

**DIOCESE OF DUNEDIN
CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE**

**External Review of
Catholic Special Character and Development**

**REPORT ON
St Mary's School
Kaikorai
Dunedin**

School Type	Co-educational contributing Primary
Visit	12-13 May 2013
Principal	Mr Richard Duffy
Reviewer	Mr Paul Ferris
Support Reviewer	Fr Aidan Cunningham IC

Summary Page:

St Mary's Kaikorai continues to be a school with a full focus on Special Character. This small school is fortunate to have a complement of committed staff who make, integrate and weave Special Character through the culture and curriculum of the school. Staff are well trained and open to continual formation as a way of making the Spirit of the school a beacon to the Community. Evangelisation within the school demonstrates the power of their witness.

Since the last review the school has had a change of Parish Priest, Principal and Board Chair. All three continue the commitment of the previous leadership and governance by providing a strong focus on all aspects of Special Character. Staff at the school have had periods of leave but are now fully engaged in the provision of high quality teaching in small classes using a variety of engaging strategies. All staff at the school are committed to ongoing formation in Special Character and have demonstrated this by maintaining their certification for various levels of leadership. Volunteer and support staff are equally committed to the school. A strength of this small school is the loyal and genuine commitment some support staff have made to the pastoral care and faith formation of the children over many years. There is also a high level of volunteer support for the school from parents.

Class programmes provide for all levels of learning. The small roll now has a range of ethnicity and challenge that was not so obvious in previous visits. Meeting student needs is a challenge handled by small classes, excellent pastoral care, a good mixture of technology and well planned and evaluated teaching.

Evangelisation has been an important outreach for the parish and the school. For such a small school the numbers being baptised are impressive. Evangelisation in the school demonstrates the strengthened relationship between the parish and school. The parish priest is welcomed and encouraged to be in the school both as a liturgist and supporter of class programmes.

The challenge for this school remains its small roll. The school is challenged in enrolment as the pool of parish members declines. Much of its enrolment now comes from people seeking a first relationship with the church or people who are attracted to its Special Character and who through involvement in the school become involved in the Parish.

The previous report commented on the strength of the three year self review programme. The work of the Director of Religious Studies remains one of the best examples of self review in the Diocese. It is planned, engaging, consultative and shared. The booklets tracing the journey of the review show that everyone has been heard and that changes are being made as a response.

St Mary's School, Kaikorai, is a safe, caring school environment where faith is central to the life of the school at all levels. It is one of Dunedin's best kept secrets.

School Information

Name: St Mary's School

Address: 6A Cromwell Street, Waikari, Dunedin

School Type: Coeducational contributing primary Years 1-6

Decile: 6

Staffing Roll for 2013: 2.49 **Actual Roll at Time of Review:** 31
Maximum Roll: 125

Non-preference Maximum: 6 **Actual Non-preference at Review:** 4

Enrolment categories according to preference:

The school is not yet recording its data against the criteria for Preference but will do so in the future.

Teaching Staff:

Roll generated 2.49

Other

Ethnic Composition: **NZ European/Pakeha** 53%
 Maori 7%
 Pacific 21%
 Other 18%

Board of Trustees Chairperson: Mr Ian Paulin

Principal: Mr Richard Duffy

Director of Religious Studies: Mrs Rachael Dearness (Note: The school does not have management units or a designated role to call DRS but it should be noted that Mrs Dearness undertakes all the duties of a DRS and does so with great effect and commitment.)

Parish Priest/Chaplain: Fr Cipriano Fernandez

Attestation Report (Last sent to the Diocese in 2010)

The review selected four aspects of the Attestation where the school had attested that it had complied.

1. Principal Appraisal - Principal appraisal is done with performance standards listing expectations for Principals of Catholic Schools. The Board discussed the matter of who does the appraisal, and the need to have a Catholic perspective, within a three year cycle to ensure that the comments made by appraisers have the authority of someone who understands the expectations of a Principal of such a school.

2. Staff Appraisal
The school has good documentation for this process and includes expectations for Special Character within the main document. It is now time to focus those expectations on the requirements to be a tagged teacher. The school needs to define the expectations for tagged and open positions in the job descriptions and include these expectations in the appraisal system.

Information was collected in an area of special national interest, namely professional development in Catholic Character and Religious Education.

- The range of Professional Development being undertaken.
- The effect of this professional development as reported by staff.
- The number of tertiary courses being undertaken by staff.
- The number of recognised courses being undertaken and their focus.
- The amount of the budget spent on courses and professional development.
- The number of staff who have received support for professional development.

Since the last review:

Since the last review in 2010 there has been a change in Principal and Board Chair and Parish Priest. This makes the implementation of the recommendations of the last report more problematic when transition is considered at the time of the change of leadership. Both the new Principal and the new Board Chair have considered the recommendations of the report and demonstrate a full commitment to the process of review and development.

The 2010 report concluded with the following:

Compliance Requirements

The Proprietor's Appointees to the board of trustees present a comprehensive report each year to the Proprietor.

Completed and the practice is part of the annual cycle of reporting.

Key Recommendations

The Principal and Board agree that

- Planning and developing a strategy for lifting enrolment is critical to the next stage of the school's growth.

Strategies have been tried. Posters and leaflets have been developed. Signs are to be placed near the school but the roll has dropped marginally in the interim. This remains a concern for the school and something that occupies a great deal of discussion.

- The Board and Staff plan and find ways to share the strengths of the school within the wider community using a range of strategies.

Staff publish their work and share the good news stories of the school as widely as they can. They have a loyal group of supporters in the Parish and among parents. Some parents continue to take their children out of the area to other Catholic Schools.

- Technology continues to be integrated into the delivery of Religious Education and the support of the Special Character so that it continues to engage students.

Mimio boards are used as is the digital resource but teachers have such strength that they use a range of very appropriate strategies. The staff can demonstrate a genuine understanding of the curriculum and use a range of teaching formats to ensure engagement of students.

- Board look to allocate more funding for Professional Development so that funds can be set aside for the development of Special Character in staff.

The Board has had to reconsider all budgets and to operate within funding to avoid close attention from the Ministry of Education after two deficit budgets. Money is allocated, but there are more restraints until the roll rises.

- Each year a plan is prepared which shows that funding set aside for Religious formation of staff has been made and is funded.

The school has yet to prepare the plan to meet this recommendation.

- Ways of exploring formation around the Dominican Charism are explored and planned for the future.

The school has worked closely with the Dominican Sisters and other schools with the same Charism to grow in the understanding of the Dominican Charism. The Sisters have provided an enthusiasm for their Charism and a rich base for the school to reflect on.

Catholic Special Character Dimensions

Catholic Community - Te Iwi Whanau 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.

Spirituality

The individual and communal spirituality of the whole school community is promoted and nurtured

St Mary's continues to be a school where spirituality and worship are central to everything they do. The school continues to have very effective prayer routines for mornings and lunch time. Each room has a well developed and resourced prayer focus area and children are very familiar with the routines. They take responsibility for leading and sharing prayer as they can.

The school has regular mass opportunities - First Friday Masses and other planned liturgies to match the Church calendar.

Staff pray at interval on Mondays. All members of staff take the opportunity to lead and share. Prayer is embedded in the school day and is seen as natural to all who work in and attend the school.

In 2011 the school developed a 'Sacred Space' in the grounds. They engaged the children in planning and building the space which had become an important part of the way they engage in prayer. Staff and students are justly proud of this space which is so much more effective because it is the culmination of their work.

Evangelisation

The school is a faith community which endeavours to spread the Good News by word and witness.

The school has a strong focus on evangelisation and regularly celebrates baptisms. In 2012 there were three baptisms and there are **three** planned for 2013. For such a small school they are active in this mission. Preparation for baptism is led by the staff.

Partnership

Education is a collaborative responsibility

The school continues to have a positive and supportive relationship with Kavanagh College but there continues to be work to do for both school and college to ensure that the relationship is strengthened and encourages a natural progression to Catholic secondary education.

Values

The school identifies and actively promotes gospel values.

The school has a set of values but they change in different locations and genre. In trying to respond to the need to model values, the school has moved through several sets of values and would argue that its current set is a “maze” of many values, amongst which Respect, Truth and Worship are featured and highlighted. They have also focused on Dominican values which offer another set of values. It is time now to embed a set of values that show they arise from Gospel tradition and teaching and which can be applied to school life. In contrast they could continue to change and renew them yearly according to discernment they make with the children and community. No matter which system they choose, they should ensure that they have a gospel reference to show that they are different from those used in state schools.

The ‘Excellence’ certificates are an excellent way of recognising behaviour and achievement, but at present they are based around quite secular models of excellence. It might be time to reconsider if these meet the expectations of all.

School Culture

Catholic Special Character is visible in the relationships, and the artistic expressions seen throughout the school.

This is a well cared for school with countless examples of art and student work that reflect the Catholic life lived in the school. The school is to be congratulated on the richness of this work.

Relationships are warm, assuring and respectful. This is a “family” rather than an institution. There is a culture of inclusion. Staff and students genuinely value each other.

The reviewers were mindful of the work of the long serving cleaner who has served the school so well for many years. As her health deteriorates she has seen this work as important and special. Her commitment and care of the school is recognised as a gift to the community.

Leadership

Leadership effectively shapes the faith-based vision, direction, values and outcomes of the school programme.

There is a Strategic Plan that is “owned” by the Board and Staff. It has clear goals associated with Special Character. The Annual Plan has Special Character goals included.

Job descriptions already show they have expectations for the Special Character but they might now check that the same documents include the expectations for tagged teachers which cover all the present staff.

The change of leadership in the school has not left the school wanting. While the new Principal is new to leadership in such a school, he is genuinely committed and enthusiastic. He is open to sharing leadership with his staff. His own strong faith and support of the local parish provide a great base for the school to grow in influence.

The remaining teaching staff are all Catholic and are a huge strength to the school. They have experience and commitment over a number of years in parish and school life and willingly give their time to this. Their knowledge of curriculum is excellent and is evident in planning and teaching observed by the reviewers. The school is extremely fortunate to have such strength in its staff who are so obviously committed to Special Character.

There is no Director of Religious Studies role in the staffing schedule but a staff member has undertaken that role for some time. She completes all the duties associated with the DRS and makes a huge contribution to the success of the school programme. Her willingness to do this without reward or recognition mark her as a staff member for further leadership in the Diocese. It should be noted that at present she is part time in her teaching but has no time allocation for some of the major liturgies and sacramental programmes for which she has responsibility. Without her contribution the Principal would carry the whole load. Providing some time would be a way of recognising that work.

Stewardship

The school accepts responsibility for delivering education with a Catholic Special Character.

The Dominican Charism has been promoted and shared since the last report. The Dominican Sisters have been proactive in supporting schools of their tradition and the schools have formed an association to promote and share this time together. The school is congratulated for the way it has sought opportunities to promote the Charism.

Enrolment material has been developed and refined to promote the special character.

Worship

A Catholic culture of prayer, liturgy, and faith based celebration is promoted in the school.

St Mary's Kaikorai has a plan for liturgy and worship for each year. It includes all feast days and major liturgical events. A strength of the school is the family masses on Saturday evenings when up to 60% of the school roll will attend. Masses are organised and prepared with staff and students playing a full part in them. There is also a programme for First Friday masses and a regular parish mass is attended **one Tuesday each term** by a class. The school is fortunate to have such a range of opportunities for worship.

The development of the Sacred Space has provided another area for innovative liturgy and focus in the lives of the staff and students.

Service

Students assist people in need through service and outreach opportunities.

While the staff will explain that the amounts they raise in their outreach programmes are not large, they are fully committed to engaging in service and outreach. The school sings at the Little Sisters of the Poor, raises funds for Caritas and for the Missions. They engage the community in their outreach.

The school has vegetable gardens which produce food to share and there is a “casserole” bank to help families in need. Students participate or have a voice in many of the school projects and activities. During the construction of the Sacred Space they played an important role in design and construction.

Collaboration with the Parish

The school collaborates with the parish of which it is part.

The new Parish Priest is developing a closer relationship with the school. He has responsibility for two parishes with schools, so his time is divided but he is supportive of the work done by staff and students. He understands that this school has a high degree of commitment to Special Character and he is grateful that the staff are fully engaged in the mission of the school. Parish masses and other liturgies, where the school plays a part, show the high level of co-operation that exists.

Sacramental programmes are run by the school. Staff ensure that these are well presented.

Pastoral Care - Manaakitanga

The school community nurtures, supports and cares for individuals.

Relationships

The school is a friendly, welcoming, co-operative learning environment where the dignity of each person is respected.

The school is fortunate to have a small and focused community who work harmoniously together. This is a mixed community with some shift in the ethnicities of the school since the last review. It is inclusive and welcoming.

Safety

The school provides for students and staff an environment that is safe – physically, emotionally, spiritually, socially and culturally.

The school is safe for all involved. Staff are vigilant about relationships among the children. Children are heard, and engaged in discussions about the school.

There is a strong staff culture where everyone is included and heard. The length of service for some staff is an indication of how the culture holds and supports them.

Behaviour Management

Discipline processes are just, compassionate, respectful and consistent.

Systems and clear procedures exist for the management of behaviour in school. Staff are consistent in their standards, and support and encourage respect among themselves and among the children. Discipline is discreet and more often praise is heard.

Cultural Awareness

The school is open to the enrichment of diverse cultures.

The review team was welcomed with a mihi Whakatau on the first day and the whole community is familiar with such an occasion. Maori is used discreetly in signs around the school. Pasifika children are encouraged and welcomed.

Since the last review more diversity among the school population has taken place. Language and art celebrate different cultural expressions.

Organisation

Pastoral care is organised in a way which is evident to all members of the school community.

The school has good policies for all its operation and there is a regular review of these. An extension of the present policies would be to include statements in the Human Resources policies that explain why it has such a view and why a Catholic Community values its Human Resources processes. At present the policies look to have no connection to the mission of the school.

Religious Education - Te Whakaakoranga Whakapono

The school helps fulfil the teaching mission of the Church by living and teaching the values of Jesus Christ

Leadership

The Principal and the Director of Religious Studies provide leadership and sound management in Religious Education.

The Principal has an inclusive style of leadership which is needed to be able to give attention to all the aspects of a school among such a small roll. There is a flat management system in the school and all staff can participate and are heard.

While there is no designated role for a Director of Religious Studies, a staff member acts in that role and plays a major part in promoting Catholic Character, planning and delivering Religious Education, liaison with the parish and organising resources. Her experience and willingness to give are important for the success of the school.

All other teaching staff are active Catholics as are most members of the support staff. The unity and common focus provided by their commitment to faith contributes to the success of the school in Special Character.

St Mary's is fortunate to have such a well trained staff.

Religious Education Curriculum

The Religious Education programme is soundly managed and professionally delivered.

The plan for Religious Education is clear and sequential. It is limited to a two year cycle where units cover the curriculum across the various multiple level classes. Evaluation is a feature of the work done by the staff. The staff acknowledge the work of the Diocesan Adviser in her support of the school and programme.

Staff have access to mimeographs for the digital resource and use it when appropriate. They are confident enough in their delivery to use a range of teaching methods. Experience and regular engagement with the Diocesan adviser gives them a confidence not often seen in planning and presenting the Religious Education curriculum.

Evaluation and tracking of students in Religious Education is a work in progress. Staff have used a variety of formats. Most recently a white card for tracking progress across all subjects has been introduced. While the summative assessment is acknowledged, it is difficult to see how this record would influence future teaching and learning. Staff will continue to review its effectiveness and its contribution to evaluation.

Student work is presented in large scrap books that record a summary of the work taught and make an excellent liaison for parents to participate in the education of their children. Students take pride in the books and the work is valued by all.

The budget for 2013 is a little less than previously but there are adequate resources. Over the years there has been a focus on building an excellent supply of resources.

Integrated Curriculum

The teaching of Religious Education is integrated with other curriculum areas especially those which include ethical issues, personal relationships and sexuality education.

There are many examples of staff using Religious Education themes or topics to teach related skills. Drama, writing, art and music all are demonstrated by staff and students. Special Character permeates all aspects of the programme.

Resources

The Board of Trustees makes financial provision for Religious Education and Catholic Special Character resources.

The Board has made provision for resourcing, and, although it is cautious at this time to manage spending, it has always prioritised Special Character items and pastoral care.

Professional Development

The school provides opportunities for regular Religious Education professional development and spiritual development for all staff.

Staff at the school have been most willing to undertake professional development and as a staff they are very responsive to the call to embrace on-going professional development. The Principal is moving from foundation to leadership level and two other staff are moving to level 2 leadership.

The school has yet to develop a budget line to show how it invests in the ongoing development of staff in Special Character. Some staff have met their own costs for some courses because they have been advised that funds are not available. This would be managed more transparently by having a Special Character plan which shows how the resources are being applied.

The Reviewers congratulate the Board for supporting a staff member to attend the Catholic Convention but it might be important to consider whether this is the best way to use a limited resource.

The school does not have current copies of the Catholic Institute courses offered which are cost effective and help staff meet the Proprietor expectations for ongoing formation. Having these resources available might also encourage some parents and parishioners to participate.

Communication

The school communicates with parents about Religious Education programmes.

School newsletters are welcoming and informative with matters of Special Character. There is also a website that has the basis of school information. It might be timely for smaller Catholic Schools to band their resources together to have one large site that can interact with parents and respond to their need for access to Special Character resources.

PROPOSALS FOR ACTION FROM THIS REVIEW

Compliance Requirements

That the Proprietor move quickly to increase the number of Proprietor Appointees from one to four.

Key Recommendations for further development

- That the school continue to reflect on how they track and record the progress of students in Religious Education as they seek a format that will provide “feed forward” to other teachers and parents when reviewing progress.
- That the school work to discern a set of values that reflect the Catholic Character of the school and use the same values in branding, certificates and behaviour systems.
- That the school investigate with other Catholic Schools the opportunity for a shared web resource to support the evangelisation of parents.
- That appraisal documents reflect the expectations of the tagged positions.
- That enrolment continues to be a focus.
- That the enrolment files differentiate between 5.1 = 5.5 on the preference cards so that information relating to experience of Church can be considered when planning programmes and setting evangelisation targets.
- That the Human Resource Policies are reviewed and that each section has a rationale that includes the influence of Catholic Social teaching on the way we work with staff.
- That a professional development plan is developed as part of the strategic plan and that each year there is financial support for staff to maintain their certification as teachers of Religious Education.

The Review Team for the Dunedin Diocese want to thank the Board and Staff for the warm welcome and openness to the review process. Their support and willingness to share ideas and reports demonstrated their desire to be an instrument of the Gospels.

Catholic Special Character Review Team
May 2013

Paul Ferris QSM
Lead Reviewer

AREA OF SPECIAL NATIONAL INTEREST 2013-2014 – Reviewer’s form

1. Name of school, town, diocese St Mary’s Kaikorai
2. School roll 28
3. Types of professional development in RE and Catholic Character offered, taken up Twilight meetings Courses through TCI delivered in Dunedin
4. The effect of this professional development as reported by teachers Confidence and commitment to the intention of the programme.
5. Changes made in teaching and learning practices as a result of the professional development. No obvious changes given credit for a course. One teacher has recently completed the SOLO model of looking at understanding the way students embrace learning in the programme and believes this will influence her teaching.
6. Number (and titles) of Tertiary Catholic Institute courses currently being undertaken (reported against the number of teachers) N/A
7. (a) Number of teachers working towards a recognised qualification in Religious Education, Catholic Character, Theology, Leadership in a Catholic School or similar. (Details by qualification) Principal Foundation Teacher 1 Level 1 applied for level 2 Teacher 2 Level 1 applied for level 2 (b) Number of teachers who have achieved a recognised qualification in Religious Education, Catholic Special Character, Theology, Spirituality, Scripture, Leadership in a Catholic School or similar (Details by qualification) One teacher Walk By Faith (self funded)

<p>SC206 Synoptic Gospels TCI Self Funded RE 102 Introduction to Spirituality TCI - self funded PM 206 Traditions of prayer- self funded</p>
<p>8. Number of hours being put in per year towards the qualification being worked on. Varies - Average 5 hours per week</p>
<p>9. Amount of funding being allocated in the Board budget for Catholic Character professional development (as a proportion of the school's overall professional development budget)</p>
<p>10. Amount of funding being allocated in the Board budget for Religious Education professional development (as a proportion of the school's overall professional development budget) 2012 \$2600/3500 General 2013 \$1000/1500 General</p>
<p>11. Number of staff who received professional development as a result of this funding 3 staff twilight meetings</p>
<p>12. Other funding (if available) provided for Religious Education and Catholic Character professional development N/A</p>
<p>13. References in the BOT policies on professional development, to Religious Education and Catholic Character professional development. No policy exists which details the schools response to RE PD</p>
<p>14. Any comments you may wish to add (Include here any discussion on needs, and anything else you consider relevant.) This is a very small Catholic School and all staff are actively living their faith and engaging in professional development.</p>
<p>Reviewer's name: Paul Ferris Date: 14.5.12</p>