

*Āhuatanga Katorika
Kaupapa Arotake
Te Pūrongo Arotake O Waho*

*Catholic Special Character Review
for Development*

*External Evaluation of
St Joseph's Catholic School Takapuna*

*An External Evaluation of St Joseph's Catholic School
Takapuna undertaken during the Covid Pandemic
2021-2022*

Review conducted on 3rd – 5th November 2021 and 23rd & 24th May 2022

Confirmed Report 28 July 2022

School Details

Name of School: St Joseph's Catholic School Takapuna

Address: 2 Taharoto Rd Takapuna 0622

School type: Contributing

Actual roll: 428

Maximum roll: 550

Non-preference maximum: 5%

Actual non-preference number: 10

Roll based staffing entitlement: 22.3 FTTE

Required number of Special Character CI 47 positions: 12

Filled number of Special Character CI 47 positions: 10

Principal: Mr Alister Bridgman

Director of Religious Studies: Miss Annette Woodhead

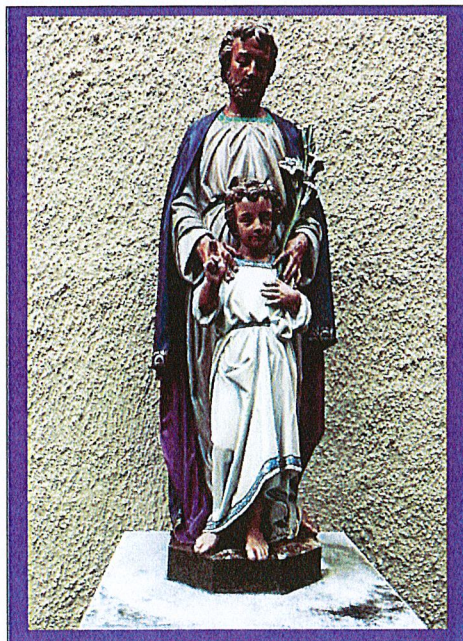
Chairperson, Board of Trustees: Mr Eric Esnouf

Parish Priest: Monsignor David Tonks

Review Team:

Lead Reviewer: Mrs Christine Smith

Accompanying Reviewer: Mr Philip Mahoney



A statue of St Joseph stands outside the old Orphanage building located behind the school. He is a familiar sight to akonga at St Joseph's.

Parameters of the Pandemic Review

This Catholic Special Character Review was undertaken during the period of the Covid Pandemic 2021-22. The Format for the Review was as outlined below;

1. School's written material and evidence sent to Reviewers for synthesis and evaluation 7 October 2021
2. Zoom interviews with the Principal, Parish Priest, Leader of Religious Education, Senior Leadership Team: October 26 & 27, 2021
3. In 2022 school visits were undertaken involving classroom visits and interviews with members of the school community on the 23rd and 24th May. There was a Zoom meeting with the School's Board on the 2nd June.
4. It was very evident to reviewers during their time in the school that the school was continuing to negotiate the impact of Covid. Indeed, the week of the review there was a resurgence of Covid amongst senior students and some staff causing the school to adopt code red conditions for the senior area of the school. The pandemic continues to impact, and the school mitigates the impact extremely well. The daily juggle of the pandemic in the life of any school cannot be underestimated.

Ngā Whāinga O Te Arotake-Aims of External Review

The New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference wishes the external review to show how effective the school is in handing on the faith and forming a new generation of Catholics; this includes evaluating the efficacy of Religious Education and how the whole school community engages in authentic Catholic Christian witness and evangelisation. This is the evangelising mission of the Church, in which the school participates.

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

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

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

And how the school is te kaitiatanga me te whakakari I te tuaakiri Katrorika - Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Character.

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

Progress With Recommendations from the 2017 Catholic Special Character Review for Development Report

1. Recommendations for areas of development: Encounter with Christ

1. Improved induction and orientation programmes for new members of the School community (including Trustees, staff, and parents) to ensure a genuine and ongoing encounter with Christ.
2. Provide senior students, staff, and trustees opportunities for retreat to focus on deepening their personal relationship with Christ.
3. Continue the planned initiative to develop the outside area as a learning space

Akonga have the opportunity for retreat (ongoing).

All teachers and staff involved in TOD retreat- Board not as yet (something for the new Board). Induction of new teachers. A very aesthetically pleasing outside learning space, all year all weathers. Achieved

2. Recommendations for areas of development: Growth in Knowledge of Christ

Innovative changes in RE mean the School needs to look at new ways to:

Monitor RE lessons, involve the Priests in regular class visits, present and assess the RE programme, share with parents the changes in teaching and learning, use the RE Curriculum Bridging Document 2018, ensure succession plan for DRS, Integration of Maori Spirituality, deliberate planning of topics or themes integrated with a Catholic world view and Catholic Social Teaching.

All of the above areas of development 'Growth in Knowledge of Christ' have been addressed very well. Some areas have been advanced more than others. Nevertheless, they have all been progressed.

3. Recommendations for areas of development: Christian Witness

More explicitly link school outreach programmes to Christ's identification with the hungry and suffering.

Continue to develop ways to understand the school's cultural diversity and ensure all cultures are acknowledged, honoured, and respected

Staff should revisit and refresh their knowledge of "The Catholic Education of School Age Children" to fully understand the role of the Catholic School

Good links have been made between outreach and the person of Christ. Cultural diversity continues to be developed well throughout the Religious Education and Connected Curriculum. Evident in the Special Character of the School. Staff are not yet fully conversant with the "The Catholic Education of School-Aged Children" and will benefit from revisiting this document.

4. Recommendations for areas of development: Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Character

Board members need to continue becoming familiar with: "The Declaration", "The Handbook for BOTs of Catholic Schools" and "The Catholic Education of School-Aged Children". They need to consider these documents when they are reviewing all policies, procedures, and strategic goals.

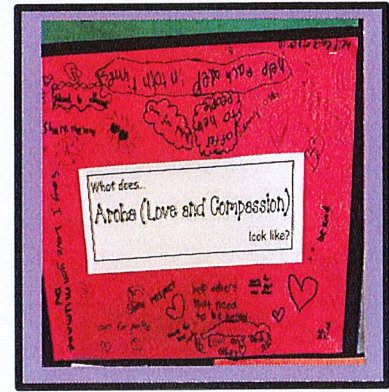
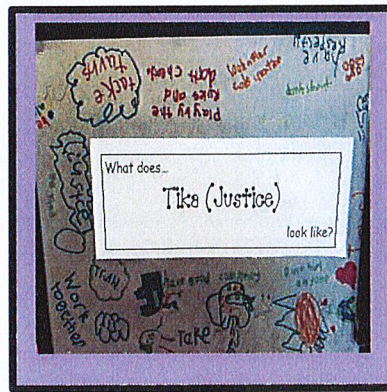
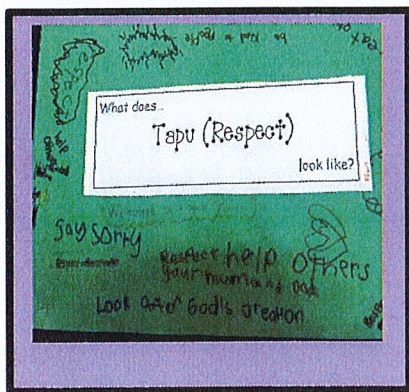
After the last external review the Board took time to become familiar with "The Catholic Education of School-Aged Children". This is material that will best support Trustees when it is reviewed by all Trustees in an ongoing manner.

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

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

St Joseph's Catholic School very effectively encourages, facilitates, and nourishes their young people to grow and develop a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

"Every Catholic educational institution is a place to encounter the living God who in Jesus Christ reveals his transforming love and truth" This statement by Pope Benedict XVI in 2008 captures the vision and mission of St Joseph's Catholic School. The authentic and innate Catholic Spirituality of the School is led by the Principal and Director of Religious Studies and very well supported by the leadership team and staff. The leadership team are role models of the Gospel Message, and this is integral to the development of the young peoples' faith journey. Teachers model Christian Encounter by their everyday actions, living out the school's Mercy values and weaving them into their daily life, demonstrating a natural integration of faith and life. Young people told reviewers how they too, integrated their faith and their life and what this looked like. They showed a mature grasp of a living faith and a desire to live it to the best of their ability, within their whanau and alongside their peers at school.



Young people integrating their faith and their life and recorded as a visual map

Pope Francis calls us to 'educate' as an act of love...(he says) the educator in Catholic schools must be, first and foremost, competent, and qualified but, at the same time, someone who is rich in humanity and capable of being with young people in a style of pedagogy that promotes human and spiritual growth.' (Pope Francis to the Congregation for Catholic Education Document, 2014 & see also 2017). At St Joseph's Takapuna education is first and foremost an act of love. Christ is revealed through the Gospel-directed actions of teaching and learning in classrooms. The future focused and grounded leadership of the Principal and the deliberate and authentic endeavours of the Director of Religious Education ensure that the Christ encounter is alive and real for ākongā. This can be seen in the relevant teaching and learning programmes and in young people's thoughtful actions, and generous interactions with each other in their everyday way of being.

The Parish Priest expressed the critical role the school now plays in bringing young people into relationship with Jesus as it is now the way in which many young people interface with the Church. The school is where many of our ākongā become aware of Jesus and grow an ongoing relationship with the person of Christ. The fruit of this is a teina- tuakana facilitation now underway, with many church-ed children now teaching and informing their parents, many of whom now have little faith affiliation. A number of adults in the school community attested to the authentic relationship young people have with Jesus and the positive influence this is having on their own and

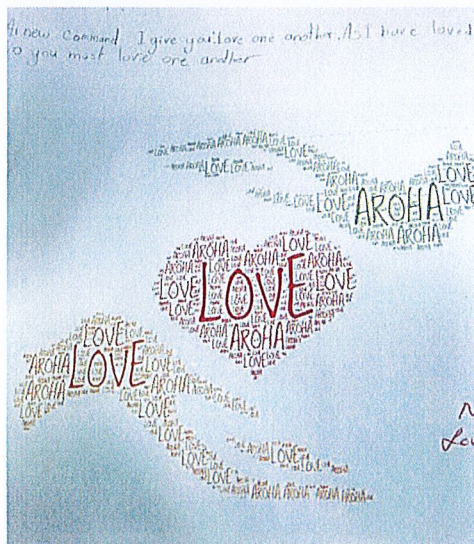
their family's lives. This is strengthening families. Family members told reviewers they had become increasingly appreciative, supportive, and committed to children's faith journey. The Parish Priest spoke of the Religious Education programme being 'like a leaven through the school' and the way St Joseph's children think reflects this. Young people at St Joseph's are encouraged to discover that God/Jesus is a friend. They demonstrate this at school, in online liturgies and throughout a pandemic, this has served them well.

The Parish Priest spoke of the generosity of tamariki rushing to open the gates to the parish garage as one of the priest's enters or leaves the precinct, a tradition and joy amongst the children. He also mentioned the spontaneous yet considered and genuine questions they will ask of him as he walks across the car park to the Church or school.

Many people spoken to observed St Joseph's young people are spiritually insightful and curious and confident in seeking knowledge, answers, and information. They have a thirst for truth. They have an understanding that God as Holy Spirit is present in their hearts. Ākonga in the junior school were able to use concrete materials to show their understanding of the Holy Spirit. Because teaching and learning of complex concepts such as the Trinity are taught adeptly and age relevant, children connect and understand the concepts. Furthermore, young people go on with confidence to inquire and are provoked by the stories and characters of the Gospels. Ākonga have a deep Catholic identity. They are nourished by the times set aside for Christian meditation and encounter and this is reflected in their words and actions.



Science is used to show the wonder of the Holy Spirit with Five year old ākonga during an Religious Education lesson



The Holy Spirit expressed through visual art by the middle school



The Holy Spirit expressed through written language by the senior school

Ākongā told reviewers that God is always available for them; “Meditation connects us to God in prayer. He’s listening always”, “We can just talk to Jesus when we pray”, “To be like Jesus, I do something I haven’t been asked to do”. The Parish Priests are known to young people and with the Pastoral Team, they live out a Christ-centric model of Church leadership and are a vital and present part of school life.

The principal is highly visible and accessible to his community. Rain or shine he greets ākongā as they arrive at school and as they leave at the end of day. School leaders and teachers are wholehearted in their approach to their school community. They meet people wherever they are they at in their lives by walking alongside young people and their Whanau.



Understanding the liturgy.....Ash Wednesday Art from the junior school

Mass attendance Liturgies and schools Masses are scheduled throughout the year. Two Combined school Parish Masses are held annually. The Special Character Leaders lead the school the school in Friday prayer with support and faith direction from the Principal.. The entire community is warmly welcomed to these events. Prayer is diverse, presented in many media and genre and modelled for ākongā. The Leadership team are proactive, ensuring opportunities for Christian Encounter through prayer are optimised for all young people within the school, enabling it to permeate every area of the learning community.

Young people and staff have a clear understanding of the school’s Values, Charism, and history and how each of these factors meaningfully supports the other. Every young person is known well, they know as members of St Joseph’s they are loved, respected, and cared for by the entire school community.

St Joseph’s intentionally builds young people’s understandings around the following key areas from an early age:

- Reflection and relationship with God - (Prayer- Relationship with Christ)
- Strengthening a Mission understanding- Mercy Values (Charism)
- Catholic Social Teaching- (Catholic Social Justice, Bicultural, Social Literacy)
- Leadership being a school leader (all ages across the school) – (Jesus our leader)
- Local Curriculums- (knowledge of Gospel Values, Chief Pautone, Mercy Sisters, Catherine McAuley and Bishop Pompallier, The Orphanage)

St Joseph’s is an inclusive school welcoming all who join them. The school operates from a position of the Common Good and staff report that relationships in the school community are high trust and lifegiving. Staff acknowledged and reviewers witnessed the school as a joyful, collegial teaching and learning environment, marked by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual formation is prioritised, and this is reflected positively in the allocation of timetables, meetings, release time and Teacher Only Days. Staff reported they are encouraged and supported to participate in further spiritual formation. They undertake retreat opportunities each year. In 2021 the Parish Priest spent a day with staff and he unpacked the Pope’s Letter for The Year of St Joseph. Staff described that the knowledge and understandings gained from this day were invaluable.

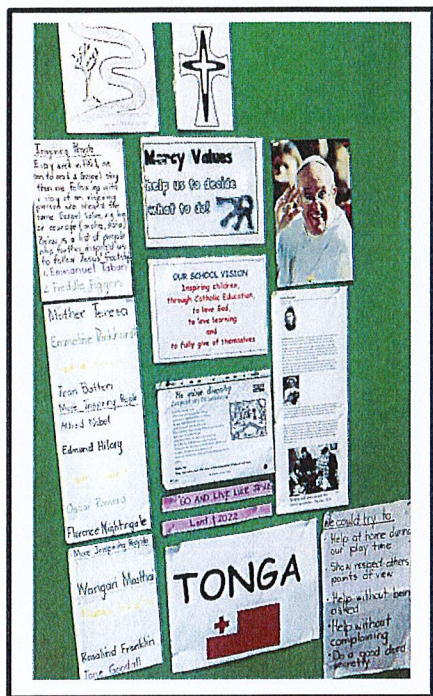
Staff in all positions across the school talked of the Principal's Christ-centred school leadership. They acknowledged the courage of the principal to lead from the Gospel and to always do what was best for people.

Senior leadership ensure that Catholic Character is explicit in the school and school life is rich with the rituals of the Church, including special feast days. Young people are involved as is appropriate in the life of the Church and Parish and represent themselves and their home cultures well, frequently providing liturgical leadership. All staff lead their colleagues in weekly staff prayers seen by all as a spiritual oasis in the busy working week.

Communication at all levels is a strength of the school and it keeps this community connected and builds relationships. People reviewers spoken with said that communication is a strength of this school and the efforts of the senior team to ensure everyone is communicated with are appreciated. Each week the school SENCo meets with all learning support to discuss their roles, their tamariki, and how the school can support each one of them. Learning Support personnel spoke affirmingly of the way in which the school's special character and Gospel Values and every aspect of the school shape the way they interact and support their learners.

'He Tangata, He Tangata, He Tangata', was said by staff to be of great importance at St Josephs. All staff know that the wellbeing of people is uppermost at St Joseph's and this culture permeates the care of all ākonga and all staff under the roof of Special Catholic Character. Staff know and value this, it is a great strength of St Joseph's.

School culture emanates with the qualities of the school's Mercy Values. They are enmeshed in the fabric of the school, throughout all documentation and lived documents. It is authentically enacted by their staff, and young people, it's just who they are. This was noted many times during the review and referenced in review material.



Parents spoke warmly to reviewers about the strength of Catholic

Character they experience which is both an explicit and implicit part

of an education at St Josephs.

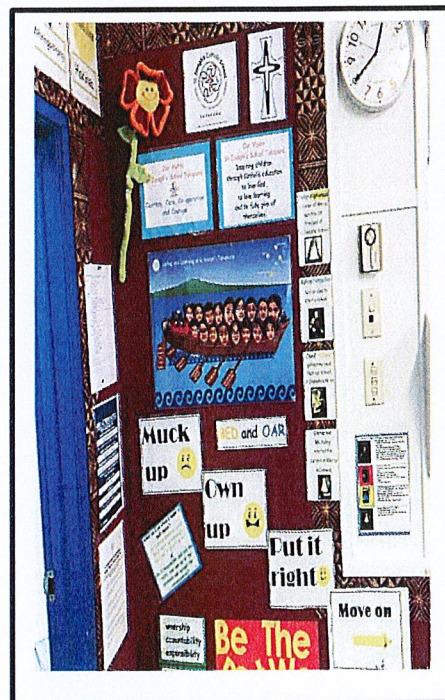
Parents gave examples of Christian Encounter:

'Teachers use the principles of social justice very fairly, when

dealing with behaviour issues.'

'Expectations at home and school are aligned, on the same page'

‘During lockdown the Principal would start each online day for the school with prayer. It brought us together as a community and made us feel ‘we were together as Catholics’, we were part of the larger Catholic community. It also signalled to our children it was time to begin learning for the day!



The openness and approachability of the Principal, Senior leaders and all teachers and staff is unreservedly appreciated. Parents were able to give the Review team explicit examples of how this was part of the culture of school-parent partnership at St Joseph's and how this supported and assisted them as whanau.

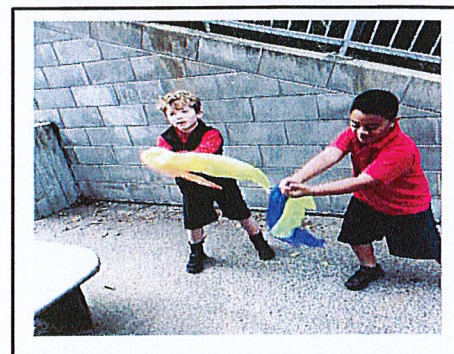
School environments provide a stimulating and visually print rich atmosphere for students. The new school plant, inclusive of classrooms, reflects young peoples' Christian encounters. Classrooms are engaging learning spaces where young people are learning to express their different and thoughtful, often complex comprehensions and understandings of 'who is God'.

Prayer life in the school is vibrant and responsive to the learners. It is authentic, alive and diverse, providing young

people with opportunity to engage in an encounter with Christ. Importantly young people were able to talk to us about prayer. They told us how important it was in their lives. Some of the students described how they could integrate their life with faith and their faith with their life. Others went on to describe how they prayed, others where they liked to pray in the school.

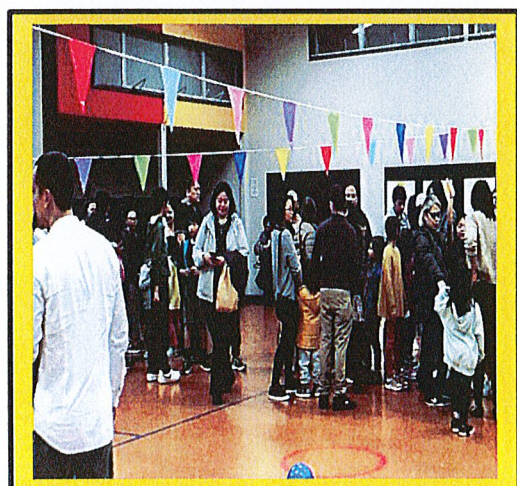
The use of visual arts and drama to support waiata and prayer as well as other mediums is actively explored and well developed through prayer and Religious Education Learning. For example, genre used to express prayer are dance, drama, modelling materials, dough, leggo, engineering models, painting, writing, Prayers said are both child-centred and traditional with classes using technology to assist.

Year 2 Akonga in the four opposing photos are each enjoying the things that bring them joy. After a lesson on 'The Joy of the Holy Spirit'.



The St Joseph's community is multicultural and all tamariki and their families are encouraged to share their culture. Young people are encouraged to speak and pray in their home/ first languages. This validates and enriches their own learning experience and deepens the knowledge and experiences of their peers. It brings the diversity and cultural richness of the community into everyday school life. An example of this is the Filipino consultation process. From 10 parents and students when the school first started Filipino consultation evenings to 150 parents in 2021. From across the school 130 students from a variety of school cultures have signed up to the 'newly' formed Filipino Cultural Group.

Gabling Pampamilyang Pilipino Evening held in the School Hall



There is very good evidence of the depth of relationship students are developing with Jesus. This was seen in the mature personal prayers written in prayer journals, and in spontaneous prayers both spoken and shared by children. Through prayer, children reflect societal and personal issues, they listen carefully and reverently in the created quiet space of meditative prayer. This takes place schoolwide each Monday afternoon. It is also effectively used by Teams, Pods and Home Groups. These times of encounter and participation are valued by young people and their families. Encounter with the living Christ is seen in the way the community pray together, relate to each other, welcome and support each other in their wider community.

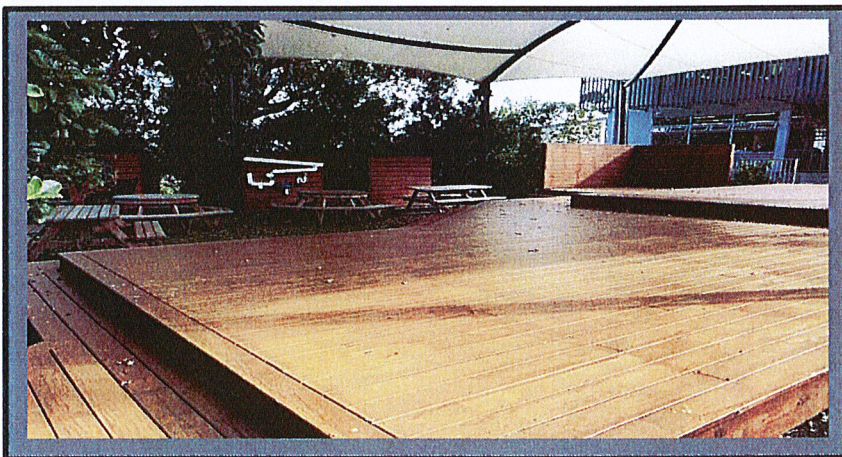
St Joseph's school operates from a position of the Common Good, staff know each other well and enjoy positive relationships. This is evidenced in staff surveys. Staff acknowledged and reviewers agree that the school is a joyful and purposeful working environment, marked by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

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

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

The leadership Team and staff of St Joseph's Catholic School are intentional, and collaborative in the way they enable their community to grow in knowledge and understanding of Jesus Christ, his teachings, and the Catholic Church. Growth in the knowledge of Programmes is supporting teachers to teach, and young people to learn about Church tradition, Charism, Mission, Values, and the Religious Education Curriculum in an environment where the Spirit of God is shared and encountered. Senior Leaders ensure there is an intentional delivery of quality Religious Education programmes. An example of this is Living and Learning@TekatorikakuraOHatoHōhepa Takapuna, outlining curriculum content and delivery at St Joseph's Takapuna. In the Religious Education Statement 2nd paragraph they say, 'Although the general aims are intentionally educational, the ultimate aim is to assist children to develop a relationship with God.... depends on each child's free faith response'. The Review team congratulate the authors for their intentionality in including this statement in the opening paragraph.

Teams work together very well to plan learning and teach collaboratively using Integrated Education and Learning (IEL) pedagogy within their Integrated Learning Spaces. Each physical Level in the Integrated Building has Five Home Groups and Two Pods. Other areas of the school have single cell or some shared space. Whatever physical space the classroom might be, teachers are delivering very good programmes of teaching and learning in Religious Education.



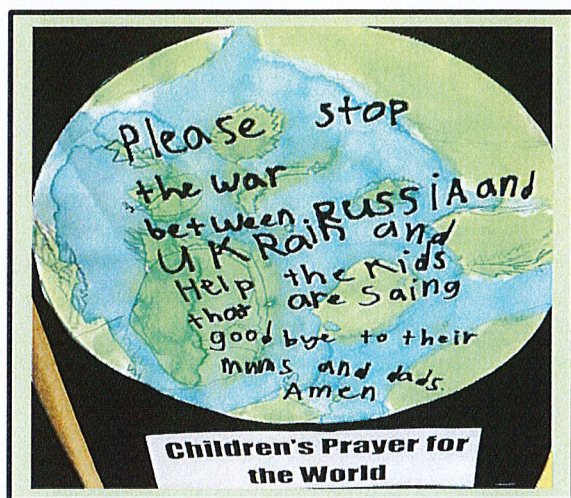
The outdoor teaching and learning space located in the centre school courtyard. This provides opportunities for all learning, Religious Education, Drama, Arts, Social Science, Physical Education etc. In addition to this it is an informal and formal gathering place e.g assemblies, liturgies or just a 'place to be'

There is also skilful integration of Religious Education across the integrated curriculum with very good evidence of the integrity of Religious Education Teaching and learning in classrooms across the school. Expectations of learners is explicit throughout the teaching and learning sessions, lessons are scaffolded to provide for diverse learners, there is clarity around what has been learned, what is being learned and what could be next in teaching and

learning programmes.

The Religious Education curriculum at St Joseph's school is comprehensive, covering the width and breadth of the curriculum and is well grounded in the teachings of the Catholic Church. Teachers and young people draw on the School's Charism to nurture academic strength, social responsibility, spiritual encounter, and growth in knowledge.

Young people integrate faith and life in an environment that is promoting the development of spiritual growth and self-regulation. There is evidence of adaptive teaching and learning, reflecting that teacher's know their learners well and Religious Education programmes are responsive to learners needs. This opportunity for learning is preparing St Joseph's young people for living a wholehearted Catholic life as adaptive learners, who mature fully into the challenges of adult life. The DRS ensures Catholic Social Justice teaching is an imperative within the curriculum, in line with Gospel Teaching, this is demonstrated through Caritas, mufti mania, Cereal box Run for the Parish, collecting for De Paul house, Food bank challenges. Akonga know that as Catholics they are responsive to need.



*Religious Education, Social Justice, Critical literacy
in the Senior school*



*Religious Education, Mercy Values & Social
Justice underpinned the Cereal Drive*

The student's learning and commitment to Laudato Si reveals their understanding of Pope Francis' Encyclical. Akonga's involvement is ongoing and evident at every level of the school. Projects are meaningful reflecting both the school's connected and local curriculum. Year 6 Environmental Leaders enthusiastically organise and lead environmental projects for their fellow students. These projects positively nurture the school and local environment while at the same time actively educating young people about caring for God's earth.

- Year 5 and 6 chose Laudato Si and Kaitiakitanga as themes for their family Mass in 2019 and 2020. Explored concepts from the Laudato Si document and prepared a Mass and Art to support and promote these concepts.
- The Year 5 and 6 students explored the concepts of sustainable coastlines and waterways and then participated in a clean-up of local beaches.
- Years 3 and 4 held a 'charity expo' where students were promoted to research endangered species in God's Creation and consider solutions for restoring and protecting species.
- Years 0/1 explore the Creation Story and reflect their understanding in caring for school plants and animals, fish, guinea pigs, and chickens.
- Introduced school-wide recycling, composting, worm farm
- Food bank Challenges

Teaching and Learning Laudato Si as a living construct within the industrious minds of St Joseph's young people has endless possibility. Through the lens of Religious Education young people at St Joseph's can inquire deeply, enabling a social inquiry approach and a science approach, using both Social Science and Science Curriculum.

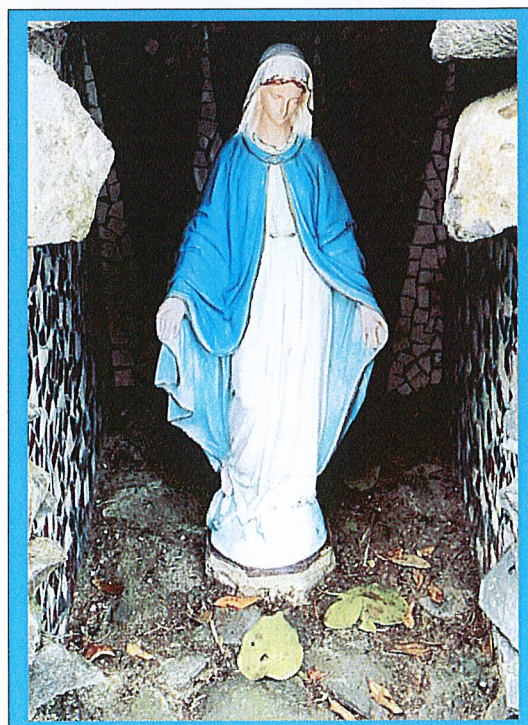
Young people are aware of their local curriculum and St Joseph's historical links back to Bishop Pompallier, Chief Eruera Patuone who gifted the land on which the school is sited and the Sisters of Mercy, who Bishop Pompallier called out from Ireland to teach at St Joseph's Takapuna in 1849. An important part of the St Joseph's story retold to reviewers by students is that of Two Sisters with six boys who rowed across the harbour from town. The Sisters of Mercy were to stay for 96 years. This the young people believe informs the rigor and tenacity of St Joseph's school and themselves as students.

As the previous paragraph illustrates, St Joseph's has an enormous depth of local curriculum in which to locate local curriculum delivery. The rich Local Curriculum is very well expressed through Religious Education as well as the integrated curriculum at St Joseph's. Cross curricula aspects are incorporated and defined by the school's Catholic Character with integration into the Religious Education Curriculum where possible, always maintaining its integrity. The school's curriculum statements are all defined by references to Catholic Character. Catholic Character and Religious Education are seamlessly integrated into the school's curriculum as and when appropriate. Reviewers observed a variety of authentic learning tasks being used in lessons, in the students' learning books and on a range of digital devices. Teachers know their students and their whānau well. They transfer this knowledge meaningfully into their teaching and learning programmes, responsively teaching to young peoples differentiated needs, learning and wellbeing, when delivering the Religious Education programme. Teachers own cultural experiences enrich students learning opportunities. This allows students to experience the Catholic faith through the lens of their own culture, and that of other students in the school, this makes for a culturally rich school environment. With this knowledge young people have a deep understanding of their Mercy Charism which affirms the call, to be kaitiaki of God's creation

Families are informed regularly of the Religious Education Strand and concept being covered through newsletters, DRS updates, student's reflections, comments on digital platforms and teacher-parent communications, for example, See Saw, Google Classroom, QR codes. Communication at all levels is a strength of the school and it keeps this community connected and builds relationships. People reviewers spoke with expressed that communication is a real strength of this school and the efforts of the senior team to ensure everyone is communicated with are appreciated.

The School's culture emanates with the qualities of its Mercy Values. They are enmeshed in the fabric of the school and authentically enacted by their staff, and young people, "it's just who they are". This was noted many times during the review and referenced in review material. The Mercy Charism is tangible in relationships and interactions and the influence of Catherine McAuley is seen in the outworking's of the Schools Mercy Values, Tika, Pono, Aroha Tapu and Manaakitanga. Without exception people spoken to during the review described the school as a community where everyone is welcome, where there is unconditional acceptance and a culture of inclusiveness. The school community are proudly Mercy and proudly Catholic.

'The Grotto' (right) is a familiar and comfortable place for St Joseph's akonga to 'be' they play at the feet of 'Our lady' sit quietly or just regard her as part of their St Joseph's whanau. She is always there to listen, to laugh and cry with whoever comes to share with her. She is loved by the whole community and cared for by the Laudato Si team.



The Principal leads a robust faith-based vision for the school. He encourages, enables, faith development in others. The Director of Religious Studies (DRS) works alongside teachers to lead the development of the school's Catholic Character. The leadership team, Principal, DRS, DP and AP ably supported by Home Group leaders have been seminal in shaping the Catholic Character of the School. Special Catholic Character and Religious Education is prioritised by School leaders. The status of the DRS is highly valued and prioritised in the school. She is a seminal member of the leadership team.

Regular staff meetings are led by the Director of Religious Studies to discuss and unpack the theological focus for each Teaching Strand. All teacher planning is developed collaboratively within 'Teams' and further refined by the 'Home Group' teacher. An open digital platform 'google' is used and this supports the school's holistic-integrated approach. As part of the school's professional learning culture, staff are being increasingly encouraged to undertake tertiary level RE papers, and all complete their mandated 12 hours of professional development annually in pre covid settings. St Joseph's school is nimble in its responsiveness to teachers and young people's teaching and learning needs.

Dimension 3: Te Whakaatu Karaitiana-Christian Witness

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

The St Joseph's Community provides hope-filled Catholic witness empowering its community members, Parish and School, to integrate their faith and life. The leadership team describe the School and Parish relationship as interwoven, in that each is part of the other. The Principal is on the Parish Council and the Parish Priest is on the School Board. All school day Masses combine with the Parish and the school leads Sunday Mass each quarter.

The school community has very recently come together to review their school vision and Strategic Goals. As a result of this consultation the schools Vision is revised to **"Love God, Love Learning And Be The Best You Can Be"** There are four strategic goals: Kaupapa Whakapono- Special Character, Ako -Teaching, Hauora- Wellbeing, Whahawhanaungatanga-Community. Underpinning this fourth initiative are four strategic initiatives of significance for their deliberate commitment to enabling Christian Witness, they are; *1. Actively support the vulnerable in our community. 2. Value and celebrate the diversity of in our community. 3. Continue to build our community connections. 4. Strengthen our learning partnerships.* This is evidence of a school community with a deliberate intention to give effect to Christian Witness within the many dimensions of their community.



Student's triage outside the health room provide Aroha and Tiaki (love and care) for the little injuries.



Caritas mission table found in every classroom

The school's new Strategic Plan is a declaration of the school's understanding of Christian Witness and their intention to act both strategically and purposefully within their community. It is the result of wide consultation and very thoughtful consultation. It will ensure that St Joseph's ākonga are readied for living in an enabled way in Aotearoa New Zealand. To this end it is important that the school has signalled its intention for their young people to encounter Christ through a Māori Wairua as well as through their own cultural lens, (for reasons previously commented on in this report). The school undertakes consultation with Māori whānau to listen to their voice, perspectives, and aspirations for their tamariki. Rosmini boys provide help with St Joseph's Kapa haka group and Kaitiākanga (care of the land) is a key Mercy value. St Joseph's staff are working deliberately to grow their competency as a school in Te ao Māori and the gains made are visible across the school, and evident when speaking with young people and staff and community.

The school is working towards initiating a journey with the educational arm of local iwi. Unfortunately, this initiative has been impeded through Covid restrictions. This movement from the school sits well with the release of the new History Curriculum and the NELP's in 2022 and the release of the new Religious Education Curriculum in 2024. Parents interviewed shared how integral the school's Catholic Character was to the children's "way of being". They described how children brought the Gospel Values into their home life. A parent explained to reviewers how the school encourages students 'to be the Face of Christ for each other, to do the simple things well, for each other, every day'. Parents shared with reviewers how they had renewed their relationship with the Church because of their children's influence and the evangelisation of the School and Parish.

Behaviour Education is clear to all and based on Catholic Social Teaching. Behaviour Education is role modelled with restorative justice processes being implemented at all levels of the school. This was also confirmed by whānau who quoted "Muck up, Own up, Put it right, Move on". This mantra based on Mercy values is strategically placed around the school.

There is a strong expectation of respect for all people in the school community based on the School's Mercy Values. These are well known and clearly understood by St Joseph's young people. They are in evidence and operational in and across all areas of the school.

The symbols, artefacts and displays within the buildings and grounds of St Joseph's witness and reflect the school's Catholic Character, faith and values, and confirm to students, staff, families and visitors that they are in a Catholic school.



Senior Art a Christian Witness

St Joseph's Primary School proclaims the mission and Gospel of Christ to all staff, students, and their families, forming a link between the school, home and Parish. There is very good communication, including a very effective website. The school and parish website are connected as are the other social supports through which St Joseph's families integrate their faith, culture, and life.

The school newsletter is attractive, readable and an effective Christian Witness. It communicates well with the

school audience, with both the Principal and DRS contributing to the commentary.

On enrolment five-year-olds and their whānau, are taken through an induction that assists both family and their young one to feel at one with the St Joseph's community. The school walks alongside whānau to nurture them into the process of starting school. Whānau expectations for their tamariki of Catholic Character expressed as warmth, aroha, and manakitanga are part of the junior school experience and ensure children have a secure and positive initial footprint at St Josephs.

The SENCo/ AP is involved in the enrolment process to directly support and welcome Akonga with diverse abilities and needs. A thoughtful transition to school programme, enables students and their families to be well prepared for school. They are familiar with the routines and environment, have begun to form relationships and started to understand prayer ritual and have a degree of comfort that comes from starting school in a strengthened position.

The school is very well resourced with support staff. Support staff feel valued and are acknowledged for the work they do. They receive training for the relevant roles they hold and participate in Catholic Special Character PLD. The SENCo and classroom teachers ensure that each identified student has a current Individual Education Plan (IEP) and daily planning to work from. The school is highly inclusive and supportive of families and responsive to the needs of their children.

When students spoke to the review team, they described how embracing and inclusive young people in the St Joseph's community are of each other, aware that they are each made in the image of God. Students with diverse and additional learning needs are being well supported in their learning. Reviewers noted that all students with diverse and additional learning needs had Religious Education planning specifically planned for them. This demonstrates a good level of teaching and learning and Teaching Practise. The school works very effectively with this group of children utilising the skills of both internal and external teachers.

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

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

The St Joseph's Board, through the Principal, ensures the Catholic Special Character permeates the vision and strategic direction of the school. Strategic planning, policies and procedures are aligned with the Vision and Mission and Gospel Values. School direction is strong. Principal's reports are prepared to a high standard. They are relevant and place Catholic Character centre front. Internal evaluation of Religious Education and Special Character is done well. It promotes and affirms good practice and focuses on growth and improvement.

The Board is well led by the Board Chair. Board members, both new and experienced demonstrated to reviewers that they are committed members of the Board. The Board undertake Board training when it is available and understand its importance. It will be very important that the entire board undertake Board training once the new board is elected in September.

'The Catholic Education of School Age Children' is a seminal document and the general themes of the document are reflected positively in day-to-day operations and the conduct and documentation of the school. The review team strongly support a whole board approach to rereading this document once the new board is elected. Both Board and School Leaders understand the value of meaningful internal review. In 2021 Internal Evaluation received by the proprietor was undertaken and completed to a high standard. It was very thorough and showed school leaders have a sound knowledge and understanding of good internal review. The newly revised Strategic and Annual planning shows a commitment by the school to promoting The Catholic Special Character of the School.

The Board are steadfast and committed to the School and Parish. The Board safeguard and nurture the school's Catholic Character and are good stewards of the school. The Board Chairperson has regular meetings with the Principal. The Principal and Board Chair share a high trust relationship, and this benefits the school. The DRS presents Catholic Character reports to the Board at each meeting. The school enjoys a very positive working

relationships with the Parish.

St Joseph's appreciates the pastoral care and friendship afforded the school by the Parish Priest. His robust support of the school and the Board and his pastoral care of the St Joseph's flock continues to lead many tamariki and their whanau to Christ. The school prioritises their relationship with the Parish Council. The Board is a good ethical employer and employment systems are robust. 'The Code of Ethics in a Catholic School' is enacted. At the time of the External Review the School was compliant with its Integration Agreement regarding Maximum roll, non-preference percentage and is seeking to fill two further CI-47 positions.

Next Steps for Development

- For the Board to undertake as part of their board formation to read and discuss. 'The Catholic Education of School Age Children'. Given that there will be different views when serving as Trustees and the centrality of Catholic Character, there would be wisdom in the Board Chair ensuring this document is part of the regular reading cycle for all Trustees.

St Joseph's Catholic Special Character Review Evaluation Summary

Areas of growth since the last review report

Since the last review, Senior Leaders have been deliberately grown and nurtured. The Principal, Senior Leaders and teachers are unequivocal in their support of the Director of Religious Studies. She is always open and enabling of teacher's new learning as is the leadership of the Principal. This is been beneficial on many levels. Distributed leadership across the school, is very positive.

The Principal is "deeply committed to communicating Christ and to help forming Christ in the lives of others" (*Blessed John Paul II 1979, CESAC*). This commitment flows through to his team and is evidenced as joy, kindness and compassion in the school community and impacts positively on everyone.

For young people at St Joseph's are each regarded as individuals in the likeness of Christ and they are at the very heart of their school. It is the everyday Christ-centric practices, implemented in the daily life of the school that bring about the integration of faith with life. In the Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Schools, "Christ is the Teacher in Catholic schools.... and Catholic schools have the task of being the living and provocative memory of Christ". St Joseph's Catholic School exemplifies this longstanding tradition of Catholic Education.

Recommendation


- To develop a bicultural strategic plan that enables all Kaiako and ākonga to grow skills and competency in Te Reo Maori, Tikanga Maori, Te Ao Maori to enable all ākonga to increase their skills in a scaffolded manner through years 1-6 at St Joseph's Catholic school.

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

The review team thank the community of St Joseph's Catholic School for the welcome, hospitality and cooperation extended to them and for the opportunity to experience the way that they safeguard and strengthen their Catholic special character. The organisation and preparation for the review by the school/college is greatly appreciated.

Christine Smith

Review and Development

Philip Mahoney

Manager