



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF AUCKLAND

Catholic Schools Office

Kia mau ki te ako ko tou orange hoki ia
Proverbs 4:13

CATHOLIC SPECIAL CHARACTER EXTERNAL REVIEW REPORT

*Te Purongo Kaupapa Arotake Mo Nga Ahuatanga
Katorika*

ST THERESE SCHOOL, THREE KINGS

20-21 September, 2017

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name: St Therese School

Address: 463 Mt Albert Rd, Mt. Roskill, Auckland 1041

School Type: Full primary for boys and girls Years 1-8

Principal: Mrs Susan McDonald

Director of Religious Studies: Ms Laura Geaney

Board of Trustees Chairperson: Mr Taina Tupou

Parish Priest: Fr Arulsamy Arokiam OFM

Reviewers: Philip Mahoney
Linda McQuade

Accompanying Principal: Mrs Louise Campbell

Current Roll: 123

Report Confirmed: 30th October 2017

Introduction

St Therese School, Three Kings welcomed and embraced the opportunity for review and development. The Board of Trustees, Principal, staff, parents, students and parish priest warmly welcomed the reviewers and all shared openly their thoughts and opinions.

Situated in Central Auckland, the school serves the parish of St Therese, Three Kings. The Church, Presbytery and Parish Hall share the site with the school. Established in 1966 by the Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, the school includes their foundress, Saint Mary of the Cross MacKillop as one of the Saints of the House teams.

Response to Areas for Development from the 2013 External Review

That the stories of the Saints that the House teams are called are well known and retold often. House Captains could be responsible for keeping the story alive within their team.

The Saints names of the House teams have been changed to 'fit' better, and Goals & Colours have been attached to Saints:

- Mary, the Mother of God – Faith - Blue
- St Therese – Community - Red
- St Mary of the Cross MacKillop – Knowledge - Yellow
- St Francis – Growth – Green

That the Board of Trustees establish a page on the school website to identify its members and share with the community regular reports on school developments.

The page established on the website, identifies the members of the Board, but as yet there are no reports to the community.

That the Board, Principal and staff use this understanding to introduce a 'Vision Statement' that clearly and succinctly articulates their vision for the school.

A Vision statement has been produced and is incorporated into the Charter and displayed on the home page of the website. The Vision is that "Students will be successful as both learners and global citizens, able to use their skills to live confidently and make meaning in a complex changing world. They will become the people that God wants them to be".

That the cross of the school emblem be added to the design graphics on the Charter document.

The Cross has been incorporated with the flower on the Charter and school letterhead.

Catholic Community: Te Iwi Whanui Katorika

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

Areas of Success

St Therese School has a strong Catholic spirituality and a charism based on St Therese of Lisieux, after whom the parish is also named. This charism is summarised in the school motto, quoting St Therese, "Do little things well with love". The children have also learnt a St Therese prayer. A large statue of St Therese stands outside the Church, and at the front of the school. A smaller statue of St Therese also stands in the school foyer and other smaller statues and symbols are placed around the school and in classrooms.

The church, presbytery and school share the one site and close relations exist between the school and parish. Faith underpins all that occurs at the school and Gospel values are very evident in the way the Principal, students, parents and parishioners pray together at daily Mass, relate to each other, welcome visitors and support each other. All stakeholders value the family environment of the school community. The school has a nurturing and caring atmosphere.

The school proclaims the mission and Gospel of Jesus Christ and provides a place to encounter the living God. Parents spoke of how welcome they feel at the school and the strong sense of family, warmth and caring which provides a nurturing environment for the personal and spiritual growth of children.

The Principal has taught at the school since 2009, 5 years as DRS/Deputy Principal and the last 3 years as Principal. She is supported by a recently appointed DRS/Deputy Principal, who has taught at the school over a period of 11 years. The Board of Trustees, Parish Priest, parents and staff spoke highly of the Principal's leadership and her commitment to the faith which is a model for them all. She attends Mass daily in the parish, is a Minister of the Eucharist and a member of the Parish Council. She takes part in Auckland Catholic Primary Principal's professional development opportunities and is well qualified in Religious Education.

A small group of Parents led by a member of the Board of Trustees organise events such as a school Disco, sausage sizzle and bake sale for raising funds for a new playground.

Recently a number of overhanging trees have been removed or trimmed allowing sunlight into previously dim areas around the school. A school garden project has been developed recently by the school with sponsorship from Bunnings. Each class takes a turn at looking after the garden and the vegies grown are distributed to the community. The St Therese School entrance foyer depicts the Special Catholic Character through colourful and attractive displays and symbols.

St Therese School is an authentic Catholic community where the Gospel values are central, faith is nourished and Catholic celebration is highly valued. This is evident in:

- The warm, welcoming atmosphere where children and their families feel included and loved.
- The Tuakana/Teina relationships where older children naturally care for the younger students.
- Students' knowledge of St Therese, St Mary of the Cross MacKillop, St Francis, and Mary Mother of God who are the house patrons.
- Weekly staff prayer on Fridays which is shared by all staff.
- Prayers throughout the school are always reverent and spiritual. Parents are welcomed to join their children for classroom prayer at the start and end of the day.
- Scripture Explorers initiative for senior students to reflect on the meaning of the Sunday readings and share on the website.
- The Breakfast Club which is run by a parent with assistance from four students each morning following Mass.
- The school attends a Sunday parish Mass and sit together as a school twice each year. Class Masses are celebrated in the library by the parish priest who helps the children understand the different parts of the Mass.
- The re-introduction of prayer kites for all classes which have been appreciated by families as the children lead them in prayer at home.
- The first communion Mass and celebration is being combined with the St Therese School Mass on the last Friday of Term 3 to allow more children to see and support their classmates make their first communion.
- New families are interviewed by the Principal, spoken to about Catholic Character and shown around the school before being sent to the Parish Priest for a Preference Certificate.

The School and Parish work closely together. The Parish Priest is Franciscan and has been at St Therese for four years. He states that the relationships between school and Parish are strong. The Principal is on the Parish Council and the Parish Priest is on the Board of Trustees. The school and Parish share newsletters and advertise events for each other. Other members of the Franciscan religious community are involved with the Year 8 retreat, input for the teachers and working with the youth.

St Therese School is part of the Auckland Central Catholic schools' Community of Learning (CoL), and some St Therese students' transition to secondary schools within the CoL and also to Marcellin College. Senior students from St Peter's College and Baradene College visit the school to support students and to raise their own awareness. St Mary's and Marcellin College students visit for music and cultural performances. Catholic School's day in 2016 was celebrated with a Mass and festival involving students from Sancta Maria College, St Mary's Avondale and Christ the King Owairaka.

Opportunity for Development

The school's values are Faith, Hope and Love, with another fifteen additional values linked to them. Faith is also one of the four school goals along with knowledge, growth and community. The children spoken to during the review confused the values with the goals, although they said they hear the goals and values spoken about by teachers and the Principal every day.

Given that in Catholic teaching Faith, Hope and Love are the three theological virtues that come from God and lead us to God, and are the foundation of all the moral virtues, they are characteristic of all Christians. "They need to be nurtured and practised so that individuals live by them, not merely believe in them". (NZCBC, The Catholic Education of School Age Children, n.70). There is no choice about them for someone living an authentic Christian life. Faith, Hope and Love, however, are not values but virtues. Values are internalised sets of belief and are subjective and based on personal preference and choice (NZCBC, n.69). In a Catholic school values "must be sourced from the Gospels particularly the parables of Jesus" (NZCBC, n.66), or be linked to the school's charism.

Hence it is important that the school continue to foster the 3 theological virtues of faith hope and love. Additionally the school may consider choosing a small number of values, which can be clearly linked to Gospel parables and also capture the strong Theresian charism of the school. The process for the choice of these values can also be made educative for the school community so that there is a sense of ownership of the values going forward.

Pastoral Care – Manaakitanga

The extent to which the school community nurtures, supports and cares for individuals.

Areas of Success

The relationships modelled by the adults in the school community are reflected in the happy relationships of the children. Staff are affirmed and work happily as a team, support staff felt valued and communication is open and transparent. The relationships and collegiality within the school are seen by all as a strength of the school.

St Therese School is very responsive with pastoral care. Partly because of its small size, but also because of the sensitivity of key staff, when help is required to support those in need it is offered quickly and effectively. The Principal, staff and school secretary ensure that all needs are met. The children are also aware and include those in need in their daily prayer. The reviewers were told of situations where this care and support were provided in an on-going manner for as long as it was required.

St Therese is a nurturing caring community where people know each other, care and look out for each other.

A strength is the sharing of family, the community, and the love in the place.

(Support staff comments)

The school has an inclusive environment where all children are acknowledged for their special God-given talents. The school provides Reading Recovery, ESOL, Rainbow Reading, a Book Club for Years 7 & 8, and Year 1 Oral Language support. Catholic Senior Citizens volunteer to help with a reading programme. There is a homework support group called Navigators for Year 4 upwards after school Monday to Thursday supervised by a teacher. Parents highly valued this programme. There is also a School Nurse available for part of the

week and a Social Worker in Schools (SWiS) visiting the school. Parents spoke very positively of the progress made by children who have transferred from other schools to St Therese and who have grown in confidence and experienced academic success.

St Therese School is largely Tongan (45%) and Samoan (24%) with an increasing Asian population (16%) which is a mixture of Indian and Filipino. Maori make up 8% of the roll. One staff member has a role for coordination of the use of Te Reo in the school. Maori Language week is celebrated and there is some use of Maori words and phrases in classrooms, learning of himene and waiata, a Te Ao Maori unit within a 3 year cycle and respect for Tikanga. The culture of the school is strongly inclusive of students and families as individuals and cultural and ethnic differences are not emphasised or apparent. Although cultural performance groups have existed in the past, they are not active at present.

Students at St Therese have opportunities to develop an awareness of others and an empathy for those who are hurt and suffering. They recently collected cans for St Vincent de Paul foodbanks, and have raised money for children with cancer and also cancer research on Daffodil Day. They participated in a Pink Shirt Day to raise awareness around bullying and mental health. During Lent, Caritas resources are used. The Student Council discusses ideas and requests for fundraising for different causes and needs which increases student ownership and understanding of each initiative.

St Therese School provides service and leadership opportunities throughout the school. All children are given the opportunity to lead prayer and act as monitors in their own classrooms. Each classroom also has technology monitors. A group of students are chosen as the Liturgy team who help organise both full school Masses and the fortnightly class Masses in the Library. Students have many opportunities to take on roles in school Masses including when celebrating with the parish. Four senior students are chosen by their houses as House Captains and they lead all sports events. The recently formed Student Council has representation from across the school and provides a voice for students to choose and publicize events for the rest of the student body. They meet regularly with one of the staff. Senior students also have the opportunity to record video clips for STS weekly news and Scripture Explorers. These clips are uploaded to the website.

The happy, positive relationships and caring nature of the school community remove most causes of disruptive behaviour and create in children a willingness to co-operate and learn. There is a high expectation of and insistence on respectful and courteous behaviour. The children are well aware of this expectation and respond accordingly. When they fail to meet the standard in the playground, for example, they are taken to the office where it is reinforced to them that their behaviour is not part of the culture of the school. The children spoke of the Golden Rule – “Treat others as you would like to be treated” and the motto – “Doing little things well with love” – as guides for their behaviour and relationships.

Religious Education – Te Whakaakoranga Whakapono

The extent to which the school helps to fulfil the teaching Mission of the Church.

Areas of Success

The Director of Religious Studies has been at St Therese School over a period of 11 years and has only taught at this school. She has been in the combined role of Deputy Principal/Director of Religious Studies for a year and a half. The Principal had held the combined role previously and is very supportive. Sufficient release time is available to attend to the different tasks associated with both roles. Observations of the teaching and learning of Religious Education and prayer sessions are carried out in each classroom twice a year and feedback is provided to teachers. This feedback is used for the appraisal process. The Director of Religious Studies provides support and guidance for teachers in planning and resources, and liaises with the Parish. Detailed digital planning templates are available and teachers are able to add and subtract as needed. She facilitates a staff meeting on the theological focus at the beginning of each strand. She attends all professional development available through the Religious Education Advisors.

There was evidence of high student engagement in Religious Education. The Taonga folders which go home at the end of each term contain individual student's work from all curriculum areas including Religious Education. The Faith Alive digital resource is incorporated into planning and all teachers make use of the technology available to them. The Religious Education displays in all rooms were relevant to the Strand being covered. Teachers gain some knowledge of their student's religious practice through classroom responses, but do not have access to Preference Criteria data. The school considers how to ensure the integration of the Special Catholic Character throughout all curriculum areas. This is discussed at the Staff meetings before each Strand and planning for each term.

An outside facilitator presents a pubertal change programme for Years 7 & 8. A teacher is always present when the programme is delivered and parents are informed about the programme and given the right to opt out. Although there is high trust from the parents, the school is required to consult with the community regarding the programme's content every two years.

Professional development is provided for teachers through:

- Staff meeting presentations and discussion
- New staff attending the Understanding Sexuality Course.
- Completing a paper as a whole staff with The Catholic Institute (RE502) in 2018
- Staff retreat with outside facilitator at the beginning of the year

The Principal has endorsed Graduate level Certification and two other teachers have Classroom level. The other teachers are working towards Classroom level.

Communication from St Therese School to the school community regarding Special Character and Religious Education is through:

- The weekly school newsletter which includes Catholic Character information from the Principal
- Evenings where teachers share information about the curriculum and students share their term's work with parents.
- Forum evenings.
- Sharing Apps, Emails, and classroom spaces on the website.

Opportunities for Development

It is suggested that the next step for teachers is to use the prior knowledge they have about students to differentiate the teaching of the Achievement Objectives to more specifically meet each students' needs. One way to gain prior knowledge is by examining the Preference Criteria data of their students to learn where they are on their sacramental journey and the extent of their evangelisation.

Recommendation

Consultation with the school community regarding the Health curriculum must be held every two years. Consultation can take the form of a survey rather than a meeting.

Stewardship and Compliance – Tuaritanga me te Hanganga Ture

The extent to which the Board of Trustees provides systems and processes to govern and comply with the school's Integration Agreement.

Areas of Success

Since the recent Board of Trustee elections a new Board has been formed with some new members. All Trustees understand their role as governors and that it is a Christ centred school. They see the Special Catholic Character as being fundamental to all decision making. Proprietors' Appointees annual reports are completed by the two Proprietors Appointees, the Principal and Deputy Principal following consultation with the community. One of the Proprietor's appointees attended a recent Diocesan workshop regarding the new Draft Catholic Character Review. The Principal reports to the Board of Trustees on the Special Character goals each month and the Director of Religious Studies presents a Special Character report for each Board meeting. According to the most recent staffing entitlement the school is required to have four S464 positions and all are currently filled.

All documentation for the school is kept up to date and provides clear guidance and support for the school to run effectively. The Special Catholic Character of the school is reflected in all documentation. However, following recent work on the Charter with an outside consultant, the Catholic Character goals need further revision as they haven't been updated and are no longer consistent with the other Charter goals. As yet, the Board is not familiar with the NZ Bishops Document "The Catholic Education of School Age Children" (2014).

A preference audit was carried out as part of this review on 22nd August, 2017.

	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	Total	Non Preference
Y8	8	2	1	2	13	
Y7	13	3	1	1	18	3
Y6	10			2	12	3
Y5	8			4	12	1
Y4	11			2	13	3
Y3	10		3	2	15	1
Y2	4	1		5	10	1
Y1	9			5	14	2
Total	73	6	5	23	107	14

The non-preference roll is 14 (8.5% of the maximum roll). The Integration Agreement requires the school to have 5%. The school cannot accept any more non preference students until the number decreases to less than 8 students. The school is aware of this.

68% of preference students are 5.1 criteria, 6% are 5.2, 5% are 5.3 and 21% are 5.4 criteria. The school needs to consider how they are going to encourage the 32% of students in 5.2 to 5.4 to continue their faith journey into receiving the Sacraments.

Records are well kept with enrolment forms, preference forms and Baptismal certificates kept for each student. If a child is not baptised, Baptismal certificates are collected for siblings, parents or sponsors.

The Principal and Parish Priest work together to ensure all enrolment and preference forms are completed correctly.

Opportunities for Development

The School's Charter has been recently updated but the Catholic Character goals need revising. Staff from Catholic Education Services would be available to work with the Board to help develop revised Catholic Character goals using the Bishops' Document "The Catholic Education of School Age Children".

Conclusion

St Therese School provides a happy, cohesive Catholic learning environment. The school has committed and passionate staff, an excellent connection with the Parish, supportive families and children who love coming to school. The children interviewed by the reviewers are living testament that the school is meeting the aspirations of the community.

The school provides an environment and many opportunities for each child to have a genuine and ongoing encounter with Christ, to grow in knowledge and understanding of Christ's teaching and to live a life of Christian witness within the Catholic Church.



Philip Mahoney
Manager
Catholic Education Services



Linda McQuade
Vicar for Education

Date: October 30, 2017