

# **CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF AUCKLAND**

**Pompallier Diocesan Centre,  
30 New Street,  
Ponsonby, Auckland 1144**

**ĀHUATANGA KATORIKA KAUPAPA  
AROTAKE ME TO AHU WHAKAMUA**

**CATHOLIC SPECIAL CHARACTER  
EXTERNAL REVIEW REPORT**

**MARIST SCHOOL  
MT. ALBERT**

**Review Visit: 27-28 March, 2019**

**Confirmed Report: 7 June, 2019**



## SCHOOL DATA

<b>Principal:</b>	Miss Catherine Ryan
<b>Director of Religious Studies:</b>	Ms Marie Walker
<b>Parish Priest:</b>	Fr. Philip Lakra
<b>BOT Chair:</b>	Mr Patrick Casey
<b>Reviewers:</b>	Mrs Colleen Gleeson, Mr Philip Mahoney
<b>Accompanying Principal:</b>	Mrs Mini Joseph

## NGĀ WHĀINGA O TE AROTAKE - AIMS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

The New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference (NZCBC) wishes the review to show how effective the School is in handing on the faith and forming a new generation of Catholics; this includes evaluating the efficacy of Religious Education and how the whole School community engages in authentic Catholic Christian witness and evangelisation.

The External Review process is based on the requirements of the *Catholic Special Character Review for Development* (Draft) that came into effect at the end of 2017.

In the review, Schools are asked to consider and demonstrate the ways in which they provide for their students:

an encounter with Christ, *Te Tūtaki ki ā te Karaiti*  
growth in knowledge, *Te Whakatupu mā te Matauranga*, and  
the development of Christian witness, *te Whakaatu Karaitiana*.

The review also investigates stewardship, including stewardship of the relationship between the Church and the State, *Te Kaitiakitanga me to Whakapakari i te Tuakiri Katorika*.

Reviewers encourage and commend best practice, and work with the School to formulate opportunities to further strengthen and develop the Catholic culture.



## INTRODUCTION

The staff and the Board of Trustees at Marist School, Mt Albert were well prepared for their Review using the draft document “Catholic Special Character Review for Development”. The documentation provided prior to the review was thorough and presented a good overview of the school and the many activities in which it is involved.

The Reviewers were warmly welcomed by the whole School with a powhiri, prayers and an insight into the school’s ethos, provided by groups of students and a video. The Principal, staff, students, parish, parents and the Board of Trustees were very hospitable and pleased to openly share their thoughts about the school and their aspirations for it. Similarly they welcomed any areas for development as a way forward for their school.

Established in 1927 by the Marist Sisters and situated in Auckland’s central suburbs. The school shares a site with St Mary’s Catholic Church, the Marist Sisters Convent and Marist College. At the time of review, major construction was underway to build a large two story block of classrooms to accommodate the whole school. The Principal had resigned and was finishing at the end of the term.

## Response to Key Recommendations from the 2015 External Review

**That the Board look at ways to consult with the community and establish a programme of consultation.**

- During 2017 and 2018 consultation has taken place with the school community (staff, whānau and students) to re-vision the school’s mission, vision, values and future strategic direction. At the beginning of 2019 this was shared with the community at an information evening and through the newsletter.
- During 2019 further consultation will take place to review the Strategic Goals.

**That the school develop a progressive Māori curriculum encompassing Te Reo and Tikanga Māori from Year 1 to Year 6, in consultation with their Maori community.**

- The school has not succeeded in developing a progressive curriculum as yet however they have made significant progress in honouring Te Reo and Tikanga Māori throughout the school by:
  - ❖ Forming a Kapa Haka group to welcome guests with a powhiri, and perform regularly at events.
  - ❖ A past-parent and current Bishop’s Appointee has voluntarily taught Te Reo lessons and initiated a Year 6 boy’s haka.
  - ❖ Religious Education planning ensures that Te Reo is integrated.
  - ❖ Te Reo is strongly evident in the re-visioning of the mission, vision and values.

## Response to Areas for Development from the 2015 External Review

**That a Gospel passage or quote be attached to the core values to give them context.**

- This was explored at the Teacher Only Day in 2019. Consultation with the Board of Trustees, staff and students will continue throughout 2019 to unpack the values and their context.

**That along with the Marist charism teaching it is emphasised that “the school exercises the right to live and teach the values of Jesus Christ”, and is Christ-centered.**

- From 2016 there has been a deliberate raising of consciousness to ensure that Marist school is first and foremost a Christ-centered faith community. This has been particularly emphasised when learning about and developing the charism, “Through Mary to Jesus”.



**The Board of Trustees should continue to ensure that the Special Catholic Character of the school is embedded throughout each policy.**

- From 2016, as each policy is reviewed and new policies developed, every effort is made to ensure they reflect the Special Catholic Character.

**That the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Rite 2, is organised for children during Lent and Advent, depending on availability of priests.**

- Children now have the opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation, Rite 2, during Lent and Advent each year.
- A Board of Trustees initiative was to invite those who made their First Reconciliation to attend Rite 2 with their families on a Saturday morning followed by morning tea.

**That both school and parish websites have link to the others' website.**

- This has occurred on both School and Parish websites.

**That the Director of Religious Studies works with the Principal to ensure that release time is adequate and provided at appropriate times to enable observations of all teachers teaching Religious Education each year.**

- The Director of Religious Studies, at the time of Review had one release day per week, she had been on study leave in 2018 and was given this to catch up with everything after her absence. This will be reduced to 1 day per fortnight in Term 2 and extra time will be made available if needed.
- There is a plan in place for observations of the Religious Education programme and prayer time to take place throughout the year.

## **Encounter with Christ – Te Tutaki ki a Te Karaiti**

*The School encourages and facilitates the development of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ who reveals the transforming love and truth of the living God.*

### **Areas of Success**

Marist School community has a shared understanding of their Marist Catholic spirituality. All members of the community, staff, Board of Trustees, parents and students, are able to articulate what it means to belong to Marist Mt Albert. The staff and students all see themselves as the face of Christ. The spirituality is also evident in the way in which the staff, students and parents relate to each other and how visitors are welcomed by the front office and then by all staff and students. All staff are positive role models who support, uphold and witness the Catholic Character of the school.

The Marist charism (Te Wairua o Mary – The Spirit of Mary – Through Mary to Jesus) is strong throughout the school and the whole community can articulate what this looks like. The new core values of Courage (Hautoa), Love (Aroha), and Compassion (Ngakau mataki) along with the 2019 focus of “Head, Heart and Hands” enhances the strong understanding of what it means to be a member of a Marist school. The Marist Way, based on a school song written by the Director of Religious Studies, is integrated into the daily school life and at home with families. The school is at the very early stages of embedding the renewed identity of Marist, Mt Albert, being developed in consultation with the community. The re-imagined Mission, Vision and Values emphasises that “*we are called*” to live with love, courage and compassion.

The school is looking at ways to enhance prayer as an authentic encounter with Christ. 2018 was spent deepening an understanding of meditation which is regularly practiced across the school. This year simple prayers are being said at the beginning and end of the day and providing a rich encounter of



prayer for combined classes within the timetable each day. Students were reverent and reflective at this time. A variety of prayer styles are being introduced and modelled.

Staff pray together on a Thursday morning and are rostered to lead this. Prayer kete are sent home on a regular basis to encourage prayer at home. Some classes only make the Sign of the Cross at the start of the day and at the end of the day. One child explained:

*“Everything we do during the day is a prayer so we don’t finish our prayer until the end of the day”*

(Senior school leader interview)

There are attractive prayer focuses in each classroom and throughout the school. School assemblies have a liturgy focus and the students participate in the interschool “Proclaiming the Word” competition.

Two classes are rostered each week to attend the Parish Wednesday Mass. School Masses and Liturgies are held for significant feast days. Sunday Parish/School Masses are held three times per year. Students are encouraged to read and participate in many roles at Masses. Teachers are encouraged to buddy with another teacher to plan class Masses. The school is planning to reintroduce 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday Masses in 2019.

The school actively supports the Parish Sacramental programme. The school promotes the programme, and celebrates the children at school, presenting them with a gift. A number of staff are parishioners of St Mary’s Church.

The Principal has been in her role for almost 6 years. She is an experienced Principal who leaves at the end of Term 1 2019. She has served Catholic Education for many years and is an excellent model of servant leadership. The Principal, staff and the Board of Trustees work to build strong relationships within the school and Parish families. The Principal’s report to the BOT always includes a section under ‘Special Character’.

Most Board of Trustee members are parishioners of St Mary’s, or surrounding, Parishes. Collectively they demonstrate for the students and their families an example of being positive role models of upholding and witnessing the Catholic faith.

The exterior of the school is well maintained and truly reflects the Catholic Special Character of the school with murals and art work around the grounds. The school is to be commended for maintaining the gardens and grounds so well during the construction period on site. The Office Manager has established a display in the front foyer with each child and staff member’s name written on a heart shape.

## **Next Steps**

Work needs to continue on the Gospel references for the core values and what the values look like for the students.

Opportunities for rich retreats for staff, Board of Trustees and students which focus on encountering Christ on the journey of discipleship, need to be identified.

The Principal or Board of Trustee member should represent the school on the Parish Council, present a school report at each meeting and report back to the Board from the meeting.



The school and parish could invite all students who complete the Sacramental programme to train as altar servers to encourage regular attendance and participation at Parish Masses.

## **Growth in Knowledge – Te Whakatupu ma te Matauranga**

*The School assists its community to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Jesus Christ, his teachings and the Catholic Church.*

### **Areas of Success**

The Director of Religious Studies has taught at the school for 20 years and has been in the Director of Religious Studies position for 6 years. She is assisted by all teachers, particularly the S464 'tagged' teachers, when preparing for Masses and Liturgies. She is a member of the Senior Management Team and liaises with the Parish Priest on a regular basis. She provides both verbal and written feedback which is positive and provides suggested ideas for future development after all observations. She models prayer and Religious Education lessons for beginning teachers and teachers new to Catholic schools.

The school is well resourced for the teaching of Religious Education and gives this subject high priority. Professional development on the "Religious Education Bridging Document" has been facilitated by the Religious Education Advisor and in 2019 the aim is for teachers to familiarise themselves with the document through an inquiry approach. The overview planning for Term 1 cleverly integrates the new vision for the school, the Marist Way, charism, values, 'Head, Heart and Hands', a prayer module and the Jesus Strand – all with an emphasis on Encounter and Scripture (which was an identified need). Teachers plan in syndicates. The Year 5 and 6 syndicate use a "Learn, Create, Share" learning model. Students were engaged in their learning and the older children were able to tell Reviewers what they were learning.

In term 4 each year the staff reflect on the year's teaching and learning. The school leadership then engages in discussion on how to further develop the connected learning in a way that is relevant and focussed on the Catholic faith identity.

Each syndicate informs parents of the RE strand currently being covered, class masses and special character activities through a syndicate newsletter each term. The Director of Religious Studies and the Principal ensure that parents receive information about prayer and the liturgical year through the school newsletter.

All staff members participate in regular Catholic Special Character professional learning and development through courses. New teachers attend the 'Teachers New to Catholic Schools' course. The Director of Religious Studies attends all DRS professional development days. All staff members attend a Teacher Only Day based on the Special Character theme for the year. Nine staff members are working towards Classroom Level Accreditation, three have attained Classroom Level, six have Endorsed Leadership Level and one has Endorsed Graduate Level. Five teachers completed a paper through The Catholic Institute in 2018. All teachers are expected to attend Cluster meetings and Religious Education staff meetings when provided. Most teachers have achieved the expected 12 hours per year and more each year. Eight staff members have completed the "Understanding Sexuality" course.

The health curriculum follows the teachings of the Catholic Church as a guide. A Public Health Nurse delivers a Pubertal Change programme for Year 6 boys and girls separately which has worked well for many years. The school is now looking at having a parent session with the Nurse prior to the lessons.



All classrooms were attractive and vibrant learning environments and reflected the work being done on the Charism, Special Catholic Character and the current strand. It was very obvious to the Reviewers that these were classrooms in a Catholic School. Teacher planning was consistent across the school.

### **Next Steps**

It is imperative that the change of pedagogy needed for the Religious Education Bridging Document's implementation is practiced and trialled in 2019, ready for the move into flexible spaces. Teachers need to teach to the needs of the students, differentiate teaching and learning at every opportunity and share the talents of teachers within the programme.

Assessment and evaluation procedures need to be developed to monitor and track the teaching and learning of Religious Education.

Once planning overviews are completed the Director of Religious Studies needs to run staff meetings on the theology behind the Achievement Objectives to be taught, particularly for teachers new to Catholic schools.

Information for parents about the Religious Education programme should be on the school website.

### **Christian Witness – Te Whakaatu Karaitiana**

*The School provides a hope-filled Catholic Christian witness which empowers its community members to integrate their faith and their life.*

### **Areas of Success**

The Principal, Director of Religious Studies and other teachers in S464 positions are active witnesses of their faith in the School and in their Parishes and present the face of Christ to others. The Catholic concept of family and community is evidenced in the school. The children and teachers care for each other in their daily activities and pray for each other at morning prayers. The School is a welcoming environment where all are treated with hospitality, aroha and respect.

Marist School and Parish have a strong working relationship based on mutual respect between the school and Parish personnel. The Parish Priest has a good rapport with the students and their families. He is very knowledgeable about education and feels comfortable in the school environment. He is very generous with his time and supports the school in every way he can. He visits the school weekly to visit classes. He is a member of the Board of Trustees and is very supportive of the school. He and the assistant priest are invited to attend all School celebrations and events and their visits are enjoyed by both staff and the students. The school and parish share facilities and resources willingly. The Marist sisters are much loved members of the Marist School family. They support all school liturgies and activities and visit the school often.

Marist School is a member of the Central Catholic Kahui Ako, they have a good relationship with local state schools and work closely with the other Marist schools in the area (Herne Bay and Marist College) with whom they celebrate Catholic Schools Day.

Playground Angels (Year 6 students) greet parents and children at New Entrant school visits and when the student begins school they introduce them and tell the school about them at the 'Thoughtful Thursday' assembly. The new students are welcomed with a gift bag of items to support them through their faith journey. In 2019 this will be extended to include the student's family. The school gifts all Year 4 students with a Bible and they also receive a gift when they receive the Sacraments for the first



time. At the Leaver's Liturgy all Year 6's are gifted symbols and items to support them on their future journey of faith.

Marist School endeavours to provide meaningful opportunities for the students to show that they care for others who are less fortunate than themselves. The school witnesses their faith by collecting Cans for Christmas, Christmas gifts for families at another school, gifts for the Jesse tree, donating to the Foodbank, providing sleeping mats for the homeless, making cards for a Christmas and Easter card drop, supporting Caritas, Caring Foundation, Poppy Day, Daffodil day, and visiting the local rest home. The students tend to drive this 'Gospel Action' themselves. For instance a Year 3 child initiated a pencil drive for the Sudan. Money is raised annually for the Mulemi Community School in Africa.

The parents expressed their gratitude for what the School does when families are in need. They acknowledged that the school had a community and family feel and it was very welcoming. Each classroom has a parent representative who liaises between teachers and parents and organises class picnics each year for families to get together. The Parents, Teachers and Friends Association (PTFA) organises volunteers to make meals which are frozen and available to families when needed. They organise morning teas after parish/school Masses, sell second hand uniforms, organise a Kid's disco, Dad's golf day and do fundraising to support the school.

The Marist Café is a new initiative to more actively support parents in their role as first faith educators. They are hoping to meet twice per term for parents to get together to discuss issues and ideas relating to them. The Principal and a Board of Trustees member facilitate the group.

The School is very inclusive and welcomes students with Special Needs. There are a number of students with moderate needs and have part-time Teacher Aide support. These Teacher Aides are committed to their roles and work with the Special Education Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCO), outside agencies, and support networks. They are to be congratulated for the work they do and the dedication they give to the children in their care. The support staff feel valued and supported in their roles. They meet with the SENCO once per month. There was an induction programme for them when they began at the school and they attend some staff professional development based on the Catholic Special Character and specific to their role. The Reading Recovery programme, ESOL, Rainbow Reading, phonics programme, literacy and maths programmes are available in the school. The school also runs enrichment opportunities: Otago Problem Solving, Kids for Kids choir, Speech, Art and Sporting competitions. The school participates in some wider community events such as Anzac Day and the Cultural Festival.

Marist School provides many opportunities for students to contribute actively in the life of the school, taking responsibility as monitors and leaders in the classroom or in the wider school. The Reviewers met with some Year 5 and 6 students. They serve the school as House Captains, Student Council, Justice and Compassion Leaders, Hauora Leaders, IT Crew, Marist in Action group, Librarians, Marist Angels, Travelwise and Wastewise Team and the Eco Team.

The School recognises Māori as tangata whenua and the commitment the Church has made to a bicultural partnership. The Reviewers were welcomed with a powhiri which was followed by a short liturgy and explanation of their identity as Marist School. Te Reo was used in some classrooms, mainly through the Religious Education programme. Prayers and waiata were shared in Te Reo. A Board of Trustees member teaches the senior boys the haka. The school employs a part time Maori specialist teacher. Developing a deeper understanding of Māori Spirituality is an area in which the staff would like professional development.

All students and teachers are respectful of each other's culture. The students showed a great deal of empathy and compassion in light of the Christchurch Mosque incident, which had just happened. They



learn the Sign of the Cross in many languages. A Pasifika cultural group has been established by two teachers.

The school introduced the KIVA – Anti Bullying programme in 2018 and along with The Marist Way, all teachers trained in “The Incredible Years” programme and an emphasis on making positive choices (“What would Jesus do?”), the behaviour of students is well handled.

## **Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Character – Te Kaitiakitanga me te Whakapakari I te Tuakiri Katorika**

*The School in its stewardship and compliance with statutory obligations, safeguards and strengthens its Catholic identity.*

The Board of Trustees has some very experienced and long term members. The Chairperson has recently resigned and another member stepped up until the upcoming elections in a few months. The Board members take their role of governance seriously. They work well together, and with the staff, and know that they play a large part in safeguarding and strengthening the School’s Catholic Special Character. They are proud of their School and know that the students receive a good Catholic education. The Board of Trustees are well versed in the Bishop’s Conference book “A Catholic Education for School-Aged Children”. Their broad vision is:

*“With the loving faith-filled support of their whanau, school and parish, our Marist tamariki learn and grow towards becoming all God created them to be.”*

The Board are known throughout the community and are identified on the school website. They are represented at all school functions and are often seen around the school.

The Proprietors Representatives on the Board of Trustees are diligent in Part A and Part B of their annual report to the Proprietor. The majority of the Board are parishioners and the special Catholic character of the school is seen as of paramount importance. They are working to enhance the key components of Catholic Character as set out in the Bishops Conference document and have identified what they need to do to:

- Use the talents of their Catholic educators
- Build young disciples
- Deliver a thriving Religious Education programme
- Live *Catholic* values
- Serve the community

The Board of Trustees communicate with and report to the community through their newsletter called “Pinboard News” in July and December posted on the school website.

The job descriptions for the Principal, Director of Religious Studies and all staff clearly contain the expectation to uphold the Special Catholic Character of the school.



As part of the Catholic Special Character Review process a preference audit was conducted on 7 March, 2019 and updated at the time of the Review.

Year	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.5	Total	NP
Y0/1	37		3	1		41	
Y2	39		5	2		46	
Y3	35	3	5	4		47	
Y4	43		5	1		49	
Y5	41	1	3	3		48	
Y6	42		4			46	
	237	4	25	11		277	0

Actual Roll = 277

Maximum Roll = 350

The School collects preference cards for each enrolment. The forms are well organised and changes to a student's preference criteria are noted. 5.3 criteria student's file holds the Baptismal certificate of the parent who is Baptised. The Parish Priest meets with every family before signing the preference form. In the case of 5.4 criteria he meets with the sponsoring familial adult also.

The audit found that:

- 85% of preference students are 5.1 criteria
- There are no non-preference students

At the time of the review Marist School was compliant with its Integration Agreement in regard to:

- Maximum roll compared to actual roll
- Consultation with the Proprietor
- The percentage of non-preference students against the maximum roll
- The number of S464 positions

### **Next Steps**

The Curriculum Delivery policy needs to include that everything is taught through a Catholic lens. As policies are reviewed ensure that the Special Catholic Character is integrated throughout each document.

With the growing roll, physical changes happening at the school and a new Principal starting, this is an excellent opportunity to review the structure of staffing, leadership and teaching staff, with the understanding that the students are at the centre of all structural decisions.



## Conclusion

From the moment you enter Marist School, Mt Albert you are aware you are in a Catholic School. The Special Character shines through the warm welcome you receive, the happy, respectful atmosphere found throughout the school. Marist is a Christ centred school with a strong family and community feel.

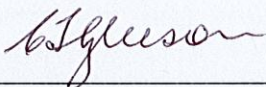
The school community are proud of their school, its cultural awareness, inclusiveness, pastoral care and its academic achievements. The school's Board of Trustees, senior leadership team, committed staff, strong connection with the Parish and very supportive families provide a nurturing environment for children who love coming to school. They focus on the whole child, spiritually, emotionally, physically, culturally and academically. The students at Marist School learn to be responsible for their learning and their behaviour.

The senior students interviewed by the reviewers were living testament that the school is achieving what the community aspires to in their Mission Statement:

*"Inspired by Mary, we use our Head, Heart and Hands to know, live and share the joy of the Gospel".*

(Marist School Charter – Mission statement)

The school provides 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.



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