

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF CHRISTCHURCH

**CATHOLIC SPECIAL CHARACTER
REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT**

St Anne's School, Woolston

April 2017

Diocesan External Review of Catholic Special Character St Anne's School, Woolston April 2017

The aims and scope of this review are in accordance with the Aotearoa New Zealand Catholic Integrated Schools "Catholic Special Character Review and Development Document".

Aims of Review:

- ♣ To identify, affirm and celebrate all the positive expressions of Catholic Special Character at St Anne's School.
- ♣ To enable St Anne's School to demonstrate acceptable standards of the Catholic Special Character dimensions:
 - Catholic Community
 - Pastoral Care
 - Religious Education
- ♣ To provide an assurance to the proprietor that St Anne's School is authentically Catholic
- ♣ To acknowledge the parish/school partnership in assisting parents as first educators of their children.

About the School:

School Type:	Primary 0-8
Teaching Staff:	
Staffing entitlement	6.77
Actual Number of teachers (FTTE)	6.7
S65 Tagged positions	2 plus Principal and DRS (DP S66)
Filled	All
Students:	
Allowable Maximum Roll	180
Domestic students	104
Non-Preference Entitlement	9
Non-Preference Actual	8
Dates of Review :	4-5 April 2017
Review Leader	Mark Gregory
Support Reviewer	Angela Marshall

Diocesan External Review Process

Consultation for this review involved an initial visit to agree upon the days of the review followed by a set-up meeting with the Principal and Board Chair.

The principal of St Joseph's School, Fairlie, was invited to assist with the review. During the two days, the reviewers met with the principal, teachers, support staff, parish priest, proprietor's representatives of the Board of Trustees, a group of parents and a group of students. Reviewers visited all classrooms to observe Religious Education lessons and to view the Religious Education curriculum and assessment documentation.

The school provided all the requested documentation in advance and organised the schedule of visits and interviews for the two days. The documentation was thoroughly prepared and appreciated by the reviewers.

The review team received a formal welcome with a powhiri and was made to feel very welcome throughout the duration of the review by all members of the school and parish community.

Recommendations for Next Steps from 2012 Review

Before the 2017 Review, St Anne's School had addressed most of the recommendations from the 2012 Review. There has been some interaction with the neighbouring parish school, Our Lady Star of the Sea School. They have been invited to St Anne's School for a Beginning of Year Mass, Parihaka Day, inter-school sporting events and Year 8 Retreats.

The school is now working closely with the parish priest to support parents to prepare their children for the Sacrament of Baptism. 12 children will be Baptised this year.

The school is sourcing a wide range of support services to assist families in need. Of particular note is a social worker who spends one day at week at the school, who is also available for home visits. The funding for this is provided by the Ministry of Education for decile 1-3 schools.

During 2016, the Director of Religious Studies unpacked the Mass in detail to support non-Catholic teachers and to increase the knowledge of the students in order for them to participate more fully.

Since 2016, there has been a group of six senior students who form a Faith Team to work with, and provide support to, the Director of Religious Studies. They play an active role in leading prayer services and in planning and preparing for School Masses.

CATHOLIC COMMUNITY - TE IWI WHĀNUI KATORIKA

The school is a community where gospel values are central, where faith is nourished, and where Christian celebration in the Catholic tradition is highly valued.

As visitors to the school, there was a warm, genuine feeling of welcome. We were treated with the utmost courtesy. The Catholic community, by all concerned, was proud to celebrate and articulate what was so special about St Anne's School. No matter who, or what group we spoke to, we were hearing the same story. All spoke of the positive relationships between students, between staff and students, board and staff, and parish and school. This became very clear to us during the two days. As one proprietor's representative shared, '*There is a great sense of faith present. God is a real part of the vocabulary which is reflected in the behaviour and kindness. This is our faith in action.*'

There is a strong working relationship between the Principal and the DRS. Although both are relatively new to their roles, there is an infectious enthusiasm and strong commitment to

collaboratively enhance the Catholic Special Character of St Anne's School by 'growing the faith,' as one board member shared. A fine example of this was the reviewing, consultation and re-writing of the school's current Charter. The school's motto and values are well communicated throughout the school community. These values are taught, modelled and regularly promoted in school documents and programmes of work. There are clear links from the Charter to the planning of classroom programmes and observing classroom practice.

The staff works as a unified team, both teaching and support staff. They have expressed the importance of positive role modelling based on what Jesus would do, say and tell us to do. Within the group of students interviewed, two experienced another school before St Anne's. Both spoke of how their new school was very different and how the children and teachers were kinder and more caring.

The school is also giving more acknowledgement to the founding order of the school, the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions. One of the 2017 Charter actions, states the desire to increase the knowledge of the charism of the Mission Sisters. It was expressed by a number of staff, how fortunate they were to have one of the Mission Sisters on the Board of Trustees. A digital presentation outlining the history of the school in its early days to the present is now shared with new parents as part of their induction programme.

Involving the community, and in particular, the students, was a feature of the design of a new school logo. This now appears strongly on all materials associated with the school including several uniform items. Children wear these with pride and can articulate the significance of the logo.

The introduction of individual classes attending the Parish Sunday Mass has received glowing comments from the parish and school community. Each class attends a Sunday celebration and a Wednesday Mass every term. This gives the school a very high profile within the parish. Classes have an active role in the Eucharist by leading the Prayers of the Faithful, singing and leading a hymn after Communion and assisting parishioners in their duties. With these increased opportunities of attending Mass, the children are becoming more reverent in their prayerfulness and behaviour. A group of parents voiced that there is now a stronger connection between the parish and the school as a result of these regular Class Masses. They also spoke very highly of the principal and teachers and appreciate all the school does for their children, particularly in the area of pastoral care.

Two teachers, including the Director of Religious Studies, recently participated in a Parish Lenten Programme which involved five, two-hour sessions. Other teachers followed Fr John O'Connor's online Lenten reflections. This level of commitment, alongside the requirement for teachers to complete an annual paper towards the Diploma of Religious Education is to be commended.

The principal, DRS and staff all support the Sacramental programmes offered by the parish. A new initiative, driven by the principal, has seen 12 children and their parents enrol in a Baptism programme. It is the hope that these children will have an ongoing encounter with Jesus Christ that will be nurtured and developed by the parish and school over time. The Sacraments of First Reconciliation and Communion, and Confirmation are all offered to primary school age children and are regularly promoted by the principal, DRS and the teachers.

The office foyer had displays featuring Lent and a statue of St Anne with the school motto written in English, Māori, Samoan and Filipino. Throughout the school there are Catholic symbols and wall displays featuring the work of the children in Religious Education and a variety of supporting material. As a focal point, each classroom has a prayer table creatively arranged.

The parish priest is well-known in the school and visits on a regular basis. The children particularly enjoyed observing him burn the palms in preparation for Ash Wednesday. He is active in sourcing

donated food for the school and parish community. These are placed in the foyer of the church on a regular basis.

St Anne's School is one of 15 schools in the Catholic Community of Learning, Te Mara Akoranga Katorika. The overall objective is to raise achievement of all students by working collaboratively and sharing best practice across the community of schools. Social Justice features prominently as the Catholic Special Character focus for all schools.

The children of St Anne's School are introduced to a variety of prayer styles where they confidently participate and lead when appropriate. There is a strong emphasis on upskilling both students and teachers in te reo Māori. The principal leads by example having committed himself to undertake a one year, full immersion te reo Māori course. Teachers make every effort to incorporate the languages of Samoan and Filipino to acknowledge the number of students within these cultures. The Sign of the Cross and Grace before Meals can be seen in the three languages above in classrooms. The same occurs for the wording of the school's motto.

The students understood social justice as treating people equally and with respect and compassion. Service is an important element of the school's motto, 'Living our faith through our actions,' and is highlighted as one of the five Gospel Values promoted by the school; *love of God, love of others, service, respect and forgiveness*. They proudly shared that their service for others included visits to retirement homes, the Caritas Coin Trail, organising stalls for the Mission Fair and being members of the kapa haka, choir and enviro groups. It would certainly be worthwhile re-establishing the Young Vinnies Group as a way of illustrating *Faith in Action*.

In summary, the children and staff encounter Jesus in the caring relationships they create with each other. As one staff member articulated, "*There is a real sense of aroha here. We are all famously friendly and the staff is 100% committed.*"

PASTORAL CARE – MANAAKITANGA

The school community nurtures, supports and cares for individuals.

After interviewing a number of different groups within the school and parish community, familiar responses were being expressed. Staff, both teaching and support, were enthusiastic about the incredibly supportive environment in which they worked and how they felt affirmed and appreciated. Similar thoughts were expressed by the parents as to the welcoming atmosphere, the willingness of staff to go the extra mile, and the strong Catholic values that are shared by all. The parent group re-iterated the very strong pastoral care culture which is consistent throughout the whole staff.

Students acknowledged that they felt very safe at school and the staff showed respect for them individually, and for their cultural heritage, and that the children cared for others and not just themselves. When they first started school, they shared how staff and students welcomed them and showed them around the school, the joy of receiving a Welcome Certificate at assembly, and the little class party to farewell any departing students.

Staff encourage students to take responsibility for their own behaviour. The behaviour management model is well known to the students and contains a few steps to help them reflect on their behaviour and put things right to re-establish the relationship. As a further enhancement, this model could relate back to the school motto and ask, what would Jesus do, say and tell us to do?

St Anne's School provides a Kidsbase before and after school care programme for its students. It operates every school day from 7.30am – 8.30am, and 3.00pm – 6.00pm. This is an effective

programme providing support for the school's working parents. A support staff member, who is also a parent, leads this activity-based programme within the safety of one of the school classrooms.

Being part of the Ministry of Education's Social Workers in Schools allows St Anne's School to tap into an excellent personnel resource for one day a week. The social worker offers a counselling service for students, and delivers a valuable liaison between home and school and useful advice for classroom teachers. Home visits are part of the ongoing support. This service provides invaluable pastoral care for the students of St Anne's School.

In the classroom, teacher aides offer extra learning support for those whom require a boost. In the discussion with parents, they were extremely grateful for the assistance given to children with learning difficulties. Support staff are proud of their contribution to support student learning and promote the Catholic Special Character of the school.

The environment reflects the cultural diversity of the school and its community. Cultural traditions, language and music are naturally incorporated into classroom programmes of work, liturgies and prayers. As to the school's bi-cultural commitment, celebrating te reo and tikanga Māori are part of the daily life of the school.

The principal sources assistance from the KidsCan Charitable Trust to support families in need. Donations provide food, clothing and healthcare programmes.

Parishioners sponsor some families for the payment of their attendance dues. The generosity of these parishioners is much appreciated.

Class prayers are inclined to alert staff to issues present for the children, particularly the younger ones.

In summary, the school's pastoral care procedures reflect Gospel values and Church teachings.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION – TE WHAKAAKORANGA WHAKAPONO

The school helps to fulfil the teaching missions of the Church.

St Anne's School integrates Religious Education throughout every aspect of school life. Strands are integrated into other learning areas e.g. focus on God the Creator was used in developing artwork, guided reading and shared reading times. Daily prayer is held in classrooms along with weekly whole school prayer services and regular Class Masses. This is then linked to home life through students taking home prayers, information sheets and activities to work on with their parents, and is further complemented by inviting parents to attend prayer assemblies and Masses.

The school implements the national Religious Education curriculum and is experimenting with an inquiry and integrated planning model. At the beginning of the year, staff looked at an integrated unit based on the Caritas, Just Water resource. Links were identified with the Sacrament Strand and the upcoming Baptisms for 12 children. Further opportunities identified Holy Water, Lourdes and the importance of water to our faith. These ideas, combined with the Caritas unit highlighting the climate change challenges faced by our Pacific communities, gave plenty of scope for student learning and engagement.

The prayer space is a focal point for each class. Karakia is the priority each morning and throughout the day. Tamariki are reverent and respectful and show an enjoyment for this special time. They are familiar with the routines and are often lead by the children themselves.

All five classes were observed during a Religious Education lesson. The learning intentions were shared and discussed with the students at the beginning of the lessons together with clear links to students' prior learning. A highlight of the class visits were the regular use of te reo Māori within the lessons and seeing the language displayed clearly on the walls of the classrooms. Students were well engaged in the lessons and exhibited a high level of respect for the different cultures of others.

Most teachers used modelling books for Religious Education. Not only did these provide a good record as to what was being taught, but also allowed students and teacher the opportunity to revisit them to highlight or recall prior learning. Teachers broke down the learning to small manageable chunks to ensure a better understanding for all. There was evidence of work in student books that displayed a level of pride in their work. These books were shared with their parents during student led conferences.

Although the principal and Director of Religious Studies are relatively new to their positions, they have developed a strong working relationship and both lead by example. Other staff are appreciative of their ongoing support and desire to enhance the Catholic Special Character of the school. The important role of the Director of Religious Studies is acknowledged by the principal and is given appropriate status.

The Director of Religious Studies makes resources available that are relevant to the liturgical year and the strand being taught. These are left in the staffroom and change on a regular basis. Non-Catholic teachers are fully supported by the Director of Religious Studies to increase their knowledge of whatever is being taught at the time. Strands covered are decided as the year progresses in order to integrate with other subject areas. These are recorded on the noticeboard in the staffroom.

The school provides opportunities for regular professional development in Religious Education. During 2016 all teaching staff completed RE101 of the Diploma of Religious Education and plan on increasing professional development hours by completing RE102, Introduction to Spirituality this year. As one teacher acknowledged in the teacher questionnaire, *"I am finding involvement completing the Religious Education Diploma is helping in the development of both personal and professional faith formation. Learning, sharing and interacting with colleagues is stimulating and inspiring."*

One of the Charter actions states that staff will be involved in the Spiritual Renewal Programme offered by the Diocese. Teaching staff must be commended for their willingness to take part in these extra opportunities to increase their knowledge.

Sexuality education is presented in the context of the education of the whole person and is appropriate for the young person's stage of development. The parent group interviewed spoke very highly of the natural and caring way this programme was covered. Two teachers have been identified for participating in the Understanding Sexuality course offered by the Catholic Education Office. Both teachers are new to the school.

School staff spend time together in prayer and to reflect on the focus of each strand. They discuss the theological focus and how this relates to the achievement objectives. At the end of the strand the Director of Religious Studies leads a meeting seeking feedback from teachers.

Assessment is completed after each strand with a variety of assessment formats used by teachers. Whole school targets are identified in the Charter. Assessment in Religious Education would be strengthened by collating school-wide data in one or two selected strands to determine the extent of increased student knowledge. Similarly, the school's Schedule of Assessment should include planned assessments in Religious Education as it does for literacy and numeracy.

Weekly newsletters keep parents informed of news and events, as do the school Facebook page and class blogs. The class prayer bag is taken home with a student each night to guide parents who are not so comfortable in praying with their children.

During 2016, the Mass was unpacked in detail to support non-Catholic teachers and to increase the knowledge of the students in order for them to participate more fully.

In summary, St Anne's School helps to fulfil the teaching mission of the Church by giving the Religious Education programme high status. The school provides effective learning and teaching programmes for Religious Education, and is adequately and appropriately resourced to deliver these programmes by teachers willing to upskill their own knowledge.

GOVERNANCE AND COMPLIANCE – NGA WHAKAAETANGA ME NGA WHAKARITENGA

The Board of Trustees and staff have recently completely revised the School Charter. They are to be complimented for the work achieved in developing their vision, motto, strategic aims and actions to achieve their annual targets. Within the charter, the school's motto, '*Living our faith through our actions*' provides further explanation as to how this is done. We do this by; *doing what Jesus said* through a study of His parables, sermons, statements and answers; *doing what Jesus did* through a study of Jesus' actions of healing, forgiveness, standing up for others and service; and *doing what Jesus told us to do* through a study of Jesus' commandments of love, Eucharist and evangelisation. These three statements provide a rare simplicity, yet clear guidelines for all to *live their faith through their actions*.

The board is to be complimented too, on its regular use of te reo Māori within the charter linking key ideas in both English and te reo Māori.

A suggestion from one of the board members was to discuss opportunities to increase the prayer life at meetings and to look at the possibility of sourcing some personal faith development.

All documentation relating to employment includes clear and concise information relating to the Catholic Special Character of St Anne's School. The school has a written Appointments Policy in keeping with the Catholic Special Character and tagged positions are correctly advertised with specific requirements included.

Teaching staff have a very detailed Catholic Character Job Description that specifies Catholic Special Character performance indicators aligned to the Teacher Professional Standards. The Director of Religious Studies provides written feedback together with a written teacher reflection on the same document. It would be worthwhile extending this process to include the appraisal of the current Director of Religious Studies and to include support staff in the process.

The school has a written Catholic Special Character Policy and incorporates separate policies on Catholic Community, Pastoral Care and Religious Education. Within the last three years, the staff and board have planned and reviewed all three dimensions of the school's Catholic Special Character.

The preference/non-preference details, as at the time of the Catholic Special Character review (April 2017), were as follows:

St Anne's School (Woolston)	Maximum Roll (as per Integration Agreement) = 180 students	Non-Preference Maximum (as per Integration Agreement) = 9 students
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Preference Criterion	Number of Students	% of Current Total Number Students
5.1	67	64.4%
5.2	6	5.8%
5.3	18	17.3%
5.4	4	3.8%
5.5	1	1.0%
Non-Preference	8	7.7%
Total	104	100%

Please note that the 7.7% non-preference level is not a breach of the Integration Agreement for St Anne's School – the school has not exceeded its agreed maximum number of 9 non-preference students (5% of the maximum roll of 180 students); the 7.7% is as a result of the school having, at April 2017, a roll of 104 students (66 students less than the school's maximum roll).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEXT STEPS FROM THIS 2017 REVIEW

Catholic Community

1. To form a dedicated, action-focused group of students to re-establish a Young Vinnies Group as a way of illustrating *Faith in Action* with the help of the DRS or other staff member.

Religious Education

2. Assessment in Religious Education would be strengthened by collating school-wide data in one or two selected strands to determine the extent of increased student knowledge. Strands chosen could be based on the weakest strands identified in the Year 4 RE Online Assessment for St Anne's School.
3. The school's Schedule of Assessment should include planned assessments in Religious Education as it does for literacy and numeracy.

Governance

4. To discuss opportunities, as a board, to increase the prayer life at meetings and the possibility of sourcing some personal faith development.

The reviewers thank the community of St Anne's School for the welcome extended to them and for the opportunity to observe and experience the way they nurture their Catholic Special Character.

Mark Gregory
Catholic Special Character Reviewer