



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF AUCKLAND

**Pompallier Diocesan Centre,
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**ĀHUATANGA KATORIKA KAUPAPA
AROTAKE ME TO AHU WHAKAMUA**

CATHOLIC SPECIAL CHARACTER EXTERNAL REVIEW REPORT

**SANCTA MARIA CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL
FLAT BUSH**

Review Visit: 15-16 May, 2019

Confirmed Report: 24 June, 2019

SCHOOL DATA

Principal:	Mrs Gina Benade
Director of Special Character:	Mrs Justine Delport
Parish Priest:	Fr Craig Dunford
BOT Chair:	Mr Mario Barbafiera
Reviewers:	Mrs Colleen Gleeson, Mr Philip Mahoney
Accompanying Principal:	Mrs Michelle Holly

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 to 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.

Introduction

Sancta Maria Catholic Primary School, Flat Bush 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 and students 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 what their next steps might be.

Situated in South-East Auckland, the school serves the Catholic Community of St Luke's Flat Bush. The school is part of the Sancta Maria Campus which includes Sancta Maria College and the Presbytery. The St Luke's Church is under construction on the site. Masses are held in the College auditorium until this long-awaited build is completed. A SKIDS building is also on site. Since the primary school's opening in 2010 the roll has steadily increased and is now at capacity.

Response to Areas for Development from the 2015 External Review

- ***That consideration be made to open traditional classrooms as far as possible to give consistent pedagogy across the school.***

No provision is available for the single cell classrooms to be turned into shared spaces. However the school continues to use modern learning practices and twenty-first century pedagogy to guide the teaching and learning programme. Composite classes, use of teacher strengths and flexible grouping across Learning Communities is used to enhance teaching and learning.

- ***With the move to more digital responses to learning, it is important that teachers consider how and where children's work can be viewed.***

During 2016 and 2017 the school made significant progress in developing, creating and updating their school website, classroom learning pages, school's newsletter and e-mail communications to families. During this time the Year 3 to 6 students were each given their own Google Accounts where they learned to create and share their work with families and the wider community. The school created and continues to use a school Facebook page where current events, interesting news and student's work or performances are shared.

During 2018 all teachers introduced the SeeSaw app to their family community. This digital platform enables students to use creative tools to capture their learning in a portfolio. Families can access their children's learning in a timely manner and are providing feedback and feedforward on a regular basis. Students also began using Kahoot, a game-based platform and Google Drive.

In 2019 it is evident that student learning is showcased digitally in many ways. Teachers are using more facilities in the SeeSaw app, in particular, to engage students and parents.

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.

Sancta Maria Catholic Primary School has an extremely strong community and family environment and culture. The feeling of belonging to the Sancta Maria family was spoken about by the BOT, staff, parents and students. This, along with the fact it is a Catholic school was the main reason parents chose the school for their children.

The spirituality of Sancta Maria Catholic Primary School was very evident in the way staff and students pray together, relate to each other, welcome visitors and support each other and the wider community. Through its Marian charism and values it provides encouragement and resources for individuals within the school community to develop their own faith journey. The school pays special attention to the fact that Jesus is the reason for their school and that through Mary they encounter Jesus. In 2018 the professional development for teachers was based on Spirituality with all staff completing The Catholic Institute paper RE502 – Spirituality for Teachers. This learning made a definite difference to the way teachers saw their roles. There is an authentic and innate Catholic spirituality in the Senior Leadership Team which is reflected in the children, their families and the staff.

“Our special character is part of our DNA. It is at the heart of everything we do”.
(Senior Leadership Team interview response)

Classroom prayers are a sacred and reverent time across the school. The classroom prayer focuses are set up with the appropriate liturgical coloured cloths and symbols of the faith. The prayers are varied and some classes use audio visual equipment to support the theme, waiata and prayers. Evidence of the relationship the students are developing with Jesus could be found in the deep personal prayers they had written. Prayers in all classes are based on a theme, chosen by the prayer leaders that week and readings, prayers and video clips are all related to the theme. Parents commented that they enjoyed helping their children to plan their prayers when it was their turn. Meditation is being introduced across the school. Prayers are said before all meetings. There is a school prayer said twice a week at the morning line up. Prayer kete are distributed from each classroom. Students take these home on a roster system and lead and share prayers with their family. The resident seminarian joins a different class each week for prayer. The staff gather weekly for shared prayer and use the Going Deeper resource which supports teaching and learning through a Catholic perspective.

The Special Character Team, a group of Year 5 and 6 students, are trained and led by the Director of Religious Studies. They apply for this leadership role stating why they thought they should be part of this team. The team has four areas of service: Service and Outreach leadership, Assembly, Liturgy and Mass Leadership and support, Classroom Prayer Helpers and Fundraising. The students can be part of more than one area. They meet at morning tea time on Wednesdays for Prayer with the Director of Religious Studies and again on Thursday at lunchtime for training, support and guidance in their roles. These students plan and lead all classroom and assembly prayer. They model classroom prayers throughout the school and introduce and model new styles of prayer throughout the year.

The staff have an annual retreat before school starts each year, and the Parish Priest and Board of Trustee members are invited. The Year 6 students have a 2-day annual retreat at the St Francis Retreat Centre early in the year, which includes a sleep-over. The Board of Trustees invited the Religious Education Advisor to facilitate sessions for them on Spirituality at the end of 2018.

Sancta Maria Catholic Primary School is rostered in to the “Mary visits Luke” parish programme where the Mary statue travels around to parish families to provide a centre focus for praying the rosary.

A class attends Mass each Friday morning and up until this year there has been one Sunday Parish/School Mass per year, this has increased to two per year in 2019. Liturgies or Masses are held on special feast days. The Parish Priest has worked with teachers and students over the past year on the parts of the Mass and the responses during Mass. Reconciliation for the eligible students is held in Advent each year.

Throughout the school buildings and grounds there are symbols of the Catholic faith and the school's values. The exterior of the school reflects the Catholic character with mosaics, crosses and a Reflection/Prayer space. The interior of the school is colourful and bright with wall displays depicting the Special Catholic Character and programmes running in the school. There was also a lot of student work on the walls inside and outside the classrooms.

The school's values of Full of Grace, Compassionate, Obedient, Thoughtful, Faithful, Hopeful, Contented and Determined are known as Mary values and have been broken down into what they look like in daily life and have been matched to a Gospel verse. These values are known to the children and their parents and are lived at school and, according to the parents, at home. They are well displayed throughout the School and in every classroom. The children interviewed were able to give examples of how they live these values. Awards are given at assemblies for children who display the values in the playground. The Virtues Project is also visible in all classrooms.

The school chooses an overarching Scripture each year that links to the theme. In 2019 it is Past, Present and Future – "Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

Sancta Maria Catholic Primary School is evangelising to the staff, students and their families, forming a link between the School and Parish. The monthly newsletter reflects on the Sunday Gospel, the Liturgical season or feast days with a Special Character section. One staff member recently joined the RCIA programme in the Parish and has been Baptised. The manager of the SKIDS programme, situated on the campus grounds is currently working through the RCIA programme. The school actively supports the Parish Sacramental programmes and advertises them, encouraging all eligible students to join. A Board of Trustee member leads the Sacramental Programme at the Parish. The Parish use four of the school classrooms for these sessions. Three staff members lead the children's liturgy at Sunday Mass. The Parish Priest has noticed an increase in numbers of teachers attending Sunday Mass at St Lukes. Students who complete the Sacramental programme are encouraged to become altar servers.

Parent curriculum workshops are held throughout the year. The first workshop each year is based on Special Character. In 2019 the focus was on "Growing Spirituality". These workshops are interactive and well attended, supporting families to continue their own faith development.

"People get caught up in the rhythm and ethos of the school and decide to become Catholic because of what they see".

(Senior Leadership Team interview comment)

The Director of Religious Studies has regular contact with the Parish Priest, as does the Principal. The Parish Priest is a member of the Board of Trustees. He, and the resident seminarian are invited to all school functions and activities and they make the time to visit classes. The Parish Priest also greets students and their caregivers at the school gate most afternoons.

The Principal has been in her current position for eleven years. She is an experienced principal who was the establishment principal at Sancta Maria Catholic Primary School. She is supported in her role by a strong Senior Leadership Team which includes the Deputy Principal, Associate Principal, Director

of Religious Studies and Learning Community Leaders. Many are active members in the Parish and all are excellent, positive role models who support, uphold and witness to the Special Catholic Character of the school. She is the leader of the Kāhui Ako group of Catholic and Christian schools in the Southern-Eastern area. The Board of Trustees praised her for her “outstanding commitment” to the school.

Next Steps

After evaluating this year’s Year 6 retreat it has been decided to look at having a one day retreat at the St Francis Centre in 2020 instead. On that day the rest of the school will have classroom retreats, planned by the teachers. The day will start with a school Mass and the bells will be switched off.

Continue to develop the variety of Meditation styles for teachers and students to find the style that suits them.

Continue to identify ways to make Jesus more central in the school charism so it is not just seen as a ‘Mary’ school.

Identify the students in Years 4 to 6 who have not completed the Sacramental Programme and find ways to encourage these families to consider continuing on their faith journey.

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 began at Sancta Maria Catholic Primary School as a teacher 4 years ago. She has been in her current role for 15 months. She is ably supported in her role by the Principal, the Deputy Principal, the tagged teachers and all staff. The Director of Religious Studies is a member of the school’s Senior Leadership Team. She has developed a good relationship with the Parish Priest and has worked with and meets regularly with him. She is currently stepping down as Staff Representative on the Board of Trustees.

Regular staff meetings led by the Director of Religious Studies are held to discuss the theological focus for each Strand. The whole staff completed The Catholic Institute paper RE502 “Spirituality for Teachers” in 2018. In 2019 they plan to complete RE501 “Introduction to Religious Education”. Four teachers have achieved Endorsed Leadership certification level, two have achieved Leadership certification level, eight have Classroom level certification and the other eleven are working towards Classroom Level.

Teachers use formative teaching and deliberate ‘learning’ talk, modelling the language needed for learning. They give clear instructions and set learning boundaries. Teachers use the key competencies to encourage responsible learners linked with the school values and a Catholic perspective. Students have access to resources and there is a high level of engagement across the school. The Reviewers saw a variety of authentic learning tasks being used in lessons, in the students’ exercise books and on digital posts. Differentiation is beginning to be used in some classes when teaching Religious Education.

The Director of Religious Studies and the Religious Education Advisor have introduced the “Religious Education Bridging Document” to staff who are beginning to plan using levels instead of years. The

planning is consistent across the school. The Director of Religious Studies is part of the core curriculum planning team. Teachers plan for deliberate 'ah-ha' God moments throughout the day.

With a mixture of Innovative Learning Environments and single cell classrooms, the staff collaboratively plan regardless of which environment they have. Some single cell classes are working together and swapping groups during Religious Education for ease of differentiation.

The Catholic Special Character is integrated well into the curriculum across the school. The use of Caritas resources was evident in all hubs particularly concerning Social Justice issues with a Catholic perspective. Each class is expected to produce at least one religious piece or artwork for the biannual school Art Exhibition.

Families are informed regularly of the strand being covered through newsletters and class webpages. A parent workshop on Special Character and the Religious Education programme is held each year. A new parents morning is held each term to share the Charism and information about the Religious Education programme, plus a walk through the school to give parents an introduction to the teaching and learning. The children's Religious Education books are sent home at the end of each strand and parents are asked to comment in them. These books were bright and attractive, the work was well marked and there were pertinent comments by the students, their families and the teacher. These books serve to provide the link between the school and the home and to provide a springboard for discussion. Due to the change in pedagogy for Religious Education teachers are beginning to use Seesaw and Blogs to post student responses to learning.

The Director of Religious Studies supports new teachers and teachers new to Catholic schools. Team Leaders are able to talk about their faith and model the ways of Jesus for their staff. The Director of Religious Studies works with each teacher at the start of the year to set a Special Character or Religious Education goal for the year. She visits classrooms in her release time, doing walk-throughs throughout the year and to observe a Religious Education lesson and classroom prayer at least once per year. Positive feedback and feedforward is given to each teacher and further support and modelling is given when needed. She works alongside teachers to plan school Masses liturgies and classroom Masses.

The Special Character Team of students is trained and supported by the Director of Religious Studies, meeting with them twice per week, once for prayer and once for planning their work across the school. She is also supporting and encouraging three teachers as Aspiring Directors of Religious Studies. She worked with the Directors of Religious Studies to plan the upcoming Catholic Schools' Day celebrations.

The Health curriculum is set in the context of the Catholic Church. Parents are consulted about the Pubertal Change programme for Year 6 students which is taught by an outside provider given clear guidelines for a Catholic perspective. The Year 6 students attend an annual camp at Lakewood Lodge.

All classrooms and hubs were vibrant and effective learning environments and teachers have worked hard to make these exciting, alive 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.

Next Steps

That the school identify ways to assess the Religious Education programme and to gather data to use for differentiation when planning.

The school has beautifully tended vegetable gardens looked after by a Garden club and the caretaker. The school should look at ways to further distribute the vegetables.

More environmental education could be the next step for the school using Pope Francis encyclical “Laudato Si” as the inspiration.

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 staff of Sancta Maria Catholic Primary School present the face of Christ to others which was often commented on by members of the school community. Many people interviewed during the review described the school as a family where everyone is welcome. The school community are proudly Catholic and promote living as witnesses to the life of Christ. They have a strong relationship with the St Luke’s Parish and Sancta Maria College, all working together on the one campus. An annual BBQ is held once per year for the leaders of the parish and schools.

Sancta Maria Catholic Primary School is part of the South East Auckland Christian Kāhui Ako with Star of the Sea School, St Marks School, Sancta Maria College, Elim Christian College and Kingsgate Christian school. They also take part in the Eastern Schools Cluster, engaging in sport, language and cultural events.

School Council and House Leaders are selected from Year 6 students by the staff each year. These students see themselves as role models for the rest of the school. They attend the National Young Leaders Day. The students take their responsibility seriously and work hard for the school throughout the year. Students are also chosen for the Special Character Team and as Milk, Wet Day, ICT, flag, gate, first aid and Jump Jam monitors. All students are given leadership responsibility from Year 1 as monitors in their classrooms.

The School recognises Māori as Tangata Whenua and they have a strong commitment to The Treaty of Waitangi. As visitors the Review Team were welcomed into the school with a Powhiri which included speeches, karakia and waiata and hongi. Te Reo is visible in all classroom displays and around the school. The school has a Kapa Haka group and one of the teachers has written a special haka for the school. Teachers find opportunities throughout the curriculum to include Te Ao Maori. In Term 1 the main curriculum concept was Turangawaewae and all students were able to articulate their turangawaewae. There is a school pepeha and the school has made contact with Umupuia Marae for guidance. The Kāhui Ako schools have established a combined Kapa Haka group.

The School welcomes and nurtures its cultural diversity. They celebrate the various language weeks and students are encouraged to share their cultures and their faith. The school includes 20 different cultures and is proud of the cultural diversity of its staff and students. They share prayers in many languages. The students have an awareness of and empathy for different cultures. The school hosts the Howick Primary Principal’s Association Cultural Festival every year. Each year two cultures from Sancta Maria Catholic Primary School are given the opportunity to share their culture at this event, in 2019 it was the Filipino and Indian students.

Sancta Maria Catholic Primary 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 Quick 60, Reading Recovery, STEPS, ALL and ALIM. Similarly, gifted and talented students are identified and catered for in class and can also join groups such as choir, Kapa Haka, Mathex, Young Writers, Music with a specialist teacher and Technology Challenge.

The school employs a number of support staff who work in administration, in classrooms and with specific individuals who need one-to-one support. Each week they meet with the Assistant Principal, who is also the Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) to discuss their roles and issues they may have. The support staff 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. The SENCO ensures that each identified student has a current Individual Education Plan (IEP) to work from. The school also puts special emphasis on educating, supporting and empowering the parents with workshops, seminars and gatherings organised for parents of children with a particular issue.

The school has a very active Parent, Teacher and Friends Association (PTFA) who work closely with the School to respond pastorally to the needs in the community. They work to support the school and Parish with working bees and fundraising. Parents also support the school with preparation of Cultural performances, sports coaching and school trips.

The Behaviour Management Plan aligns with the school values and is based on restorative justice. Restorative conversations are held for all conflict issues. There is a genuine level of care amongst the older children for the younger ones (Tuakana/Teina, Soul Friends). Each class has developed a Class Treaty. The school has a strong expectation of respect and honouring the special dignity of all. They look to forgiveness and say that "Each day is a new day", and they reflect on the question "What would Jesus do?" The school helps students to realise that they are Jesus' disciples and to identify ways they can follow Jesus through his teachings. The school is about to begin the PB4L programme and they are aware of the need to keep what they already have and integrate a Catholic perspective throughout the programme.

The Sancta Maria Catholic Primary School teachers and students seek to identify opportunities for service and outreach within the school community, Parish and local community. The school helps students to identify ways and opportunities to carry on Jesus' mission in the world. They reach out to families in crisis and ensure they feel supported and that relevant agencies are supporting the family. They support Caritas (outreach for South Sudan and Lenten programme), Cans for Christmas, Kids First, the local parish and St Vincent De Paul Society. They collect cans for the foodbank and food for the homeless on the Marae, Koha boxes in each classroom, they have Mufti Days and a Market Day for various causes. The Special Character Team look for opportunities to fundraise and are currently raising funds to support the building of the new St Luke's church.

Next Steps

Students need to be taught to see the connection between their faith learning and their everyday life, and to articulate that, through service and outreach, they are being Christ to others and responding to Christ in others.

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.

The Board of Trustees, when interviewed, stated that *“the School’s Catholic Special Character is at the heart of everything we do”*. The Board members are a mixture of new and experienced members and are led by a very capable Chairperson. He takes his role seriously, makes himself available, and is assisted by the other members of the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees are supportive of the staff and appreciate what they do for the children. They are very aware of the workload of the Principal and ensure that she has all the support she needs. They report regularly to the parents through the Board Talk in the newsletter. The Board of Trustees are visible in the school community, attending all school events.

The Principal’s reports to the BOT against the Strategic and Annual Plan which includes a Special Character Goal. The BOT take seriously their role of Governance and they continually review and update documentation including school policies so that they reflect their cultural diversity, the unique position of our bi-cultural heritage and the School’s Catholic Special Character. The Board Chairperson has regular weekly meetings with the Principal. The Special Character Committee meet regularly and the Director of Religious Studies presents the Special Character report to the Board of Trustees each month.

The Board of Trustees documentation including policies, procedures and promotional material all demonstrate a commitment to the Catholic faith.

The school’s Catholic Special Character self review in 2018, was on the Encounter with Christ dimension, looking specifically at Spirituality. The review process followed a cycle of inquiry method and was rigorous and relevant to their focus for the year.

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
- Teachers completing professional development in Religious Education

The school’s strategic and annual planning, and all promotional material reflect the Special Catholic Character. The Board of Trustees are working to continue to strengthen the relationships between the parish, Sancta Maria College and the school.

As part of the Catholic Special Character Review process, a preference audit was conducted on 13 May, 2019 and updated at the time of the Review. The roll on that day was 388.

Year	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.5	Total	NP
Y1	69					69	1
Y2	57					57	
Y3	57					57	1
Y4	60		1			61	
Y5	70	1				71	
Y6	69		1			70	1
	382	1	2			385	3

The School collects the preference forms and Baptismal Certificates at each enrolment. These are well organised and the preference criteria is loaded on the School Management System. The Parish Priest interviews all parents he does not know and writes a letter to the Principal regarding each one. Any changes of preference criteria are changed on the School Management System and noted on the preference form.

The audit found that:

- 99% of preference students are 5.1 criteria
- 0.7% of the students on the maximum roll are non-preference.

Next Steps

That the Board of Trustees read one section of the Bishop's Conference book "Catholic Education for School-Aged Children" at each meeting and have a short discussion on it.

Conclusion

Sancta Maria Catholic Primary School 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 for their students. The Board of Trustees and staff all see their work as a Ministry within the Church. Everything that occurs in the school is under the guidance of Mother Mary whose presence is everywhere – in statues, art works and in the students, staff and Board themselves.

The school is a calm, happy, welcoming, nurturing family and strong learning environment, modelled by staff and followed by students. The Board of Trustees, parents, teachers and children have a clear understanding of the school's goals and all members of the school community live by the Marian charism.

"A strength of the school are the passionate, loving and stable staff and strong leadership".
(Board of Trustees interview response)

Prayer at Sancta Maria is given utmost importance. The Special Character Team led by the Director of Religious Studies are modelling a variety of styles and leadership for teachers and students. The students show reverence and sincerity at prayer times.

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

“Students growing Catholic faith in their hearts, minds and actions, and who are confident, contented, collaborative and critically discerning.”

The students are cared for as individuals and are at the centre of the school. They are confident, happy, respectful and engaged in their learning. Along with their families they are proud to be members of Sancta Maria Catholic Primary School.

Philip Mahoney
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