

# **CATHOLIC SPECIAL CHARACTER EXTERNAL REVIEW REPORT**

**ST. JOHN'S SCHOOL  
MAIRANGI BAY**

**9-10 APRIL, 2014**

## SCHOOL DETAILS

**Name:** St John's School, Mairangi Bay

**Address:** 87A Penzance Rd, Mairangi Bay  
Auckland 0630

**School Type:** Contributing school Yrs 1-6 boys and girls.

**Principal:** Mr Bernard Fitzgibbon

**Director of Religious Studies:** Mrs Mary Fitzgibbon

**Board of Trustees Chairperson:** Mrs Siobhan Harrod

**Parish Priest:** Fr Robert O'Brien

**Reviewers:** Mr Neil Laurenson  
Mrs Colleen Gleeson

**Accompanying Principal** Mrs Michele Mill

**Current Roll:** 337

**Report Confirmed:** 13 May, 2014

The National Administration Guidelines (NAG 2) requires all schools to develop a Strategic Plan, maintain a programme of self review and report to the community. In Catholic Schools this process must include provision for the maintenance and development of Catholic Special Character. The review and development cycle includes annual internal self review of a key dimension of Catholic Special Character as well as an external review every four years.

The purpose of the external review is to provide assurance to the Proprietor that the school has appropriate systems in place to deliver education with a Catholic Special Character in terms of the following three Key Dimensions:

***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.

***Pastoral Care: Manaakitanga***

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

***Religious Education: Te Whakaakoranga Whakapono***

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

As well as the key dimensions, the Reviewers look at the school's process for self-review and how areas for development are incorporated into the school's Development Plan. In carrying out this review, the Reviewers had access to relevant documentation, interviewed staff, Board of Trustee members, parents and students and visited all classrooms.

## CATHOLIC COMMUNITY: Te Iwi Whanau 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.*

St. John's School, Mairangi Bay warmly welcomed and embraced the opportunity for review and development. The Board of Trustees, Principal, staff, students, parent and parish community welcomed the reviewers and all shared openly their thoughts and opinions.

Situated in East Coast Bays, this school is set on a hill overlooking the Rangitoto Chanel with panoramic views across to Rangitoto Island and the Waitemata Harbour. St John's celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee in 2011. Set in well groomed grounds the school serves the Parish of East Coast Bays which includes St Francis de Sales Church, Browns Bay, from Campbell's Bay to Long Bay and surrounding areas from Glenfield to Albany. The St John the Baptist Church, Mairangi Bay and Presbytery share the site with the school.

### SPIRITUALITY

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

The spirituality of St John's School is seen in the way staff and students relate to each other, welcome visitors and support each other and the wider community. Through its charism and values it provides encouragement and resources for individuals within the school community to develop their own faith journey.

*"One only needs to attend a school function to see the obvious spirituality of the children, especially in their attendance and participation at school Masses.*

(Parish survey response)

### EVANGELISATION

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

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

*"My greatest joy is teaching at St John's School where I get to carry out my faith journey daily with the children and staff."*

(Staff survey response)

## PARTNERSHIP

*Education is a collaborative responsibility.*

The Principal, staff and Board of Trustees work to build strong relationships with families, the Parish and the wider community. All members of the school community spoken to by the Reviewers said that they felt welcome in the school and appreciated the ‘open-door’ policy.

The partnership with parents is continually being developed through effective communication and learning conversations. The St John’s School PTFA meet regularly and initiate events and fundraising. They receive huge support from the school and parish communities at all events and organise a balance of events for parents and children. Each year they run a Gala to raise funds for the school.

*“We rely on the active support and involvement of our parents”.*

(St John’s School Prospectus)

The Year 6 classes represented St John’s School on Catholic Schools Day in 2013 at Mass at Takapuna attended by each Catholic school on the North Shore. The school has a close relationship with Carmel and Rosmini Colleges and ensures a smooth transition to College for their graduating students.

## VALUES

*The school identifies and actively promotes Gospel values.*

St John’s School identify their core values as:

Respect – Protect and Respect

Excellence – Be the best I can be, Better than before

Community – Be a contributor

Faith – Do what Jesus would do.

These values, based on the Josephite charism can be found in the school Charter and displayed throughout the interior of the school and in every classroom. The children, staff and parents were very familiar with the values and were able to articulate to the reviewers what they looked like in action.

One value is chosen as the focus for the term across the school. The values underpin everything at the school and help the children to shape their learning. Values are promoted in classrooms and at assemblies. Values certificates are given out to children at assembly who had been seen to be living by the values.

*“Knowing that there is a shared understanding of values helps positive interactions and outcomes”.*

(Staff survey response)

## SCHOOL CULTURE

*Catholic Special Character is visible in the relationships and the artistic expression seen throughout the school.*

Since the previous External Special Catholic Character review in 2010 it is evident that the school has continued to develop its Josephite charism and to build awareness across the school community of the story of St Mary MacKillop and the establishment of St John's School by the Sisters of St Joseph of Nazareth.

Images of St Mary of the Cross MacKillop and symbols of the St Joseph's Order are placed around the school and in classrooms, including an impressive icon in the administration foyer. Images of Fr. Julian Tenison Woods are also evident in the foyer and classroom displays. The Josephite charism together with the work of St John the Baptist, the school's patron saint, all combine to form the ethos of St John's. The school emblem is a shield with three sections, pale blue with a diagram depicting the church/ rock/ Rangitihi by the water, the red section showing the sacrificial lamb of God and the third section is dark blue for the night sky with the Southern Cross. Under the shield is a ribbon with "Prepare the Way", the school Motto. The senior students were able to articulate the charism and the emblem and what it meant to them.

The school has a strong sense of community. The Principal and staff work to maintain strong relationships with the parent and parish communities. A family atmosphere and warmth were school strengths mentioned by many groups spoken to by the reviewers. Many of the parents are past pupils themselves and wanted their children to experience a St John's education. Parents commented that they liked the school because it fostered Catholic values and the teachers were all caring, passionate and good role models.

It was evident that St John's School is about its people. The open door policy and welcoming atmosphere is inviting for families and visitors. The staff are valued, shown by the Silver accreditation gained through the "Investors in People" programme in 2013.

*"It is a place where little things are important"*

(Support staff comment).

The St John's School is built on a difficult site however every part is used and careful planning has resulted in many useable and attractive areas. The Caretaker and school community are to be commended on the neat and tidy grounds. The lookout platform, nature walk, memorial seat, Jubilee sculpture and mosaics all enhance the environment and also provide quiet places that reflect on the history and tradition of the school.

*"Underpinning every aspect of St John's School life is our Catholic Character. It creates the environment, it enhances and it sustains it".*

(Board of Trustees questionnaire comment)

## LEADERSHIP

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

The Principal of St John's School, Mairangi Bay has very successfully led the school for 24 years. His commitment and passion for providing a quality Catholic education that is relevant to the students of St John's is evident in his words and actions and was acknowledged by the Board of Trustees, staff and parents. He has an excellent rapport with parents, is approachable and always available. He is seen at the gate of the school each afternoon chatting with parents and children and doing duty. The school and Parish Priest have trust in the Principal and see him as an excellent role model and a leader.

The Principal reports to the Board of Trustees through a monthly report which includes Special Catholic Character items. He has a strong working relationship with the Senior Leadership Team and together they provide support and guidance for teachers and children and have led the development of a strong charism and learning environment. All members of the Leadership team are skilled practitioners and share the Principal's vision for the school and his high standards.

The Chairperson ably leads a stable Board of Trustees who all have the Catholic Special Character at heart. They were able to express how the school's Catholic Special Character impacted on their role of governance.

All Board of Trustee members are committed to the Special Catholic Character of the school and see it as every member's responsibility, not just the Proprietor Representatives, to ensure the Special Catholic Character is upheld in all decisions and work of the Board.

*"Catholic Special Character is a guiding light that underpins all of our decision making. At all times we must be cognisant of the special nature of our school; that Catholic schools were founded with the primary purpose of giving Catholic education to Catholic children"*

(Board of Trustees questionnaire comment)

The Board of Trustees is representative of the school community and have all participated in regular training through the Ministry of Education webinars and Catholic Education Services workshops. The Board has a well established page on the school website to introduce themselves to the community. They consult with parents regularly, informally and through discussions at consultation and school events. A Board member attends the PTFA meetings.

The school communicates to parents through the weekly newsletter which includes news, events, reminders and information on the Sacramental programme run by the Parish. PTFA and Board notices are also found on newsletters regularly. The newsletter is sent home by hardcopy each Tuesday and is also posted on the school website.

## **STEWARDSHIP**

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

The Board of Trustees recognise their responsibility to ensure that Catholic Special Character permeates the whole curriculum and the school environment. They understand that partnership with the Parish is an important aspect in developing an effective school environment. Many Board of Trustee members and staff are parishioners at St John's and contribute to the Parish and school.

*"Together we excel, we celebrate, we live our faith in Christ".*

(St John's School's Vision Statement)

The Charter and Strategic plan has a very strong Catholic Special Character content in the Strategic goals. In response to the 2010 External Special Catholic Character Review recommendations the Board has updated all policies and prepared a Policy Framework booklet. This includes the school Charter, a well worded Special Catholic Character policy and a covering statement that outlines that the Catholic Special Character had been taken into account when forming the framework. This document fulfils the requirement of the recommendation if read as a whole framework, however if single policies were read in isolation some do not reflect the Special Catholic Character. It is recommended that all policies refer to the Special Catholic Character of St John's School in the rationale or guidelines. It is also recommended that the 'Responsibilities of the Principal Policy' includes "Upholds and leads the Special Catholic Character of the school".

At the time of appointment the expectations for a staff member and teacher are made clear. Prior to starting at St John's teachers spend one day at the school meeting with the Principal, Director of Religious Studies and Team Leader and visiting classrooms to understand the ethos of the school. St John's pays for the teacher to be released if necessary.

An induction for new entrant parents is run by the Assistant Principal, Junior School, and includes information about the school and expectations are outlined. The Parish worker attends and speaks to the parents in respect of the Parish and Parish programmes.

*"The importance and pervading influence of the Catholic Special Character is expressed very early in a family's relationship with the school by being an important part of the New Entrant meeting".*

(BOT questionnaire comment)

The annual Internal Catholic Special Character Self Review process is led by the Principal and Director of Religious Studies using three different review principles, Sharing Wisdom, Appreciative Inquiry and a standard curriculum format and is inclusive of teachers, parents and children. The process is clearly defined and is part of the school's self review programme. The comprehensive reports and findings are presented to the Board and forms part of the Annual Proprietor Representatives' Report to the Bishop. It is suggested that the review should decide on only one area within a dimension each year and to rigorously review that area in depth to further develop and enhance the school.

Coaching is the tool for the growth and development of individual staff members and the leadership style of the school. This process focuses on collaborative relationships that support confident, articulate and motivated staff members striving to reach their full potential. Attestation is carried

out in a coaching style using the Professional Standards which include Special Catholic Character indicators. Professional support and guidance is also provided by the Assistant Principals and Team Leaders. This Performance Management model is based on Collaboration, Trust and Responsibility.

The school website provides relevant information for parents and is updated regularly. It provides links to the Parish website, the Catholic Schools Office, the Education Review Office and the Ministry of Education.

The school enrolled very few non preference children and has a formal enrolment policy with specific criteria for acceptance. Preference cards are signed by the Parish Priest or an ethnic chaplain and are kept by the Administration Officer.

## PRAYER AND WORSHIP

*A Catholic culture of prayer. Liturgy and faith-based celebration is promoted in the school.*

The reviewers joined six classes for prayers during their visit. These prayers were student led at all levels of the school and the students were reverent and respectful of this sacred time. The children were focused using candles, crucifix, statues, items of relevance to the Religious Education focus, and Bibles. A variety of methods to pray were used, including spontaneous prayer and reflections, singing, traditional prayer and meditation.

In response to the recommendations of an internal self review the Religious Education professional development programme in 2013 was focused on 'Prayer'. Fr Peter Murphy trained the staff in Meditation and a variety of prayer styles were introduced and modelled. The children lead prayer at the start of each assembly, classes take turns for this and it usually reflects the learning being done in the class programmes. The children told the Reviewers that they could pray anywhere and that there were some very good places around the school where quiet reflection could occur, such as the Native Walk, the lookout, the seats around the school etc.

Staff prayers are held each Friday. Teachers take turns to prepare these prayers which include the special intentions written in the Pastoral Care Journal and kept on the staffroom prayer focus. Prayers are also said before all meetings.

Buddy Masses are held each Wednesday with a younger class joining an older class and parents provide morning tea afterwards. School Masses are held on the feasts of St Joseph, St John the Baptist, The Assumption and an end of year Mass. A liturgy is held on Ash Wednesday. The Director of Religious Studies plans and organises all School Masses and liturgies. Parents are invited and encouraged to attend Masses and liturgies. If adults are in classes at the beginning of the day they are welcome to take part in the class prayer.

All Sacramental programmes are organised and implemented by the Parish. The school advertises and supports these programmes and celebrates the children involved. Currently one of the support staff is leading the Sacramental programme for the older children. Rite 2 Reconciliation is held for Year 5 and 6 children in Lent and Advent.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE

*The school promotes social justice.*

*“Never see a need without doing something about it”.*

(St Mary of the Cross MacKillop)

St John’s School provides many opportunities for the students to develop an awareness of others, of issues in and beyond their immediate community and an empathy for those who are hurt and suffering. It contributes to raising awareness and action for justice within the school and the wider community.

The school supports the Caritas Lenten Appeal and has Caritas representatives to speak at assembly. It is conscious of supporting charities that have relevance for the children. Support was raised for past pupils and a parent who went to Uganda to do missionary work, the children wrote letters to the Ugandan school and raised money, the past pupils returned to address the school and to show them what their money had done.

Each class has a Mission Box and this money goes to the St Vincent de Paul Society. The children are encouraged to work for the money that they get to put in the Mission boxes. Food items are collected and given to the Parish for hampers. The school is also very aware of underprivileged families within their community and support them where necessary. Some families pay more for school fees or camp to help other families.

Each year a Mission Fair is organised and run by the Year 6 students. They have fun games and activities, including wearing mufti, a sausage sizzle and raffles to raise money. The school has donated books to the Islands, supported the Make a Wish Foundation and have coin trails for Daffodil day, Jump Rope for Heart and Child Cancer. The Year 5 and 6 children participate in the 20 hour famine each year.

## COLLABORATION WITH THE PARISH

*The school collaborates with the Parish of which it is part.*

The Parish of St John the Baptist welcomes the school’s presence:

*“The leadership at St John’s School recognises the importance of the school community being a part of the Parish, and school Masses with the Parish included has always been a highlight for me”.*

*“The class Masses during the term are an opportunity for children, parents and parishioners to join together”.*

(Parish survey comments)

The Board of Trustees sees having the Parish Priest interested and supportive, as very relevant to the school/parish relationship. The Parish Priest has been in the Parish for just over a year and is extremely supportive of the school, meets with the Principal regularly, joins the staff for morning tea and visits classrooms weekly. He is also on the Board of Trustees. Because of this close liaison,

communication and co-operation between the parish and school is very effective. The Assistant Priest is also well known to the children, he visits classrooms each week and trains the Altar servers.

The 2013 and 2014 St John's School Annual Plans have specific goals relating to building the relationship between the school and parish.

The Parish website includes links to the school website. The school newsletter includes any special Parish news. The Happy Hour group and the St John's Playgroup use the school Hall on Wednesdays. The Parish use the school facilities for Marriage Preparation Courses, and parking for funerals when needed. The school sometimes changes their timetable to accommodate a funeral if necessary.

When the school organises sessions with Andrew Chinn, the Parish are always invited. The Parish Worker attends New Entrant parent meetings and has an open door policy towards the school. Many staff, past and present, have been involved in the Sacramental programme and Children's Liturgy.

## AREAS FOR CATHOLIC COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- That the Special Catholic Character Internal review should focus on only one area within a dimension each year and rigorously review that area in depth to further develop and enhance the school.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CATHOLIC COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- That all policies refer to the Special Catholic Character of St John's School in the rationale or guidelines.
- That the 'Responsibilities of the Principal Policy' includes "Upholds the Special Catholic Character of the school".

## 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*

As visitors to the school, the reviewers experienced warm and generous hospitality from all members of the school community. Parents acknowledged that teachers were passionate, approachable and respectful to them and their children. Teachers had a warm, gentle and caring

relationship with the children. The Board of Trustees, staff, parents and Parish work together with respect and co-operation to provide a nurturing environment. This teamwork and collaboration makes for a happy and cohesive learning environment.

All staff including support staff attend teacher-only days, Masses and liturgies. Parents and parishioners are warmly welcomed into the staffroom and the school endeavours to involve parents as much as possible in all school events. A ministry of service is evident in the Leadership of the school and teachers and support staff work collaboratively and feel valued in their roles. A climate of Manaakitanga is felt throughout the school which offers programmes such as Seasons for Growth, Edmund Rice Camps and Family First to the school community when required.

Parents are thanked and celebrated on Mother's Day Out in May and Father's Day Out in September where the parents are invited to attend a Prayer Assembly, read and participate in games and activities with the children and then have a shared morning tea.

The Buddy Class system provides children with the opportunity for older children to look after younger ones and to role model the St John's way. The bonds they make within this system remain throughout their time at St John's.

The school has an inclusive environment where all children are acknowledged for their special talents. St John's invests heavily in supporting children with Special Education Needs and the Special Education Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) keeps a comprehensive Special Needs Register and organises specific Independent Education Plans for each child depending on need. The school works closely with many outside agencies such as Occupational Therapist, Speech/Language Therapists, Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLB), Resource Teachers of Literacy and Marinoto. A large number of teacher aides are employed to work with individuals or small groups and many programmes are available for children to support their learning, for instance Reading Recovery, Rainbow Reading, Perceptual Motor Programme, Literacy Enrichment, ESOL programme etc. Teacher Aides are given time to share ideas, meet with the SENCO and are provided with professional development opportunities relevant to their role.

Teachers and Team Leaders identify children in the Gifted and Talented category and ensure that classroom programmes meet the needs of these students. The school is to be commended for the procedures it has in place for identification, support and monitoring of Special Needs children. Parents commented to the Reviewers that their Special Needs children are accepted, supported and achieve above expectation at St John's.

St John's School has a good relationship with surrounding local schools and other Catholic schools and colleges on the North Shore and East Coast Bays area.

*"There is a great feeling of overall support in the school, both socially and intellectually. St John's is a very caring environment and because of its size I feel everyone is very caring of other people's children as well as their own."*

(Parent survey comment)

*"Lots of parents come to help at the school with reading, trips, camps, sports and odd jobs for teachers. Teachers are always so grateful and you feel really appreciated. You always get a hand-written thank you note when you do something."*

(Parent interview comment)

## **ORGANISATION**

*The way pastoral care is organised is evident to all members of the school community.*

During the review visit, the reviewers heard of the many times care and support was given to families and individuals. The PTFA, Principal and staff ensured that all families knew of the support they could receive and organised help and support in times of need, grief or illness. The Principal and Director of Religious Studies visited families in the community during crisis. All members of the school community make time to listen, be available and give assistance when needed.

Each classroom has a Class Liaison Person who ensures that communication with parents and teachers is effective. They welcome and get to know new families and organise support for families when required.

The PTFA has a Pastoral Care Committee who also ensure that families in the school community are supported in times of need.

## **BI-CULTURAL COMMITMENT**

*The school is committed to the Treaty of Waitangi.*

St John's School recognises the importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi / The Treaty of Waitangi and the status of Maori as Tangata Whenua. The Strategic Goal 2.3 states that "*Students and teachers of St John's School will confidently participate in the cultural rituals of Aotearoa/ New Zealand by increasing their exposure to Te Reo and Maoritanga*". Maori vocabulary and glossaries were evident and The Sign of the Cross in Maori was used in classrooms. Te Reo is taught in all classrooms by the Classroom Release Teacher. Staff are having professional development each term in correct Maori pronunciation and Maoritanga. Each Monday is called "Te Reo Rahina" – a school-wide initiative where the roll and prayers are said in Maori and Maori Myths and legends are read to the children. Flipcharts have been set up for use in classrooms to support the Maori language programme.

In response to the 2010 External Special Character Review recommendation all staff completed a Maori Spirituality and Theology Course led by Fr Peter from Hato Petera.

The Year 5 and 6 Kapa Haka group is trained before school once per week by a tutor from Northcross Intermediate. They participate in the Onepoto Cultural Festival and special school events.

## **CULTURAL AWARENESS**

*The school recognises and honours cultural diversity.*

*"St John's School, as appropriate to its community, will reflect in its programmes and practices New Zealand's cultural diversity".*

(St John's 2014 Annual Plan)

At St John's School, teachers were very careful to honour the cultural diversity within their classrooms. They integrate cultural awareness into the study units of the school's inquiry programme and highlight children's cultural identity on specific occasions such as Cultural Awareness Day and liturgies.

## BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

*Discipline processes are just, compassionate, respectful and consistent.*

The happy, positive relationships and calm learning-focused environment of the school community removes most causes of disruptive behaviour and creates in children a willingness to co-operate and self manage. The school expects a high level of respect and dignity for all.

The underlying philosophy is to "Treat others as you would want to be treated" (School Behaviour Code). The Code of Behaviour is founded on the values of St Mary MacKillop and a strong sense of fairness and justice.

Class Treaties were evident in some classrooms and there are clear guidelines for consequences. The children are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions and to "Do What Jesus Would Do". Behaviour problems are seen as a shared problem by staff. The "Cool Schools" programme is implemented and Peer Mediators are trained to work with children in the playground.

## SAFETY

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

St John's School is a Travelwise School, has a Walking Bus and encourages families to use public transport. The adventure playground / fitness challenge has been established with every care for safety and fun.

The school provides a safe, caring and protective environment.

## SERVICE

*The students assist people in need through service and outreach opportunities provided by the school.*

Leadership opportunities are provided throughout St John's School. All children are given the opportunity to lead prayer and act as monitors and class leaders in their own classrooms. Senior children are given leadership as House Captains, librarians, peer mediators, bus, sick bay, wet day, mission, Mathletics and PE shed monitors, bell ringers and book reader of the week. All Year 6 children proudly wear a badge with the school emblem. Badges are given out each term for specific responsibilities children take on. The children spoken to by the reviewers emphasised the responsibility of being a role model.

Senior children are trained as Altar Servers for school as well as Parish Masses on weekdays and weekends.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: Te Whakaakoranga Whakapono**

*The school helps to fulfil the teaching mission of the Church.*

### **LEADERSHIP**

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

The Director of Religious Studies has taught at St John's School for 15 years. She works collaboratively with the Principal, staff and parish personnel to ensure that a good working relationship exists between the school and parish. She brings experience and knowledge and ensures that professional development, liturgies and other important religious occasions are carried out efficiently and calmly. She is a member of the Senior Leadership team and also holds the role of Assistant Principal, Senior School.

The Director of Religious Studies plans and prepares all full school Masses and celebrations. She supports new teachers to the school and teachers new to Catholic schools. In collaboration with the Principal and Leadership Team she plans and implements the annual Special Character Internal Review which she presents to the Board of Trustees. These reports include the internal self review process and findings and are collated as Part C in the Bishop Appointee's annual report to the Bishop.

Professional development for Religious Education is planned and organised by the Director of Religious Studies and is based on the needs of the staff. Each year there is a focus, 2013 was Prayer and Meditation and 2014 is Biblical Literacy. One staff meeting per term is planned for this focus and guest presenters are invited where appropriate.

Teachers are supported by the Director of Religious Education who joins with classes for prayer and attends class Masses when she can. She offers to model Religious Education lessons or assist with lessons when required.

### **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM**

*The Religious Education programme is professionally delivered.*

The classroom and foyer displays throughout the school were evidence that Religious Education and the Special Catholic Character have a high status at St John's School, Mairangi Bay. The Religious Education Curriculum is very full, the strands and modules are well covered and the Special Catholic Character is being integrated into unit planning. Teams plan for Religious Education together in year

levels. Planning is consistent across the school and the Digital Resource is integrated into the planning.

St John's School elearning goal is for "teachers to have the confidence and content knowledge to deliver high quality digital learning opportunities in their teaching and learning programmes". The school is working towards the senior classes having one-to-one devices. With this move in teaching and learning will come a change in pedagogy. The next step for the school is to use its formative teaching and teacher inquiry approach to make changes in pedagogy to enhance the teaching and learning in Religious Education across the school.

The children record their learning in a Religious Education book. These books were well presented and the children were proud of their work and willing to discuss and reflect on what they had done and what they had learned. At the start of each Strand the content outline is pasted into the book. At the end of each Strand of work an evaluation comment was made by the children and teacher and the books were taken home for the parents to share and make a comment. Each Strand is assessed against the Achievement Objectives. This assessment is discussed at Team level and teachers ensure that children do not have gaps in their learning before moving forward. Currently the senior team are using an online and inquiry model of assessment and will share their findings with the other teams.

The learning environments were all vibrant and the displays were relevant to the Religious Education Strand being covered.

## INTEGRATED CURRICULUM

*Catholic teaching is integrated with other curriculum areas.*

At St John's School a Catholic perspective is evident in classroom environments across the curriculum. Most teachers were successfully and deliberately weaving a Catholic point of view into the total curriculum so that children were naturally making links and seeing that God was present in everything.

The "Myself and Others" module was integrated throughout the St John's School Health programme to ensure a Catholic perspective is provided. Puberty talks are provided by an external provider and teachers for Year 6 children. Health consultation with parents is held annually in conjunction with Positive Puberty Programme. The 'Keeping Ourselves Safe', 'Life Education' and the 'Cool Schools' programmes build foundations for self acceptance and self esteem.

St John's School are very aware of environmental issues and in 2014 they plan to look into the Enviro Schools initiative. Already they run a paper recycling programme and care for gardens and the grounds by not dropping litter.

Each year the school has an Education Outside of the Classroom Week where Year 6 children go to Camp Hunua and other year groups have activities including rock climbing, bike day and a trip to the beach. Every two years the school puts on a musical production.

## **RESOURCES**

*The school makes financial provision for Religious Education and Catholic Special Character resources.*

The school is well resourced and the Director of Religious Studies ensures that all classrooms have the necessary resources to deliver the Religious Education programme and provide an environment that reflects the Special Catholic Character. All class teachers use the digital resource and other online resources and all classrooms have interactive whiteboards.

The Religious Education Advisors are used by the school to support beginning teachers and teachers new to Catholic schools and to run staff meetings when requested.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

The Director of Religious Studies ensures that Religious Education professional development is delivered at one staff meeting per term. All teachers attend Cluster meetings and special days where guest speakers are provided by the Religious Education Advisors.

The Principal reports to the Board of Trustees on all Religious Education Professional Development and programmes are stated clearly in the Annual plan and the Professional Learning Programme each year. All teachers are required to attend at least one Religious Education meeting each term. Each year Michael Mangan or Andrew Chinn have been invited to do a Religious Music workshop with the children followed by a staff formation session. At the Teacher Only Days at the beginning of the year, Special Character is part of the agenda. All beginning teachers and teachers new to Catholic schools attend the professional development provided by the Diocese. Teachers attend some Cluster meetings and workshops provided by the Religious Education Advisors, School or Parish.

The Principal and Director of Religious Studies have achieved Leadership Level Certification and all other teachers are working towards Classroom Level. It is suggested that teachers be encouraged to complete 12 hours of Special Character Professional Development each year and to apply for Certification when they have achieved the requirements.

## **COMMUNICATION**

*The school communicates with parents/caregivers about Religious Education.*

A weekly school newsletter is distributed and includes notices about Special Character and Religious Education, PTFA and Board of Trustees news and important information from the Parish. The school's website is informative and updated regularly. SchoolZone was used in 2013 to promote Religious Education with teachers posting reminders, information and photos of children at work.

Due to SchoolZone's incompatibility with the new Ultra Fast Broadband, an alternative will be used in 2015.

The children's Religious Education books are sent home regularly and at the end of each Strand for parents to discuss with their children and to write an evaluation comment. Parents commented that it was an excellent way of discussing the Religious Education programme with their children. Student led conferences also share with parents the work children do in Religious Education.

Parents, families and parishioners are welcome to attend all school liturgies and Masses, Buddy Masses and Special Masses. They also join in class prayers if they are in the classroom at the time. The Principal, Director of Religious Studies and teachers chat to parents informally each afternoon as they pick up their children. The open door and welcoming attitude at the school invites families and the parish to participate and contribute.

The school website is updated regularly and includes all of the information parents may need to support their children at school. Parents are contacted by text, email or phone and commented that they were well informed.

All new families to the school are expected to purchase a Whanau Book and Bible and are provided with information about the Special Character of St John's School and the Religious Education Programme.

## AREAS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

- The next step for the school is to use its formative teaching and teacher inquiry approach to make changes in pedagogy (due to elearning) to enhance the teaching and learning in Religious Education across the school.
- It is suggested that teachers be encouraged to complete 12 hours of Special Character Professional Development each year and to apply for Certification when they have achieved the requirements.

## CONCLUSION

St John's School, Mairangi Bay provides a child-centred, nurturing learning environment that focuses on holistic learning and the achievement of excellence. The leadership of the Principal, Assistant Principal, Senior School/DRS, The Assistant Principals, Junior and Middle Schools, the Board of Trustees, a dedicated staff, enthusiastic and positive parents and the links with the St John the Baptist Parish, together combine to form a successful Catholic community. The Josephite charism and values provide the school with an ethos that permeates the school.

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

*"At St John's we will provide a faith enriched Catholic education that promotes and celebrates excellence and life-long learning".*

The children are confident, happy and engaged in their learning. Along with their families they are proud to be members of St John's School.

*"We are confident we are succeeding in our Mission when we look around the community and see in the adolescents and young adults, graduates of St John's, fine up-standing and respected members of the community."*

(Board questionnaire comment)

*"The school is a truly welcoming place, a safe learning environment. It helps children to develop socially and spiritually".*

(Parent survey comment)

*"St John's provides an amazing education in Catholic teaching and values which is lived out by its students and teachers."*

(Parish survey comment)

**Neil Laurenson**  
**Manager**  
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Date May 13, 2014

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