charism. Since the appointment of a new principal in 2017, this has become more explicit and visible in signs and wall displays inside and outside the school, as well as in the words and actions of staff and students.

The NZ Religious Education Curriculum is being implemented and teachers use a variety of ways to engage students in their learning, ably led by the DRS, an experienced teacher and exemplary role model. An outstanding feature of the school is how the Catholic Character is woven into all aspects of teaching and learning, giving students an authentic experience of a life lived from a Christian perspective. The way teachers consciously and strategically focus on how the Gospel message enlightens all curriculum areas, is powerful.

Prayer is a cornerstone of the school. Teachers model a variety of prayer styles to their students, who benefit from these rich prayer experiences. Students take leadership roles in prayer from the time they start at school, the most notable being in whole school prayer which is led by a different class each week. Parents and whanau are invited to this and many attend regularly. This prayer time was commented upon by staff, students and parents as a valuable way of putting God at the centre of life.

Positive and respectful relationships between students and staff and among students are evident. Students speak with love about their school and can describe how having a relationship with Jesus influences their lives.

The principal, DRS and DP, together with the Board, demonstrate effective leadership and stewardship of the school. The recommendations at the end of this Report will assist them to continue to do this.

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## **SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE PREVIOUS EXTERNAL REVIEW**

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### **Key Recommendations from the 2014 Review**

- 1. The analysis of preference certificates indicates that a number of students are yet to be baptised. The school is encouraged to work closely with the parish priest to find ways to support parents to prepare their children for the sacrament of baptism.***

A new format for preparing students for the Sacraments is promoted through the school newsletter. Parents of school children are encouraged to participate in sessions as well. Both the DRS and the Deputy Principal are involved in the planning and preparation of candidates enrolled in the Parish Sacrament Program which is run out of school hours. However, Baptism has not been specifically highlighted as part of this. See Recommendations 2018.

- 2. The school already has Catholic Character information for staff in a variety of places. However, it would be good to develop a Catholic Character section in the staff handbook so that staff can readily access it. This could include, all Catholic Character policies and procedures, pastoral care, the religious education statement, prayer with samples, professional development etc.***

Teachers new to the school receive an RE folder with guidelines for teaching and planning. PD for Teachers new to Catholic schools run by CSES is attended by all new staff. Curriculum workshops enable staff to keep up with aspects of Catholic Character.

- 3. Consider further promotion of the school's identified values by focussing on one value at a time. The value can be promoted in the classrooms, at assemblies, the playground and can also be highlighted in the school newsletter so that parents can refer to the values at home.***

The school has developed a Conceptual Curriculum. Each term's overarching theme links to the school charism and two Beatitudes values. Planning involves weaving and integrating these into all the curriculum areas. The charism and Gospel values form the basis for Assemblies and whole school prayers.

***4. Continue to promote and teach the students about the school's Charism to ensure that the history of the De La Salle Brothers and the Mercy Sisters are captured in ways that keep it alive for the school community.***

The story of the Mercy Sisters and De La Salle Brothers Charisms was studied by students and key words, phrases and spiritual themes were identified. Pictures were drawn for a mural and ideas were connected for the purpose of stating the charism as it relates to the past, present and future of our school. Parents and students were surveyed about the school's charism. The results of this survey led to the development of a new student leadership model. Crosses symbolising the school's history and special character, designed by students, will be manufactured and erected around the school.

***5. Within the school community, continue to identify ways in which to encourage all cultural groups within the school to be part of the faith life of the school.***

Tangata whenua were consulted about adopting a *whakatauki* (guiding principle) to encapsulate the school's mission statement. A cultural leaders' group was established in 2017 as part of a new leadership model. As part of the survey about the school's charism, the principal consulted with leaders of the various ethnic groups represented in the school. In school Masses, cultural elements are now embedded as normal practice e.g. students speak in their own language for a prayer, the sign of the cross has been taught in different languages and is recited at the start of each assembly and prayer.

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**TE TŪTAKI KI A TE KARAITI – ENCOUNTER WITH CHRIST**

*How 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?*

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**AREAS OF SUCCESS****Spiritual Formation**

Through the recent review of the school's charism, its mission statement, vision and values, there is a shared understanding of what Catholic spirituality looks like and how it is lived out in St. Mary's School. Students' knowledge of and relationship with Jesus Christ is based on the school vision *In Christ's Light*, as well as on the Beatitudes. These underpin school culture and are regularly used as a prayer focus.

There is evidence of rich and varied prayer experiences integral to the daily routine of school life. Prayer takes many forms, including art work, songs, meditation, praying in colour, as well as the use of traditional prayers. Prayer is also based on the charism of the Founders, the Mercy Sisters and De La Salle Brothers. Student prayer planning and leadership of prayer is a strength of the school.

Staff pray together twice a week, and are rostered to lead prayer. This is a time greatly valued by staff.

Students, staff and parents report that whole school prayer every Friday morning which is open to whanau and the parish community is one of the school's strengths. Prayer is led by a different class each week and incorporates the current learning in RE or some aspect of the school's vision and values.

There is space and time for quiet personal reflection and prayer. Students can pray individually in the prayer garden, meditation is incorporated into classroom prayer, some classes have made their own prayer books, and individual prayer cubes encourage personal reflection.

**Evangelisation**

All staff are positive role models who support, uphold and witness to the Catholic Character of the school in all their interactions.

The school provides a variety of opportunities for members of its community to develop and deepen their faith through open evenings, invitation to Friday prayer, assemblies, masses, the fortnightly Newsletter, the website with RE ideas for parents and whanau, and a spiritual component to all whanau meetings. The focus of the whanau meeting to start this year was *In Christ's Light*.

The school actively supports and promotes the parish programmes for the Sacraments of Reconciliation, First Eucharist and Confirmation, with details circulated in the Newsletter, and teachers supporting the programme.

School induction and orientation programmes assist new staff. A Resource Folder for teachers new to Catholic Schools is provided and includes a timetable for school-wide prayers, masses, liturgies each term, as well as classroom prayer rosters.

A clear statement about the school's priorities can be seen in the signs and symbols that have been erected, and further visuals are planned. The Beatitudes and associated values are printed around the pergola outside the Office.

### **Faith Based Leadership**

The principal and DRS confidently and competently demonstrate their own faith. The principal, well supported by the leadership team, articulates and promotes a clear, faith-based vision for the school. Working alongside the DRS, he has led a review of the Catholic Special Character with a focus on rediscovering its mission and vision in the light of the charism of the founders and the values stemming from the Beatitudes. A lighthouse (based on the nearby Cape Campbell Lighthouse) is the visual representation of the vision *In Christ's light*, and is evident in prayer, planning and teaching.

The history of the school has been revisited by staff and students, resulting in the school Houses returning to their original names of the founders, and to a greater awareness of the charism of those founders.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Continue to expand the lighthouse theme by exploring it in a deeper way each year and throughout the year levels.

Continue to build on the visual signs and symbols that express the Catholic Character of the school.

Currently there are 56 students with a preference certificate but who are not yet baptised. This has implications for their faith development and for the teaching of Religious Education, and presents an opportunity for the school to develop a strategic approach to an invitation to Baptism. See Recommendations.



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**TE WHAKATUPU MĀ TE MĀTAURANGA – GROWTH IN KNOWLEDGE**

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

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**AREAS OF SUCCESS****Leadership**

The DRS demonstrates effective leadership in the teaching of RE and observances. Her holistic view of the school's importance in the community of faith, helps in the way she leads the integration of faith into life. She continues to develop students and teachers as leaders in different aspects of Catholic Character and ensures teachers are developed in Religious Education. The role of the DRS is given appropriate status as part of the Senior Leadership Team, with weekly release and opportunities for appropriate PD. The DRS monitors the work of, and provides ongoing professional support for, teachers of Religious Education, through planning days and classroom observations.

The school leadership team engages in discussion and planning on how to synthesise a future-focused culture, faith and life, seen particularly through collaborative planning using the Conceptual Curriculum.

**Religious Education**

Effective, integrated, learning and teaching programmes for Religious Education based on the nationally mandated curriculum, are in place. This is evidenced in the annual Conceptual Curriculum planning framework which uses the school vision as the overarching theme across all curriculum areas. Planning is done cooperatively. Term goals are identified, explored and reflected upon within the context of the school's vision *In Christ's Light*. Teachers make effective use of NCRS online curriculum material including Faith Alive, and use the Religious Education Bridging Document (REBD).

Teaching and learning in Religious Education reflect best practice in current pedagogy. Across the school, RE teaching is effective, creative, and engaging; wall displays, scriptural/ gospel presentations and student led inquiry are examples of the variety of learning experiences. RE lessons integrated with other areas of the Curriculum are evident in all classrooms e.g. studying an aspect of light in science demonstrates integration into the overarching Catholic Character theme of *Sharing the Light*. Students could explain how they live Christ's light in the world.

Teachers evaluate their teaching and are reflective in their practice. Rather than formal assessment, teachers have discussions with students about the depth and breadth of their knowledge which includes how they can live a Christian life and share their faith. Teachers use this information when writing Reports. Teachers also hold evaluative

discussions at team level to share student progress and achievement, and to determine next steps.

All staff members engage in a regular, planned programme of PLD, which included the REBD in 2018, and an exploration of their Charism in 2017.

Whānau are informed regularly of the content and emphasis of the Religious Education programme. Some ways this is done is through the school website, Facebook page and newsletter, and by sending home prayer books with New Entrants.

### **Catholic Curriculum**

The school teaches the core principles of Catholic social teaching and their application, as an integral component of a lived faith. Examples are the use of CARITAS Social Justice Resources, the Beatitudes values interwoven through daily school life, and whole school weekly prayer.

The school develops students' awareness of their responsibilities as global citizens as well as citizens of Aotearoa New Zealand through the Enviro Group, Social Justice Week, Caritas Lenten Program, Cultural Group, recycling, and the Kids' Edible Garden.

School policy ensures that those aspects of the Health curriculum which involve human sexuality education are set in the context of the teaching of the Catholic Church. A girls' and boys' Year 7 and 8 programme is run through a parent and student night by external providers.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Explore how students at all levels can evaluate their own faith journey e.g. Reflective or Prayer Journals.

Link all school documents, especially appraisals to the school charism, vision and values.

Develop a Health Curriculum Sexuality class-based programme from Year 1-8 that reflects the teaching of the Catholic Church. Teachers who have not yet participated in the *Having Life to the Full* programme need to do this before the next review.

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**TE WHAKAATU KARAITIANA- CHRISTIAN WITNESS**

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

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**AREAS OF SUCCESS****Catholic School Community**

The principal, DRS and teachers are active witnesses of faith in the school and parish. Several teachers participate in the parish as Eucharistic ministers, readers, in the sacramental programme, being on the Catholic schools stewardship team, and in faith formation days.

The charism of the school is actively promoted as a lens through which the school's Catholic identity and commitment to Jesus Christ are made visible. Over the last year, the school has made more explicit its mission as a Catholic school. Signs and symbols provide witness to the Catholic identity of the school. The Beatitudes, printed around the pergola in the grounds and the presence of the prayer garden give witness to the Catholic Character. All classrooms express the school's Catholic Character by featuring the values and lighthouse symbol, well-resourced prayer focus areas, and displays of students' RE work. The statue and displays in the foyer leave no doubt that this is a Catholic school.

**Partnership & Collaboration**

As a community within the larger communities of the extended parish and the diocese, the school seeks to work collaboratively with the local parish. There is a very positive relationship with Fr. John Pearce (Parish Priest), who regularly visits classrooms to chat with children, attends prayer sessions and is a welcome presence in the staffroom.

Networking with other Catholic groups is evidenced by regular visits from Frank Wafer and Alan Grant of CSES as well as connecting with Nelson and West Coast DRSs, DPs and Principals' groups.

The school also belongs to the local Kahui Ako (Community of Learning), the only Catholic school represented.

**Te Tiriti o Waitangi**

The school has a commitment to, and educates for, a deeper understanding of the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, seen in the School Charter, Code of Conduct, Staff Handbook, and in the playground, signs and values in Te Reo Māori as well as in English.

The school has a commitment to learning and teaching about local Māori and pakehā history by visiting Waikawa Marae as a whole school in 2017.

The school takes part in authentic consultation with its Māori community. Rita Powick, CEO of Waikawa marae and RTLB for Māori in Marlborough, was consulted over local iwi names for the Beatitudes and for the Māori signage on the new school signposts. The school continues to operate and educate in culturally responsive ways and is using the Ministry of Education document entitled *Poutama Pounamu* to further build on this.

The school has its own *whakatauki*, developed in consultation with local Māori. Students begin to explore their *pepeha* from the time they start school through to Yr 8. The staffroom wall has an area devoted to the tribal affiliations of whanau with a photo of each student linking to the geographical location of their iwi.

There is an ongoing connection with students from Marlborough Girls' College who visit the school weekly and provide tutoring in waiata with actions and games.

### **Pastoral Care**

Pastoral Care is provided in a needs-based way for individual students and their parents. Outside agencies are engaged whenever necessary to support families and more recently there is a greater emphasis on restorative practice to build pastoral care with students.

### **Service and Outreach**

The school is developing culture of service and outreach through Caritas, Mission Money, Operation Christmas Child, the Parish Food Drive and St. Vincent de Paul. Students help with the Book Fair, gala, garage sale, working bees, prayer leadership, assemblies and masses.

Year 5-8 students can take up leadership roles in a variety of service areas within the school and are recognised for their service and leadership.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Review Pastoral Care and develop a plan integrated into the school's charism, vision and values. See Recommendations.

Design a more structured approach to service and outreach in the community that develops from Year 1. Developing a relationship with the residents of Bethsaida Retirement Village (which is to start in Term 4), and establishing a 'Mini Vinnies' were two suggestions made by staff and parents. See Recommendations.

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

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

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**Actual Roll:** 177

**Maximum Roll:** 464

**Non-preference Maximum** *as per Integration Agreement:* 23 (5 % of max roll)

**Actual non preference:** 20 (4.3 % of max roll)

**Roll-based staffing entitlement:** 8.9

**No. S464 positions required:** 5

**No. actual S464 positions:** 5

Preference Criteria	Number of Students	% actual roll
5.1	101	57
5.2	6	3.4
5.3	29	16.4
5.4	21	12
5.5		
Preference with no criteria		
<b>Total of signed preference roll</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>88.5</b>
Non-Preference Roll	20	11.5
International Fee Paying Students	n/a	

## AREAS OF SUCCESS

### Stewardship

The Board safeguards the school's Catholic Character. All meetings start and end with prayer. Frank Wafer from CSES has provided several professional development sessions for the Board.

The Board Chair and principal have a positive working relationship. Currently all documentation, including Policies, are being reviewed in the light of the Catholic Character, to better reflect the school's charism and values.

**Legal Obligations**

The school is meeting its obligations under its Integration Agreement in terms of staffing, tagged positions and preference/non-preference students.

**NEXT STEPS**

In the last 3 years, twelve preference certificates with students enrolled under 5.1 had no evidence of their baptism. See Recommendations.

The Integration Agreement allows for non-preference students to make up 5% of the maximum roll. Numerically, this is 23 students out of 464. Currently there are 20 non-preference students out of a roll of 177 students, equating to 11% of the actual roll. The Board is aware of this and continues to ensure that the Catholic Character is safeguarded and strengthened.

Evaluation of Catholic Character needs to be part of the Board's internal review process. Responsibility for reviews involves not only the DRS but also the principal and proprietor's appointees in some capacity. See Recommendations.

As policies are reviewed and updated, ensure that each reflects the school's Catholic Character.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

*It is expected that the Board of Trustees and staff will include these recommendations in its strategic and annual plans and address them fully before the next external review. Catholic Schools Education Services staff are available to offer professional support as required.*

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*Encounter with Christ*

- 1. Continue to develop the charism, vision and values as the foundation of the school and ensure these are reflected in all documentation.**
  - Update the RE Curriculum document, Pastoral Care Procedures and write a Behavioral Management Plan to reflect the charism of the school.
- 2. From the time of enrolment, ensure that there is an invitational process for receiving the Sacrament of Baptism as part of the school welcome and culture.**

*Christian Witness*

- 3. Build capability and authentic opportunities for all students to serve in the wider community.**

*Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Character*

- 4. Ensure preference forms are completed fully and accurately before a child is accepted into the school.**
- 5. Carry out internal review of Catholic Character annually as part of a 3 year cycle. Ensure that**
  - Reviews are based on the dimensions in the *Catholic Special Character Review for Development* Draft Document and are included in the Board triennial work plan

The review team is confident that the St. Mary's School leadership (Board, Principal, DP and DRS) have the willingness and ability to address the recommendations of this report.

In concluding this report, the review team wish to thank the St. Mary's School staff and community for their aroha and manaakitanga during our visit and for the opportunity to observe and the privilege to experience the Catholic Character of the school.



Zita Smith  
Lead Reviewer