



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF AUCKLAND

**Pompallier Diocesan Centre,
30 New Street,
Ponsonby, Auckland 1144**

**ĀHUATANGA KATORIKA KAUPAPA
AROTAKE ME TO AHU WHAKAMUA**

CATHOLIC SPECIAL CHARACTER

EXTERNAL REVIEW REPORT

**ST. FRANCIS XAVIER CATHOLIC SCHOOL
WHANGAREI**

Review Visit: 21st – 22nd August, 2019

Confirmed Report: 24th September, 2019

NGĀ WHĀINGA O TE AROTAKE - AIMS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

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

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

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

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

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

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

SCHOOL INFORMATION

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| School Name: | St Francis Xavier Catholic School, Whangarei |
| Address: | 1 Percy St, Kensington, Whangarei 0112 |
| Principal: | Mr Craig McKernan |
| Director of Special Character: | Mrs Maria Wilson |
| Parish Priest: | Fr. Christopher Martin SM |
| BOT Chair: | Mrs Joanne Ashby |
| Reviewers: | Mrs. Colleen Gleeson, Mr Philip Mahoney |
| Accompanying Principal: | Miss Peta Lindstrom |
| School Type: | Year 1-6 (girls and boys) |

Introduction

St Francis Xavier Catholic School, Whangarei had prepared themselves well for their Catholic Special Character External Review. The documentation provided, prior to the Review, was thorough and presented a good overview of the school and the many activities in which it is involved. Considerable thought and time had obviously gone into the completion of the Review Questionnaires as together they gave a very comprehensive picture of how the school lives its Catholic Special Character.

The Board of Trustees, Principal, staff, parents, students and parishioners warmly welcomed the Reviewers and were happy to talk about their school, sharing their thoughts and opinions, and were open to any ideas as to how to enhance the Special Character.

Situated in Northland, the school serves the Parish of St Francis Xavier. The school and Parish share a large site with the presbytery and parish centre. It is the only Catholic primary school in Whangarei.

Response to Areas for Development from the 2015 External Review

- ***That the school continue to investigate the use of innovative learning environments and the modern pedagogy needed to make them successful and find a solution which suits their students and the whanau organisation of the school.***

The school is divided into five whanau groupings, each consisting of junior, middle and senior classes. Teachers work collaboratively within the whanau, sharing ideas, talents and expertise. This structure works well for the school community.

- ***That the Board identify the most effective way of gathering data for each annual self review, that is relevant to the review focus, a survey may not always be the most effective option.***

Each self review focus is now considered and the most appropriate way of collecting data is implemented to answer the focus question.

- ***That the Director of Religious Studies and her team share the observation of prayer by taking their own classes to share prayer in different classes which will provide teachers with direction and also save more release time for other tasks.***

The Director of Religious Studies models prayer and Religious Education lessons for new employees which has proved very beneficial. She observes a prayer session and a Religious Education lesson in each room at least once per year.

- ***The next step for the school is to place an emphasis on the variety of responses to the teaching and learning in Religious Education. Religious Education books or folders, blogs, digital responses, art, drama, music and literacy can be created. With the move to more digital and creative responses to learning it is important that teachers consider how and where children's work can be recorded and viewed.***

Most teachers now use the "Seesaw" app to share children's work and progress in Religious Education. The Religious Education journals are still used to share written responses to learning.

- ***The next step for teachers is to reflect on their pedagogy and ensure that they are working towards more student-led learning, self managing programmes and flexible timetables.***

The school are reviewing local curriculum goals. They have included student choice, play-based time in learning and are beginning to introduce STEAM – Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths.

- ***That the following Sunday's Gospel reading be provided to teachers, students and families to be discussed and understood in preparation for Sunday Mass each week.***

This initiative was not tried however the Director of Religious Studies does inform the parent community of upcoming parish and school activities and Masses. The Religious Education section in the school newsletter reflects how and why they are a Catholic School.

Encounter with Christ – Te Tutaki ki a Te Karaiti

The School encourages and facilitates the development of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ who reveals the transforming love and truth of the living God.

Areas of Success

St Francis Xavier Catholic School, Whangarei has an extremely strong community and warm atmosphere where families are particularly important. St Francis Xavier is the only Catholic primary school in the area and the parents spoken to during the review were very clear that it was the Catholic values and education they were wanting for their children. They wanted the school to be an extension of their homes and saw the staff as Christ-like role models.

The spirituality of St Francis Xavier Catholic School is very evident in the way staff and students relate to each other, welcome visitors and support each other and the wider community. Through its Mary MacKillop sayings and Gospel values it provides encouragement and resources for individuals within the school community to develop their own faith journey.

Classroom prayers are a sacred and reverent time across the school. The prayers are varied and some classes use audio visual equipment to support the theme, waiata and prayers. Students lead prayer where possible. Evidence of the relationship the students are developing with Jesus was found in the reverence students showed during meditation and prayers in general. A parishioner visits the school each week and visits classes or whanau groups to do Meditation with the students. Staff reflections are held on Friday mornings before school and staff are rostered to lead this. The Year 6 students have a full day retreat in the Parish hall each year. The Religious Education Advisors facilitated the retreat last year. In the month of May the school focuses on Mary and in October each year the Rosary is said by the whole school twice per week lead by each whanau. Mihi Whakatau are held at the beginning of each term for new students and families. They are held in the church, supported by our priests, and reflect the parish/school partnership.

Whanau Masses are held on one Sunday per term, classes are rostered to attend a Tuesday morning parish Mass each week and school Masses or liturgies are held on special feast days and for special celebrations. Reconciliation is offered to classes four times throughout the year. A Commissioning Mass is held at the beginning of each school year where Boards of Trustees and staff of Pompallier Catholic College and St Francis Xavier are blessed.

The spirituality of the school is reflected in the beautiful grounds and displays throughout the interior of the buildings. From the dovecote at the front door of the school - home to five white doves, murals and artwork, to the sacred space of the prayer garden with symbolic planting, stepping-stone rosary

and full size statues of Jesus and Mary set in pergolas, the grounds are a credit to the school and continue to be maintained and developed with pride. Walking around the grounds you get a clear sense of the love of God's creation held by the school.

The school's Mary MacKillop statements are known to the children and their parents and are lived at school and, according to the parents, at home. Each of these statements are based on Gospel values. They are well displayed throughout the school and are obvious to the school community and visitors alike. The children interviewed were able to give examples of how they live these values. Awards are presented at assemblies to children displaying them in their daily life.

The school motto is "To Love, Kia Aroha; To Learn, Kia Akona; To Serve, Kia Aro Atu". Children are able to articulate how they live this motto in their everyday lives.

St Francis Xavier school and parish work as one to provide a Sacramental programme. At the time of the previous Special Catholic Character Review in 2015 the school had begun to advertise a Baptismal programme for students who had 5.2-5.4 preference criteria. The programme has now been going very effectively for three and a half years, run by the Deputy Principal, who is a parishioner, and the Parish Priest. Over this time 68 children have been Baptised. The Sacramental Programme is parish based and many of the school's teachers help to run and teach this programme.

"We are planting the seeds for future faith development"
(Staff interview response)

The school actively promotes the Catholic faith among staff and have made some excellent tagged appointments. Some teachers who have either come back to the Church or who have become Catholic are now assisting with the Parish Sacramental Programme.

There are four priests at the parish, three of whom have an interest in the primary school, the other is the chaplain for Pompallier College. The Parish Priest is a member of the Board of Trustees and spends time in the school most days, if possible. All three priests visit classes each week and take turns to celebrate school Masses. They enjoy being part of the everyday life of the school and are invited to all school functions and activities. The Parish Priest makes a point to stand by the school exit each afternoon to speak to parents and children as they leave. Two of the priests are available to interview each family as they sign the Preference form.

The Principal has been in his role at St Francis Xavier School for 19 years. He is highly respected in both the Catholic and State Education sectors and has supported Catholic Principals and teachers in the Far North and Dargaville for many years. He is held in very high esteem by the school and parish community. He has served on the Auckland Catholic Primary Principals Executive and the New Zealand Catholic Primary Principals Executive. He currently is Chairperson of the wider Whangarei Community of Learning and is leading one of the five Kahui Ako

The Principal is supported in his role by a strong Senior Leadership Team which includes the two Deputy Principals, Director of Religious Studies and whanau leaders. Most are active members in the Parish and are excellent, positive role models who support, uphold and witness to the Special Catholic Character of the school.

Next Steps

A Charism unit is taught across the school annually. This unit needs to be planned in progressions from Year 1 to Year 6 and should include the missionary zeal and life stories of St Francis Xavier and St Mary MacKillop. The link between St Mary MacKillop and the Josephite Sisters and their work in the history of Catholic education in the Whangarei area needs to be understood by students.

The school could consider an annual retreat for staff and Board of Trustee members, either together or separately.

Growth in Knowledge – Te Whakatupu ma te Matauranga

The School assists its community to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Jesus Christ, his teachings and the Catholic Church.

Areas of Success

The Director of Religious Studies taught in St Joseph's School, Whangarei before its amalgamation with St Mary's to become St Francis Xavier Catholic School. She has been Director of Religious Studies for 11 years. She receives one day per fortnight release for Director of Religious Studies work and the Deputy Principal gives her more time if needed. She is a classroom teacher and a valued member of the Senior Leadership Team. Another teacher works with her in support, and receives half a unit, and all teachers are more than happy to help if necessary. The Director of Religious Studies issues a very informative newsletter regularly which includes information on the Religious Education programme and feast days, liturgical events and the Special Character of the school.

Staff meetings led by the Director of Religious Studies are held to discuss the theology behind the Religious Education Programme and the new Religious Education Bridging document. Teachers are encouraged to attend professional development when it becomes available. The Religious Education Advisors visit and facilitate professional development when requested. In 2016 the whole staff completed the TH501 – Introduction to Catholicism paper through The Catholic Institute in 2016. Since then some individual teachers have continued to study. The whole staff attended the Richard Leonard day held in Auckland during the holidays in July this year. The Board of Trustees paid for accommodation for this trip.

The Director of Religious Education supports beginning teachers and teachers new to Catholic schools with planning and implementation. Each teacher has a Special Catholic Character goal and are observed, at least once per year, by the Director of Religious Education taking a Religious Education lesson and a prayer session and she gives feedback which is used for appraisal purposes.

The Principal has a Masters in Education Leadership, one teachers have achieved Graduate level certification, two teachers have Endorsed Leadership certification, seven have achieved Leadership certification, three have Classroom level certification and all others (14) are working towards Classroom Level.

The Religious Education Programme is given very high status in the school and is timetabled appropriately. Teachers use the "Faith Alive" resource to supplement the Religious Education Curriculum. Students were engaged in lessons and responded to their learning through a variety of media. Each student has a Religious Education book, other responses are displayed in classrooms or on 'Seesaw'.

Teachers are familiar with the Religious Education Bridging Document and are beginning to use it for their planning. The planning is consistent across the school and done collaboratively. The pedagogy used in Religious Education is the same as that used in all curriculum areas. The school's Curriculum Mapping system is effective and students are very aware and can articulate what they are learning and how it relates to their lives.

The Catholic Special Character is integrated into the curriculum mapping across the school. Each year has an overall concept – 2019 is 'Innovation and Change'. The overarching bible quote for the year is "...no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9) Each term's concept includes an Essential Understanding and Enduring Question that reflects the Catholic Special Character. The Term 2 Concept plan "Energy Matters" had an Enduring Understanding which relates to the Special Catholic Character "The Holy Spirit is God's energy in us".

St Francis Xavier Catholic School has investigated STEAM which includes Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths, to enhance the curriculum. They are in the process of resourcing this initiative which will begin in 2020.

"Education for Sustainability is an integral part of life at our school as we live out our roles of kaitiaki/guardians of Planet Earth"

(School Curriculum Documents)

The school received a bronze Enviro Schools award in 2006 and received a silver award in 2008 with its 'Clean Green Stream Team'. This year they were once again awarded Silver status. Recently the Northland Regional Council presented them with an award for their prayer garden and they became a Wastewise school.

All classrooms were vibrant, colourful and effective learning environments and teachers have worked hard to make these exciting and a showcase for the work the children have completed. It was very obvious to the Reviewers that they were not only sound working environments, but that they were spaces that reflected the School's Catholic Special Character. There is a real strength in art across the school.

Next Steps

The teachers are encouraged to continue using the Religious Education Bridging Document to plan Religious Education in a creative way, focussing on differentiating teaching to individual student need rather than concentrating on the coverage of the curriculum.

A consistent way of assessing the Achievement Objectives of each strand, which works for the school, would assist teachers in how to differentiate the teaching and learning.

Continue to encourage teachers to complete NZQA qualifications in Religious Education.

Christian Witness – Te Whakaatu Karaitiana

The School provides a hope-filled Catholic Christian witness which empowers its community members to integrate their faith and their life.

Areas of Success

The way in which the staff of St Francis Xavier Catholic School present the face of Christ to others was often discussed during the review interviews. Many people described the school as a 'faith community where everyone is welcome'. The school community are proudly Catholic and promote living as witnesses to the life of Christ.

The school has a strong, collaborative relationship with the Parish and the local Secondary College. They work together as one to provide a Catholic Centre for the community. The two schools employ a Family Care Worker who works with families from the community who need support. Parish and school facilities are shared.

St Francis Xavier Catholic School works closely with other schools in the wider Whangarei area through its work in the Community of Learning. Both the College and the primary school have across-school teachers.

The school is divided into five whanau, each whanau consists of Y1 to Y6 students. This structure has worked well for the school over the past four years and enables strong Tuakana/Teina relationships.

He Kakano is a five week induction programme established to provide a positive transition for new families to the school. The Principal and Deputy Principal use this opportunity to ensure parents understand the partnership between school and home and the expectations for being part of a Catholic community. School newsletters, emails, personal invitations and a notice board in the carpark ensure that families are well informed of planned events.

The Year 6 whanau leaders and deputies see themselves as role models. The students take their responsibility seriously and work hard for the school throughout the year. All students are given leadership responsibility from Year 1 as monitors in their classrooms. The senior school students volunteer as peer mediators, office messengers, road patrol, wet day, PE, bike and library monitors and Junior Joeys.

The School recognises Māori as Tangata Whenua and they have a strong commitment to The Treaty of Waitangi and the bi-cultural foundations of New Zealand. All school signage is bi-lingual and Te Reo is used in classroom instructions and displays. Tikanga Maori is integrated through planning and daily routines. The Diving Deeper Maori Programme has included flax weaving, Te Reo, and making clay flutes. Three Pou are being completed on the scooter track to depict earth, sea and sky. A local Maori artist has worked with the school to paint kowhaiwhai panels and a mural. Other artwork around the school represents the bi-cultural relationship. The children pray in English and Maori. A Maori Graduate profile sits alongside the Year 6 Graduate profile.

St Francis Xavier Catholic School welcomes and nurtures its cultural diversity. They celebrate the various language weeks and students are encouraged to share their cultures and their faith. All teachers welcome the students in their class by calling the roll in a variety of languages each morning and the children answer in a language of their choice. The school has included a variety of cultural celebrations in their planning.

St Francis Xavier Catholic School welcomes students with special needs. Resources are put in place to support these students and training and guidance from outside agencies is encouraged and valued.

Many programmes are used to support children to extend their oral and written language, these include Reading Recovery, Quick 60, Talk to Learn, STEPS, Alphabet group, PMP and ESOL programmes. Cooking classes are available and in previous years a boy's group was formed for older boys to spend time together doing woodwork etc. Similarly, gifted and talented students are identified and catered for in their own classrooms and through the Diving Deeper programme. This provides classes in Art, Debating, Physical Education, Te Reo, Philosophy, Mathex and Technology – Robotics and Coding across whanau. These topics change depending on student interest and previously they have included Puppet Theatre, Gardening, Dance, Band, ICT, Film Making and Future Problem Solving. Students can also join groups such as kapa haka and choir.

The school employs a number of support staff who work in administration, in classrooms and with specific individuals who need one-to-one support. They feel valued by the Principal and staff and are acknowledged often for the work they do. They receive training for the various roles they have when it is needed and meet with the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) fortnightly to discuss their work. Outside agencies work with the SENCO, teacher aides and students, when needed.

The importance of 'It is better to give than receive' is emphasised through the social justice and outreach programmes in the school such as:

- Caritas Challenges
- MissioNZ
- Muftimania
- St Vincent de Paul
- Women's Refuge
- Pastoral Care Basket
- Cards for sick parishioners
- Soul Food for meals for the homeless in Whangarei

The school contributes and shows witness to the wider community also by:

- Recycling paper and food scraps. They run a worm farm and some food scraps go to a pig farm.
- Collecting rubbish around the community and from local parks.
- Give produce from the garden to the community
- Food collection basket in the office for the needy
- Presenting a school production
- Entertaining at local retirement home with kapa haka, ukulele group etc.
- Knitting blankets.
- Collecting can tabs for Kidney Kids
- Yummy sticker sports equipment – given to St Vincent de Paul for Christmas gifts

The enthusiastic and hard working Parent, Teacher and Friends Association (PTFA) raise funds for the school, organise social events for the school community, support families in the school and parish in need and run information evenings to inform parents. A successful evening was recently held for parents on "Encountering Christ in the here and now" with a guest speaker from Auckland. They also cater for the Northland Chrism Mass annually.

The school has behavioural management procedures in place rather than a policy. The system includes restorative justice, MacKillop values, school mission and motto. An awareness of each child and their context outside of the school is seen as imperative to the way each situation is dealt with.

Next Steps

Continue to seek further opportunities to engage with the various ethnic communities as their numbers increase.

Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Character – Te Kaitiakitanga me te Whakapakari I te Tuakiri Katorika

The School in its stewardship and compliance with statutory obligations, safeguards and strengthens its Catholic identity.

Areas of Success

The Board of Trustees are very proud of the school's history, tradition and strong Catholic Special Character. The Board members are a mixture of new and more experienced members and are led by a very capable Chairperson. She takes her role seriously, makes herself available, and is ably assisted by all other members of the Board. The Board of Trustees are very supportive of the staff and appreciate all they do for the children and families. They report to the school community through two newsletters each year, the Chairperson presents an annual report at prizegiving and the Board minutes are posted on the school website. They take advantage of the training provided by the Catholic Schools Office and the School Trustees Association.

The Principal's reports to the Board contain some information about the school's Catholic Special Character, however the Special Character Committee meet with the Religious Education team twice per term and a report is submitted at each Board meeting. The Board take seriously their role of governance and they continually review and update documentation including school policies so that they reflect their Special Catholic Character. The Board Chairperson has regular meetings with the Principal.

St Francis Xavier Catholic School Community have designed three cornerstones for strategic planning – Uniting through Christ, Embracing Mana, Enhancing Futures. Consultation is continuing to unpack and have a common understanding of these strategic goals.

The school's internal Catholic Special Character self review is completed each year. The 2019 review has begun, based on the Encounter with Christ dimension, looking specifically at Evangelisation. This is a collaboration between the Parish, Pompallier College and the school.

The school is working on ensuring that all staff job descriptions include the draft 'Catholic Elaborations of Professional Standards'.

At the time of enrolment for new families, the Principal clearly outlines to parents their responsibility as first educators of their children and that there should be a focus on 'partnership' in all aspects and particularly Faith development. The He Kakano transition programme also informs New Entrant families of their responsibilities.

SCHOOL DATA

| | | | |
|---|------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Decile: | 6 | | |
| Roll at time of Review: | 497 | | |
| Maximum Roll: | 575 | | |
| Staffing Entitlement: | Base: 24.4 | Total: 26.52 | |
| Required number of S464 Positions: | 15 | | |
| Current number of S464 positions: | 15 | | |
| Ancillary Staff: | Teacher Aides: 8 | Admin: 3 | Caretaker 1 |

At the time of the Review the school was compliant with its Integration Agreement in regard to:

- Maximum roll compared to actual role.
- Number of S464 positions
- Number of non-preference students

As part of the Catholic Special Character Review process, a preference audit was conducted on 20 August, 2019 and updated at the time of the Review. The school had, for some years, been granted an exemption to have a special category (5.6.1) for some students in need. This exemption ended in 2016.

| Year | 5.1 | 5.2 | 5.3 | 5.4 | 5.5 | 5.6.1 | Total | NP |
|------|------------|----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|------------|-----------|
| Y1 | 53 | 2 | 19 | 13 | | | 87 | 7 |
| Y2 | 37 | 2 | 20 | 13 | | | 72 | 4 |
| Y3 | 52 | | 12 | 13 | | 1 | 78 | 2 |
| Y4 | 53 | | 16 | 16 | | 1 | 86 | 3 |
| Y5 | 53 | | 10 | 13 | | 1 | 77 | 4 |
| Y6 | 57 | | 5 | 8 | 1 | 3 | 74 | 3 |
| | 305 | 4 | 82 | 76 | 1 | 6 | 474 | 23 |

The School collects the preference forms and some Baptismal Certificates at each enrolment. These are organised alphabetical and the preference criteria is loaded onto the School Management System. The files are well maintained. The audit found that:

- 64% of preference students are 5.1 criteria
- 4% of the students on the maximum roll are non-preference.
- 1.2% are the remainder in the 5.6.1 category.

Conclusion

St Francis Xavier Catholic School, Whangarei is ably led by the Principal and BOT Chairperson who work tirelessly along with their staff and Board members to provide an excellent Catholic education and support for the students and their whanau.

The senior children, interviewed by the reviewers, were living testament that the school is achieving what the community aspires to in their Mission Statement:

“Inspired by Gospel Values, St Francis Xavier Catholic School encourages us all to have a passion for learning and serving”.

The school is a vibrant, positive, happy, welcoming and nurturing learning environment. The Board of Trustees, parish, parents, teachers and children have a common vision and work in partnership to provide an excellent Catholic education for the community. The school has an excellent reputation in the area and never rests on its laurels by continually striving for academic excellence and being at the cutting edge of educational development.

The school has had continuity of strong leadership, history and tradition, and has Christ at the Centre. Visitors are in no doubt they are entering a Catholic school. The students are confident, happy, respectful and engaged in their learning. Along with their families they are very proud to be members of St Francis Xavier Catholic School.

Philip Mahoney
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