

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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*He Pūrongo Arotake Mātauranga  
Ahurea Katorika ā Waho.*

*Catholic Special Character  
External Evaluation Report*

**St Mary's Catholic School,  
Putaruru**

Review conducted on.....28-29 June 2022

Confirmed Report .....22 August 2022

## School Details 2022

**Name of School:** St Mary's Catholic School

**Address:** 5 MacKenzie Street, Putaruru

**School type:** Primary Co-educational Years 1-8

**Actual roll:** 165

**Maximum roll:** 195

**Non-preference maximum:** 10

**Actual non-preference number:** 10

**5.1:** 76 (46%) **5.2:** 5 (3%) **5.3:** 74 (45%) **5.4:** 0 **5.5:** 0

**Required number of Special Character CI 47 positions:** 5

**Filled number of Special Character CI 47 positions:** 5

**Principal:** Jenny MacKenzie

**Director of Religious Studies:** Jonathon Parkinson

**Chairperson, Board of Trustees:** Sean McChlery

### **Elected Members (C NC)**

1. Tinika Begbie (C)
2. Andrea Crawford
3. Sarah Flavell (C)
4. Cheryl-Lee Henare (C)
5. Angela Holdem

### **Proprietor's Reps**

1. Paul Dykstra (C)
2. James Farrell (C)
3. Kathleen Farrell (C)

**Staff Rep:** Nicola Bailey

**Parish Priest:** Father Fernando

### **Review Team:**

**Lead Reviewer:** Terry Consedine

**Accompanying Reviewers:** Shelly Fitness, Paul Shannon

## **Ngā Whāinga O Te Arotake-Aims of External Review**

The New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference wishes the external 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. This is the evangelising mission of the Church, in which the school participates.

The external review process is based upon the *Āhuatanga Katorika Kaupapa Arotake Me Te Ahu Whakamua: Catholic Special Character Review for Development* document (draft, 2018).

In the review, schools are asked to consider and demonstrate the ways in which they have provided for their students:

- Te tūtaki ki a Te Karaiti - an encounter with Christ,
- Te whakatupu mā - te mātauranga-growth in knowledge,
- Te whakaatu Karaitiana - Christian witness.

And how the school is:

Te kaitiakitanga me to whakapakari i to tuakiri Katrorika - Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Character.

The review is designed to look at the work the school has done, in its internal evaluation and development, to grow Catholic character. It affirms what the school has done and the opportunities for further development the school has discerned. It challenges the school to be more transformational. Reviewers encourage, commend good practice and work with the school to analyse opportunities to further strengthen and develop the Catholic culture.

## **Introduction**

St Mary's Catholic School Putaruru is a medium-sized country Catholic integrated school and is part of St Patrick's Catholic Parish in the centre of the Putaruru township. It caters for students in Years 1 to 8. There is a present role of 165 students with a maximum role of 195. There are a number of different cultures that make up the school. The community comprises a variety of families from various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The school roll has approximately 28% Maori tamariki with representations from Indian, Pasifika and Filipino communities.

Striving for Excellence in the Marist tradition is alive and well as a vision for the school. The school is ably led by a principal who brings a wealth of experience, She lives the values of the Marist Sisters especially 'in the hidden way of Mary'. She exemplifies this charism with both the kaiako and within the parish. She is well supported by her management team. There is a new DRS who has made a great start in his role. The school is fortunate in having a number of experienced staff who have previously held the DRS role and are also willing to share ideas.

The school was founded by the Marist Sisters in 1944. The school has a rich history associated with the Marist Sisters and strongly values the contribution they have made to St Mary's. There is a close cooperative relationship with St Patrick's Parish and St Mary's school. It is part of a faith based Kahui Ako.

## **Progress With Recommendations from the 28 May 2019 Catholic Special Character Review for Development Report**

### **Key Recommendations:**

- 1. To ensure school-wide consistency with the assessment tool for Religious Education, using both reflective practice and knowledge. A process which might include how you record, and what you do with that would be helpful. In the senior part of the school, knowledge assessment is essential.**

The school has really embraced this practice and is beginning to think about how it applies to the new Curriculum. The principal has done some extensive work on the analysis of variance on one of the units. This gives clear indication of how different groups in the school performed in the unit. The reports then have a place for tamariki to reflect on their journey within the Marist Charism expectations

- 2. To progress with Professional Development, a more detailed overview of needs of staff on an individual basis, recording the next steps which would be helpful for each one. It was suggested to the Board that a day's cover for teachers completing assignments towards qualifications would be very supportive.**

This has been taken on board and the kaiako have completed the Social Justice paper together. Time given to complete assignments.

- 3. During the course of the Review, conversations were held to ensure more collaboration with Bishop Edward Gaines school in Tokoroa. There is an opportunity to avail of shared Professional Development, Staff Retreat, and Michael Mangan's visit.**

Opportunities are taken where possible to include Bishop Edward Gaines School in any staff activities. Sometimes it is possible and sometimes it doesn't fit with both schools. The combined Board seems to be working reasonably well.

- 4. While the students are very familiar with the Marist Charism and the hidden way of Mary, the knowledge or understanding of the school monogram could receive more attention in the School.**

There is clear evidence that students do understand 'the hidden way of Mary' and that it is widely promoted and practised in the school by both staff and tamariki.

### **Dimension 1: Te Tūtaki Ki A Te Karaiti-Encounter with Christ**

How effectively does the school encourage and facilitate the development of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ who reveals the transforming love and truth of the living God?

The school is active in providing ongoing Catholic spiritual formation to assist their key people to deepen their relationship with Christ. This includes the principal, staff and tamariki. The Board is clear in its support of the principal's Catholic leadership professional learning. She takes up these opportunities as they arise. The previous parish priest was an outstanding support in this way. She is keen to support the work of the parish alongside the parish priest. She is active in the Parish Council with the intention to continue to strengthen the connection between the parish and school. The school encourages the parish priest to be an integral part of the school. Some of the connections have been made more challenging because of Covid restrictions. It is hoped that this will strengthen as these restrictions reduce.

The Board pray at the start and end of Board Meetings. They complete the STA papers but recognise a need to be formed in Catholic practice in a similar way. They are keen to search for opportunities to support new Board members in this way to build their understanding of Catholic character and what it means from a governance perspective.

Kaiako gather for prayer three days a week. A number of kaiako spoken to by the review team said how much they valued this opportunity for formation. Opportunities are taken each year for whole day Retreats for the whole staff. There is a plan for kaiako to take part in a Retreat this year based on 'what being catholic looks like today'. The kaiako studying the Social Justice paper say that it has been a strong source of strengthening the knowledge and practice of Catholic social teaching among the whole staff. Support staff are fully involved in these Retreats too and feel very much part of the family of the school.

"We aim to be a caring community that encourages our tamariki without judgment"  
(teacher aide)

Tamariki are provided with numerous opportunities for their spiritual formation. Many are arriving with very little spiritual Catholic understanding. A prayer book is given to each student upon entry to the school and tamariki add to it on a regular basis. They have the opportunity to pray together as a class three times a day. Prayer comes in a variety of forms: Traditional prayers, some meditation and spontaneous prayer. Each class has a well equipped prayer table. Tamariki take turns to prepare and lead prayer. A parent spoke of how much their child enjoyed having their turn to lead the prayer. Tamariki learn at least two new prayers each term and glue these into their prayer books. These books are then taken home each term so that the tamariki can share these prayers with their families. There is work being done regarding tamariki learning some of these in te reo. Currently, tamariki in the senior school are able to recite the Sign of the Cross and the prayer before lunch in te reo. Waiata form an important part of liturgy and Masses.

There are a number of reflective displays around the school which support the focus of the learning. Prayer tables provide reflective possibilities within each classroom. Outside is a Grotto that is a quiet place where tamariki and kaiako may go to pray. Classroom walls reflect the strong focus on learning from a Catholic perspective. A particular focus recently has been Matariki because of the current season of the year.

The school takes opportunities through a variety of means to facilitate an encounter with Christ. A particular example for the tamariki and kaiako is the Gospel reflection every Monday in the parish church. This is prepared by the DRS and led by the Year 8 students.

' We truly celebrate the Word of God here at St Mary's Catholic School' (DRS)

This year tamariki and staff have been involved with celebrating a number of parish-school Masses and liturgies marking significant feasts. There is a parish school Sunday Mass once a term which is strongly supported by whānau.

At the start of each term the DRS creates an overview that shows the planned Masses and Liturgies throughout the term as well as who is responsible for planning and organising these.

The school has taken some deliberate steps towards enhancing and bringing alive te ao maori in the school and improving their understanding of wairuatanga maori. Two kaiako are learning te reo. The school has been celebrating Matariki for a number of years now. The recent Matariki liturgy was a huge success with high involvement from all levels of the school. There is an intention to celebrate a weekend Maori Mass twice a year on the weekend with the support of the Kapa Haka Group. This will be a first for the school and will be greatly supported by the whānau group.

The Religious Education liturgy newsletter is available every two weeks. It provides an opportunity for whānau to reflect on the Gospel and keep up to date with what is happening both with Catholic special character events and in Religious Education classes.

The principal through her vision and leadership is an authentic living witness to others. The Marist Sisters' charism of doing things in the hidden way of Mary is extremely well in her living action. She not only drives the vision through the Marist Charism but has more recently incorporated the Fruits of the Spirit as part of the vision alongside the principles of Catholic social teaching. Her witness is clear both within the parish and among the kaiako and tamariki. Some examples include her taking responsibility for the breakfast club at 7.30am Three days a week. A homework club runs at the same time for families who have to get to work early. The food bank at the entrance of the school and parish church also results from her work and her brief.

The principal is well complemented by the deputy principal who brings real experience of the leading of Religious Education curriculum as well the needs of a Catholic school.

## Next Steps for Development

- Consider enhancing mindfulness meditation to a Catholic approach to meditation.
- Once the precautions around Covid are lifted. That the school and parish priest continue to work towards companioning one another with a view to evangelising and welcoming new to the school and parish

### **Dimension 2: Te Whakatupu Mā Te Mātauranga: Growth in Knowledge**

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

The leadership team fully comprehends and lives out what it means to be on a disciple's journey. As an example, the new office manager is very open about the fact that she is not Catholic but has felt extremely welcomed into the 'family'. She has no trouble seeking answers surrounding all the Catholic beliefs and practices. They make real efforts to be inclusive of all staff including the caretaker and the teacher aides who all commented they felt part of the family. Kaiako who are new this year, felt at ease very quickly. Part of the initial orientation is with the senior leadership team but also each kaiako has a 'critical friend' whom they can ask for whatever they need. All new Kaiako do the new CTC course, Whakataki Ki Nga Kura O Te Hahi Katorika (Introduction to Catholic schools) to help them make sense of the Catholic system as well nurture them further in their knowledge of Catholicity.

All kaiako engage in a regular, planned programme of Catholic special character professional learning and formation. There is huge encouragement from the principal to increase capability in terms of the learning and understanding of the staff in a manageable way. A most successful initiative has been the whole staff studying the Social Justice paper together. This has had the impact for kaiako of gaining an understanding of the disciple's journey around Social Justice and the principles of Catholic social teaching. It has provided kaiako with an opportunity to confidently teach the core principles of Catholic social teaching and their application, as an integral component of a lived faith. The impact of this has been that the staff have a shared understanding not just of the Church Social teachings but also the application. They are able to apply it to their teaching as well as delve deeper into the charism of reaching out to the vulnerable 'in the hidden way of Mary'.

"There is a spirit amongst the staff. We have common goals. We support each other. We encourage whānau. We are all on board to help. We are working together to help our tamariki." (teacher)

The impact of this leadership embedded in the 'hidden way of Mary' means that without even saying anything staff and parishioners see the living of the Gospel in action. Significant staff numbers are active in the parish which provides wonderful witness for whānau and tamariki alike.



Release time is provided for kaiako and the DRS to attend appropriate Professional Development days. The DRS keeps a record of the kaiako Professional Development. He keeps this up to date with the Hamilton diocese. For simplicity there is also a google doc within the school which documents all CTC papers and other professional learning carried out by kaiako.

The Religious Education programme is given high status. There is a framework plan provided for all kaiako. Kaiako have been using 'Faith Alive' to support the use of the bridging document since 2020. The curriculum is delivered by a team of highly experienced staff who work alongside those who are new. There are at least two staff meetings a term that focus on Religious Education. Staff meetings have been used effectively to demonstrate a good Religious Education lesson. The deputy principal brings a wealth of experience to this. There have also been opportunities for key staff to attend the diocesan meeting for the new curriculum so that they can lead the journey back at school. These are generally led by the DRS but the school is fortunate in having a number of staff who have DRS experiences who also contribute. The DRS is given time to carry out his responsibilities. Although this seems limited he does feel free to ask for release time when needed. Obtaining resources for Religious Education is made easy. It is just a matter of asking the principal.

There is clear evidence also in the way that Religious Education is managed. All classrooms display a Catholic focus, with prayer tables in a prominent position. Prayer tables have the correct liturgical coloured cloths, e.g. purple for Lent or Advent. These are checked by the DRS from time to time. There is clear evidence of planning, some of which is shared. Kaiako use Faith Alive as their basis for their planning. A number of Religious Education Units are assessed and reported like other subjects. A detailed analysis of the Religious Education assessment results is compiled and shared with the staff and the Board of Trustees. This shows how different groups are progressing in the knowledge aspect. Students also reflect on how they are going against the Charism values of Marist, Respect, Attitude and 'Yes'. A smaller summary of the Achievement Objectives, knowledge assessed, and the students progress in this assessment is shared with the students and their whānau in their assessment books. The principal is assured that Religious Education is professionally delivered by regularly doing 'walkthroughs'. The principal takes the opportunity to teach and discuss how it is progressing with the DRS. There is a system of 'critical friends' across the staff to support one another by observing a lesson and giving constructive feedback.

Information about liturgical celebrations, tamariki learning in Religious Education, and all things related to Catholic Character are shared with the community via the school website, school facebook page, and the school newsletter. Alongside this, every fortnight there is an Religious Education newsletter that is accessed via weblink. This also contains information for whānau on the new Religious Education curriculum that the school is about to embrace.

As part of its commitment to providing tamariki with further opportunities to Encounter Christ, the school actively supports and promotes parish programmes for the Sacraments of Initiation especially through the newsletter. Covid restrictions have made these programmes less

accessible. The Parish runs the Sacramental Programme. It is offered to all tamariki appropriately aged at St Mary's. Kaiako and parents support this programme by their presence. This programme prepares students to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation, Confirmation and Eucharist. The whole school is invited for the First Holy Communion and Confirmation Mass. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered for all tamariki who have completed the Sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation twice a term on Mondays. This has been led by the parish Father Fernando Alombro. All tamariki are invited to receive the Sacrament of Baptism through the school newsletter.

There is an understanding among all kaiako that the Catholic worldview is part of the culture and daily practices of the school. There is a strong commitment to educating for a deeper understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. The school is on a journey towards biculturalism. There is a commitment to learning and teaching local Katorika Māori and Pākehā history. There are conscious efforts to include wairuatanga Māori in the school Religious Education programme. The Kahui Ako has Cultural Competency as a major focus, with two Teacher Only Days and combined staff meetings. Two kaiako are learning te reo. There is a Māori Board member and an active whānau group. Recently kaiako attended a Matariki conference at John Paul College. This helped provide a basis for an understanding of Matariki and the importance of this time of year for our country as a whole. This was in preparation for the school Liturgy and school wide activities on Matariki. The school also takes the time to recognise Parihaka. Professional learning to increase cultural competency is enhanced by working with MAC, Māori Achievement Collaborative. Staff are beginning to use te reo in the classroom and formal te reo lessons are taught twice a week.

The school is clear that those aspects of the Health Curriculum which involve human sexuality education are set in the context of the teaching of the Catholic Church and delivered using culturally responsive pedagogy. There is regular consultation with the community. There is a plan for all staff to attend and complete the 'Having Life to the Full' course in Term Three in order to revise the Sexuality programme and have everyone on the same page in the light of the new Framing document for Human sexuality.

As part of the Marist charism 'in the hidden way of Mary' the school is outstanding in its commitment to awareness raising and action for justice within the school and in the wider community, explicitly relating this to the Gospels' portrayal of Jesus' care for the poor and marginalised. This is particularly exemplified by the principal. She is well supported in this area by other staff members as well. There is an active Social Justice tamariki group who promote both awareness and action in outreach to local poor and overseas.

### **Next Steps for Development**

- Continue to consolidate the outstanding work begun on assessment and reporting of Religious Education knowledge in the light of the new curriculum as suitable resources become available.

### **Dimension 3: Te Whakaatu Karaitiana-Christian Witness**

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

The school leadership understands their role, in being part of an authentic Catholic community. Many opportunities are taken to promote and support active Catholic witness and practice in the school. The school and parish work collaboratively to build relationships that are an example of Christian witness. The daily foodbank at the entrance to the school and church is an outstanding witness and a response in faith and action to the community. The school recognises that they are an integral part of the parish and value the wonderful support they get from parishioners.

There is a strong 'family feel' in the school. Staff spoken to by the evaluators spoke of this.

"There is an open door policy with senior management. Any issues, concerns or questions are always welcomed and treated with respect and consideration. During Covid times and times of illness, the support for my well-being offered by the school has been invaluable." (kaiako)

The culture of the school is characterised by warm relationships at all levels, friendly communications, active listening, and a sense that all are treated with respect. Whenever a staff member or parishioner, or parent becomes very unwell the school rallies together to make a meal and a get well message. Every student from every class writes something in it. This outreach also extends to supporting those who have lost loved ones. The school works together to create a personalised large card to express their sympathies and prayerful support.

The school works to build and maintain respectful and affirming relationships with whānau Māori so that they feel comfortable and welcome. They are committed to building an understanding of Te Tiriti principles of protection, partnership, and participation, and take part in authentic consultation with the Māori community. There is an active kapa haka group supported by a parent whānau group which has a strong Catholic focus and organises events such as the Matariki Day celebrations. Māori liturgy has been developed and there is a group who make sure te reo is alive and well in the school. They show a passion for being Catholic and Māori. The school links with mana whenua as well as a number of other marae in the area, especially Raukawa iwi and Ngā Tira marae.

The school has built strong partnerships and works collaboratively with their founding order, The Marist Sisters. There is a good relationship maintained, especially with two Marist sisters who take an interest in the school and visit on a regular basis. There has been a strong commitment to maintaining the charism as part of the focus and vision of the school

The school recognises the cultural diversity within the school as well as throughout New Zealand, and works to ensure that all ākonga develop an appreciation and understanding of this diversity. They work to honour and respect all cultures.

Systems are in place to ensure that tamariki are personally known, cared for, and provided with support. Kaiako know their whānau well. There has been a real focus on behaviour management processes through the use of Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L). The processes are restorative by nature and linked to the Fruits of the Holy Spirit. These have been woven into the Charism of the school alongside Catholic social teaching. Tamariki are enabled to develop the skills to take responsibility for their own behaviour. There is now a greater consistency of approach. The impact of this has been that tamariki understand the clear focus of the school around positive relationships.

The school has a system for working with its parish and whānau to identify those in need. As people of the Gospel and in the light of the preferential option for the poor, staff and tamariki treat each person with respect and aroha and reach out to those most in need. The daily foodbank shared by the school and parish is a great witness to this. Pastoral care systems and procedures are responsive to the needs of tamariki and their whānau. The principal has huge compassion when it comes to families facing financial struggles especially in regards to paying school fees. There are some caring parishioners who donate money to pay for some students' school fees. Second hand uniforms are available if required.

Staff are affirming of the leadership of the principal, and their wellbeing is well supported. The open door policy and outreach in times of need is well appreciated. Staff are very good at reaching out to one another.

The school has an explicitly Christ-centred culture of justice, service, and outreach towards local, national, and international communities. There are numerous opportunities for tamariki to take up these challenges to care for others. The Social Justice Group play a key role in promoting social justice in the school and community. They work on writing letters and cards to the residents of the Cardrona Rest Home, organising fundraisers such as raffles and mufti days for World Vision Child and other charities such as the Red Cross Putaruru or Westpac Rescue Helicopter. Every session begins with prayer. The students also make cards and proceeds from these go towards a local charity.

As part of caring for the planet in the light of Laudato Si, there is also an Enviro Group who take particular responsibility for care around the school environment. They organise recycling programmes around the school. They have established and they maintain a worm farm. They have also developed gardens such as the Van der Croft Grove on the field and the garden around Mary's grotto. The Enviro-schools resources are valued. As an extension to this, a number of these students also volunteer to take part in a Rotary Rubbish Walk around Putaruru. Once a week during lunchtime, students are supplied with buckets and gloves and

walk around Putaruru picking up rubbish, In the process promote the Catholic Social Teaching Principle of Stewardship.

As part of the bigger picture of Social Justice, the school has a vegetable garden which is located next to the presbytery. The school provides the resources such as tools and seeds/plants. Students take turns maintaining it individually or in small groups. The produce from the garden such as broccoli, lettuce, cucumber, potatoes, cauliflower and cabbage are put on a trolley at the front gate for members of the community to collect as required. The impact of these initiatives is that students have the opportunity to put into practice 'in the Hidden way of Mary' as it applies to Gospel values and Catholic Social Teaching,

As part of caring for people at the parish level there is an opportunity at every Mass for a collection of non-perishable food items. This is taken up with the offertory and later donated to the Putaruru Foodbank.

#### **Dimension 4: Te Kaitiakitanga Me To Whakapakari I Te Tuakiri Katorika-Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Character**

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

At the time of the evaluation, the school had submitted the attestation document covering off the compliance requirements to the diocesan office. This document clearly shows that the school is operating within the statutory Catholic special character compliances relating to the number of employed tagged kaiako and the number of permitted non preference students.

Letters of appointment for kaiako clearly show whether the appointment is tagged or untagged. Tagged kaiako are clear about their obligations as tagged teachers. The job descriptions for the remainder clearly enunciate the expectations of the employee regarding the special character of the school.

We note that the proprietor's representatives have yet to file their annual report to the diocese for 2021. We understand that this has been delayed because one of the proprietor's representatives is not well. However, the principal will follow this up.

An audit of the school's preference enrolments was conducted. Although the student records show the preference status of the students, in a number of cases, particularly those children enrolled during 2022, this status was only evidenced by copies of the baptism certificates of the child, parent or grandparent. The required preference card was missing. We understand this situation has arisen primarily due to the Covid pandemic and the unavailability of the priest to meet with the parents to complete the preference card. To be compliant with the school's integration agreement, no student should start school as a preference student until such time as an authorised preference card is submitted. We understand that the school is addressing this situation with the parish priest and some remedial action is taking place to address this situation. We recommend that another audit take place in six months time.

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A unique situation exists in that the Board of Trustees have the combined responsibility for both St Mary's Catholic school, Putaruru and Bishop Gaines Catholic school in Tokoroa. This does have some challenges for sharing governance responsibilities particularly in supporting a newly appointed principal at Bishop Gaines Catholic school. This year the Board has agreed to allow the principal from St Mary's to spend a considerable amount of time supporting the new principal at Edward Gaines. A suggestion was made by the Board Chair that they would appreciate more support in this regard from the diocese.

The Board benefits from a well-balanced and experienced principal. She is committed to her parish and ably supported by a Catholic deputy principal and a young DRS who are both energetic and highly involved in living out their Catholic faith. They work well as a senior management group committed to ensuring that the principles of Catholic Social Teaching are entrenched into everything that happens within the school.

The principal with the support of her Board ensures that all kaiako participate in professional development as a group in relation to Religious Education and or Catholic special character. They participate in courses run through the Te Kupenga Theological Institute ( CTC)

The principal has confirmed that one of this year's goals was for the whole staff to complete "Having Life to the Full" sexuality programme later in the year.

When it appeared that a Sacramental programme was unlikely this year the school supported by a proprietor's representative committed to providing at least one kaiako to assist in the delivery of the programme.

### **Next Steps for Development**

- Link NZCEO's Catholic School Elaborations into the professional growth cycle.
- The Board would value some learning around their obligations around Catholic special character

## **Catholic Special Character Review Report Summary**

Catholic Special Character Review ..... St Mary's Catholic School Putaruru..... 28-29 June

St Mary's Catholic School Putaruru provides a vast array of opportunities for tamariki and their whānau to encounter Christ. The leadership from an experienced principal is very strong. Her outstanding witness to her Faith is very evident. This is underpinned by some experienced teachers who are committed in their support for the direction of the school which has developed a culture embedded by the vision, "Excellence in the Marist Tradition".

Prayer is highly valued as part of the culture of the school. Tamariki are given a prayer book at the start of their time at the school. Prayers are added to this on a regular basis. They pray in class three times a day. They are in the process of learning some prayers in te reo as well as waiata as part of liturgies and Masses.

The parish works well with the school in a wide range of areas. Covid restrictions have brought about some hesitancy on the part of the parish over some activities that would normally be parish-school connections. The Sacramental program is being rekindled. This is run by one of the parishioners and supported by kaiako at the school. There is a real enthusiasm to rebuild the earlier pre-Covid connection with the parish.

The commitment towards biculturalism is vibrant. There is a growing understanding of wairuatanga Māori. Tamariki have opportunities to learn te reo twice a week. Two kaiako are learning in their own time. There is a strong support group who are very excited about this developing cultural competence among the staff. There is an enthusiastic kapa haka group.

The school assists kaiako to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Jesus Christ, his teachings in a variety of ways. There is a fine culture of learning among kaiako. There are plentiful opportunities to become qualified and opportunities for other professional learning in Religious Education. The Religious Education kaiako are using the bridging document in preparation for the new curriculum.

### **Areas of growth since the last review report**

The school has fully embraced a school wide assessment practice and is beginning to think how it applies to the new Curriculum. The principal has done wonderful extensive work on the analysis of variance on one of the Units. This gives clear indication of how different groups in the school performed in the unit. Reports now have a place for tamariki to reflect on their journey within the Marist Charism expectations.

Kaiako have completed the Social Justice paper together. Time was given to assist kaiako in completion of the assignments. This has had a huge impact on both the teaching of Catholic Social Teachings and the practical side of service which has developed to be a real strength of the school. It has meant that kaiako fully understands the school's commitment to social Justice.

The work done on PB4L has brought about a consistency in approach to behaviour management. The process has also made explicit links to the Marist charism, the Fruits of the

Spirit and Catholic Social Teaching. This has been a school wide initiative since the last review.

Opportunities have been taken, where possible, to include Bishop Edward Gaines School in any staff professional learning. The combined Board appears to be working effectively.

There is clear evidence that tamariki understand 'the hidden way of Mary' and that it is widely promoted and practised in the school by both kaiako and tamariki. As the charism of Mary has become more widely known, the understanding of the monogram has been better understood.

## **Recommendations**

- Continue to build staff knowledge and confidence to effectively prepare for the new Integrated Curriculum To Tātou Whakapono, by building on the work begun on the bridging document and the beginnings of the Integrated curriculum that has been developed over recent years
- Introduce an annual school evaluation process of the Catholic special character initiatives in the school in the light of the Four Dimensions. This is with a view to enhance present initiatives asking: why are we doing this and what is the impact on individual tamariki, kaiako and whānau.
- That the DRS carries out formal classroom observations of the teaching of Religious Education to gain an overall understanding and give feedback and to enhance the confidence of staff.

The review team is confident that the St Mary's Catholic School Putaruru's leadership team (Board of Trustees, principal and DRS ) have the willingness and ability to address these recommendations fully before the next external evaluation. The Catholic Education Office staff are available to assist the principal, Board of Trustees and staff in compiling an action plan to address these recommendations.

The review team wishes to thank the community of St Mary's Catholic School Putaruru for the warm welcome, hospitality and the cooperation extended to them. They are thankful for the opportunity to experience the way that they safeguard and strengthen their Catholic special character. The organisation and preparation for the review by the school is greatly appreciated.

**Terry Consedine**

*Lead reviewer*

**Shelly Fitness**

*National Manager*

*Special Character*

**Paul Shannon**

*Religious Education*

*Advisor*