

**Diocese of Dunedin
Catholic Education Office**

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

REPORT ON

**Sacred Heart School
North East Valley, Dunedin**

School Type	Co-educational Contributing Primary
Visit	29 June 2015
Principal	Mr Paul Richardson
Reviewer	Mr Paul Ferris



Summary Page:

Sacred Heart School in North East Valley Dunedin remains an authentic Catholic Community with an energy for the Gospel and a willingness to review and refine practice which supports the mission of the Church. It is a small school with a small roll. Its roll has declined since the last review through natural attrition but it has a determination to meet this challenge through evangelization and being a beacon of faith for people in the North Dunedin Community.

The school has strong leadership from the Board of Trustees which has a good understanding of governance and Special Character. It has the leadership of an experienced Principal who has a strong personal commitment to the mission of the school. He has recently been joined by an Assistant Principal who has leadership and management in Special Character and who has an energy and enthusiasm for the school and its work. All staff are strong in their commitment to Special Character. Together the staff are the strongest agents for the school and the Proprietor.

Religious Education is well planned and taught. More importantly, it is integrated in many aspects of the school culture and across other curriculum levels. Faith and life are a synthesis in the school which give it an authenticity not always achieved in larger schools.

Sacred Heart school is active in its evangelization of students. It is an inclusive and welcoming community where pastoral care is part of a genuine appreciation of the individual. Behavioural management looks for restorative solutions although the school will use stronger sanctions if students are unable to respond to the care and support they receive, or if they pose a threat to the safety of others.

The school, through its Principal, has reviewed several aspects of Special Character. It has supported refinements to appraisal and formation in line with the Proprietor's direction, and it has much to be proud of in the progress it has made in the last three years.

Sacred Heart school will continue to refine and review its teaching and pastoral care on a regular basis as a way of ensuring that it continues to support the mission of the Church.

Recommendations in the report encourage the school to continue its journey in refining and building the community of faith with a strong parish connection.

School Information

Name: Sacred Heart School

Address: 89 North Road, North East Valley, Dunedin

School Type: Co-educational contributing

Decile: 7

Staffing Roll for 2015: 55 **Actual Roll at Time of Review:** 43
Maximum Roll: 110

Non-preference Maximum: 6 **Actual Non-preference at Review:** 6
Enrolment categories according to preference:

5.1 36

5.2

5.3 1

5.4

5.5

NP 6

Teaching Staff:

Roll generated 3.68

Other .01 **Board support**

Ethnic Composition:

NZ European/Pakeha	19
Maori	5
Pacific	2
Other	17

Board of Trustees Chairperson: Mr Stephen Gallagher

Principal: Mr Paul Richardson

Director of Religious Studies: Mr Pesamino Tili

Parish Priest/Chaplain: Fr Aidan Cunningham IC

Since the last review:

That the self review programme scheduled for Special Character be summarized in a document and incorporated into the Strategic and Annual Plan. Individual aspects of the plan can then be reviewed against data on a schedule that is manageable for a small school but using a system that will add value rather than work.

A self review programme has been developed for the three years and a genuine effort to gather data and refine aspects of Special Character has been made. Refining the focus of the self review questions would help the Board make more refinements to an already good process rather than engaging in such broad reviews.

That the Board look at developing a set of questions for interrogating data from self review so that their questions and deliberations can assist the Principal and staff develop even more success for the school.

The Board has participated in the self review process.

That the values already discerned are now associated with scripture and widely embedded into the operation and documents of the school.

One of the most successful pieces of work since the last review has been the schools efforts to develop and own a set of gospel based values that underpin the culture of the school and help it focus on living the Special Character.

That the Board review professional development and look at developing a plan for the next three years which supports the development of staff in Special Character formation.

The Board has data relating to formation work undertaken by staff but that information has not yet been translated into a plan to take the school forward.

That the Board review the process of Principal appraisal so that the Special Character section is reviewed by a process that can support him to focus on next steps.

Principal appraisal has been refined and includes the Catholic Professional Standards as well as the standards by the Teachers' Council. He has also joined the Southland Catholic Principals who have formed a cluster for self review in Special Character. He can see the value of establishing a group for Dunedin Principals.

That the teacher process be refined to also help staff plan next steps in their professional journey involving Special Character.

Staff appraisal has yet to include Catholic Professional Standards and to show how the process tracks and supports staff through the process of certification.

That the Board consider ways that they can develop a website that not only advertises the school but supports parent catechesis through its resources and connections. The Board might consider ways of uniting with several schools to pool resources to achieve a stronger resource capable of engaging parents and students more.

This recommendation has been considered by the Principal and Board but they have at present elected to refine their own web site. They appreciate the value of providing support to parents as they re-engage with their faith as their children enter the Catholic school.

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

Prayer is an integral part of the school life. Staff pray and have a roster for leading and sharing prayer. Classes begin each day with prayer and begin lunch with a grace. Class prayer is inclusive of music and scripture.

Evangelisation

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

The school has several baptisms each year. Students who are given preference in the enrolment process and who have not received the sacraments of initiation, are encouraged to complete this when the year 3 class begins the sacramental programme.

Partnership

Education is a collaborative responsibility

The School has worked hard through one of its self review processes to deepen the relationship with the Parish. It has considered all the aspects of its relationship and brain stormed ways that this can be developed further. The Self review of the Parish relationship has a narrative approach without data but it shows that there is a genuine attempt to develop the relationship and enhance its place in the school. The Parish Priest and the Principal work easily together.

The school promotes and encourages children to move to the Catholic high school as a natural transition from Sacred Heart.

Values

The school identifies and actively promotes gospel values.

Since the last review the school has worked seriously on the school values and embedded them into the culture of the school. They are displayed, used to discuss behavior and guide the culture of the school. The values of Respect, Justice, Truth and Humanity are explained through scripture and aligned with the school Charism. St Dominic has been rightfully used as a lens for people seeking to follow Jesus. The school uses its Dominican links and values in a transparent and helpful way and the children respond and understand their importance.

School Culture

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

Because the school has such a focus on its values and charism, the culture lived in the school is inclusive, supportive, responsive and proudly Catholic. It is supported by a staff who believe and express their faith through their actions in the school. Sacred Heart School is genuinely Catholic in the way it lives gospel values and engages with Catholic Social teaching.

Leadership

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

Sacred Heart has a strong Board who understand the mission of the school. They provide good feedback to the Principal and staff. They work with him and the staff to give voice to the Church in the life of the school. They seek advice when required and responsibly and sensitively work through issues.

The Principal has prepared for review on many levels. He uses his experience and commitment in Catholic education to provide servant leadership to the school and its community. He has the respect of other Principals in the Diocese to be their representative on the NZ Executive for Catholic Primary Schools. He has given time to be a part of Catholic review in a previous year and used that experience to genuinely review and reflect on how he can cover all aspects of the Catholic review programme. He is open to advice and respectful of other views.

In 2014 the school appointed a new Assistant Principal and Director of Religious Studies who has brought energy and enthusiasm to both the school in general and the schools response to Te Reo and music in liturgy. He is open to further formation and will continue to work easily with the Principal and staff as a liturgy leader.

Stewardship

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

The school has a very full strategic and annual plan. The strategic plan and annual plan have elements of Special Character included but the Principal has already identified that the Charter is not yet completely refined because of its detail. Many aspects of the charter are more “business as usual” rather than goals that would make a strategic difference. He has already made an arrangement for his appraiser to work with him to refine and focus the charter for 2016.

The Board receive full and illustrated reports on Special Character that report the work done in the previous weeks. The level of reporting is very good in a narrative and photo format. As the school develops confidence with data from Education in Faith teaching it will include that information in

the Board report. The Board have found the reports so well prepared they have wanted to share them more widely with the parent and parish community.

The Board and Principal have developed a detailed self review programme. Two detailed reviews made available for the review show that developmental steps have been considered for pastoral care and Parish/ School relationship. The parish / school relationship review is a narrative reflection on ways they work together and the pastoral review has some excellent consultation and reflection provided by stakeholders. This review provides a template for further planning.

Employment documents have been developed to support the Special Character. Job descriptions and Appraisal documents include Catholic Professional Standards and the leadership is developing a confidence in writing against those. There is some work to ensure that expectations for “tagged” teachers are more explicit in the documents but there has been significant progress to date.

The Principal Appraisal has actively sought to work with other Principals in the Diocese who are looking to empower their leadership through developing professional learning groups with a focus on Special Character.

Worship

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

The school has a full programme for liturgy and reflection. In the last review it had already developed an outside sacred space that continues to offer a space to pause and reflect. Prayer is a part of school life but the Parish and school work closely to have masses during term time and on specific weekends. On a recent Sunday parish mass the school had 75% attendance from the students and their singing was the subject of much Parish approbation.

Service

Students assist people in need through service and outreach opportunities.

The school has a Young Vinnie group and a commitment to social justice. Youth workers from the parish work in the school to help provide focus and activities in prayer and action for the students. The school supports Caritas and other Catholic charities.

Collaboration with the Parish

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

The school has worked purposely to help enhance the relationship with the Parish. There has always been a willingness to work together but the school has seriously considered how this can be developed further through shared activities, communications, promotion, shared Sunday masses and sacramental programmes. The Parish Priest has encouraged people to enrol in the school with less confident claims for preference in the hope that the school continues to evangelise and support them in their faith journey. Evangelisation figures support this action.

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.

Relationships between staff and between staff and students are strong. There is a shared leadership presented to the children and all teachers are valued and respected. This is a school that bases its success in teaching on having a warm and inclusive environment that accepts and supports people of different ethnicities. Relationships and respect are key components of the school's response in faith.

Safety

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

The school has very clear expectations around student safety and checks regularly to see that people are feeling safe. Play amongst students showed that they were happy and assertive and that good supervision provided monitoring.

Behaviour Management

Discipline processes are just, compassionate, respectful and consistent.

There are clear expectations for behaviour. These are based on the values rather than a set of rules or prescriptors. When issues arise that require more overt action the Principal will invoke statutory processes to see what the school and community think are reasonable outcomes. The school seeks to build a restorative process rather than a punitive one. This approach has assisted it to include and engage a number of students who in another context may not be so successful.

Cultural Awareness

The school is open to the enrichment of diverse cultures.

Sacred Heart has one of the most diverse group of ethnicities in the Diocese. A symbol of its success is the way it celebrates and encourages them all to feel welcome and included while giving appropriate priority to Te Reo, Maori and Pasifika Culture. The assistant principal is strong in Te Reo and shares that with staff and students. There is a genuine attempt to use Te Reo in classrooms and students respond in that language with confidence.

Organisation

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

As a small school, detailed organization is not essential for the pastoral care of students. All staff and teacher aides participate in caring and supporting.

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 and Assistant Principal take responsibility for leading the work in the Religious Education department. In reality, all three teachers are personally committed to Catholic teaching and support and share with each other. Planning is done jointly as is the reflection at the end of each strand.

Religious Education Curriculum

The Religious Education programme is soundly managed and professionally delivered.

The school plans and delivers the curriculum well. It has composite classes which requires it to balance the learning to meet the learning needs of a wider group of students. It does this well and includes sacramental preparation as well in the programme. It reports to parents about the progress children make in Religious Education and will continue to look for ways that data is gathered and shared.

The use of the Solo taxonomy to help evaluate each strand is an example of ways the staff value and consider the effectiveness of their teaching. This level of reflection is not found in many other schools.

The digital resource is used but in a supportive role at all levels. It provides graphic illustrations for some strands but is generally used to support teaching which relies on a range of other delivery and group teaching strategies.

Integrated Curriculum

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

Religious education is integrated in many aspects of the programme and the application of writing skills, language in general, art and oral skills all benefit from activities used in the programme.

Resources

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

With limited resources for a small school, resources for Religious Education and Special Character are prioritized .

Professional Development

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

The Principal has maintained his certification as a leader of Catholic Schools. He has completed a Catholic Institute of Aotearoa New Zealand paper and enrolled for another. He encourages his staff to enrol and supports them with resources. There are good reasons why some staff struggle to do that, while their family commitments are quite large. There is a willingness to complete the requirement for certification as soon as those constraints are lessened.

Staff have been to the New Zealand Catholic Convention recently and support all twilight meetings.

Communication

The school communicates with parents about Religious Education programmes.

The school has an attractive and informative newsletter that goes out each week. It highlights many aspects of Special Character in the school and is available in the Parish and on the website. The next step for the school is the development of support materials for parents who are re-engaging with faith and are seeking catechetical resources to help them engage at an adult level.

PROPOSALS FOR ACTION FROM THIS REVIEW

Compliance Requirements

There are no compliance issues for the School to address.

Key Recommendations for further development

- That the school continues to look at how they use the data from review to support next steps in teaching Religious Education.
- That the School continues to build the family connections to Parish.
- That the school refines the professional development plan using the data from appraisal to help direct and support staff.
- That the school continues to refine teaching of Religious Education using a range of strategies for engagement.
- That the school continues to celebrate the school values and charism of the Dominican Order as a way of preserving its history and tradition.
- That the school continues to support the high level of Te Reo and Karakia in the school.
- That the Teacher's Appraisal documents embed the Professional Standards for Catholic Teachers.
- That the Board work with staff to develop a strategy for formation for all staff for the next three years.

THE REVIEW TEAM WISH TO THANK THE BOARD, PRINCIPAL AND STUDENTS FOR THE SUPPORT AND ENTHUSIASM FOR THE REVIEW PROCESS AND LOOK FORWARD TO RETURNING TO CELEBRATE THE PROGRESS THEY WILL MAKE IN BUILDING THE CATHOLIC CHARACTER OF THE SCHOOL.

**Catholic Special Character Review Team
September 2015**

**Paul Ferris QSM
Lead Reviewer**