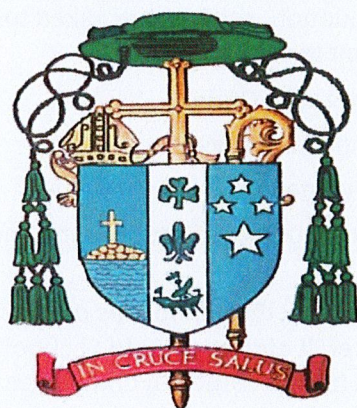


Catholic Special Character External Evaluation
He Arotake Whanaketanga mō te Mātauranga Ahurea Katorika

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School
Takapuna, Auckland



***He Arotake Whanaketanga mō te Mātauranga Ahurea Katorika – Te Ture Tāuke mō ngā
Kura Katorika***

Confirmed Catholic Special Character External Evaluation for Kura Development

Ngā Whāinga O Te Arotake — Aims of External Evaluation

The New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference wishes the external evaluation 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 evangelising. This is the evangelizing mission of the Church, in which the school participates.

The external review process is based upon the He Arotake Whanaketanga mō te Mātauranga Ahurea Katorika – Te Ture Tāuke mō ngā Kura Katorika – Catholic Special Character Evaluation for Development (January 2022). In the evaluation, schools are asked to consider and demonstrate the ways in which they have provided for their tamariki:

- Te tūtaki ki a Te Karaiti – an encounter with Christ
- Mā te Mātauranga ka tipu – growth in knowledge
- Te whakaatu Karaitiana – Christian witness
- Te kaitiakitanga me te whakapakari i te tuakiri – Safeguarding and strengthening Catholic Special Character

The evaluation 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 that the school has discerned. It challenges the school to be more transformational.

Statistics about this Kura

Name	St Joseph's Catholic Primary
Address	2 Taharoto Road, Takapuna ,Auckland
Maximum roll	585
Actual roll	421 (02/06/2026)
School type	Catholic Integrated Primary School Co-Educational Year 1–6
Non-preference maximum	29 (5%)
Actual non-preference number	26
Tumuaki	Alister Bridgman
Director of Religious Studies	Annette Woodhead
Assistant Tumuaiki	Natasha Luxford, Laura Bateman, Debbie Pratt
Presiding Member	Karen Roncon
Parish Priest	Monsignor David Tonks
Roll-based staffing entitlement	22.2
Required Special Character Cl 47 positions	14
Filled Special Character Cl 47 positions	13 including Principal and DRS

A Description of This Kura *(extract from the St Joseph's Induction Powerpoint)*

St Joseph's Takapuna, was opened in 1849 as "St Mary's Industrial School", the first school on the North Shore. By the following year it had 30 pupils. Some lived in the orphanage, a few were sons of settlers and others were from the Maori village nearby, where A.U.T stands today.

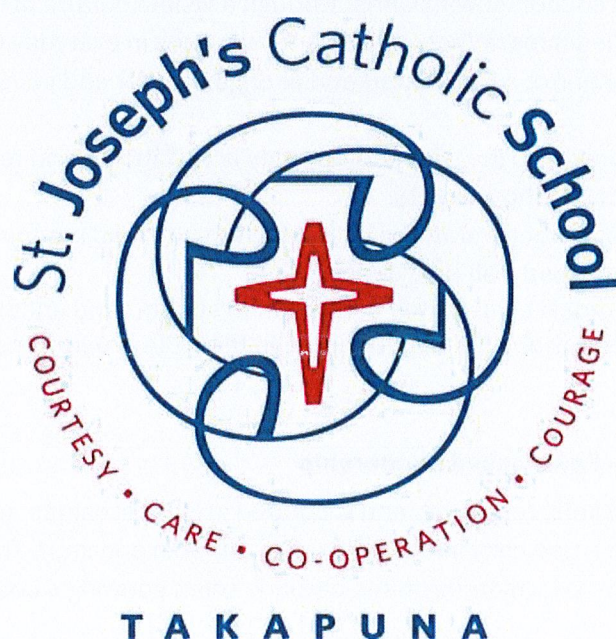
The first group of Sisters of Mercy came out from Ireland in 1850, at the request of Bishop Pompallier. The need for teachers at that time was great and the sisters responded to this challenge. Their first convent was on the site of St Patrick's Cathedral. The Sisters later moved to Ponsonby.

In 1893, the building was handed over to the Mercy Sisters as a home for orphaned and destitute boys. In January of that year, Sister Mildred and Sister Alphonsus, with six boys rowed across the harbour from town and took over the building. The Sisters of Mercy were to stay for 96 years until 1989 when Sister Gemma, the last Sister of Mercy left St Joseph's.

At first there were only 2 small classrooms in a cottage near the gate. Now the school has 15 classrooms, hall, administration block which includes a library.

In 1989 Sister Gemma left St Joseph's School to return to Ireland, ending a 96 year old association between the Sisters of Mercy and St Joseph's School. The first "lay" principal, Mrs Kay Hook, was appointed and later that year, the first Board of Trustees was elected.

Today, St Joseph's Catholic School, Takapuna, is a modern, vibrant and future-focused place of learning where Christ is at the centre of all decision-making. Guided by its Mercy charism and Gospel values, the school nurtures students to grow spiritually, academically and socially, empowering them to become confident and compassionate learners. The school celebrates its rich multicultural community while remaining deeply committed to honouring Aotearoa New Zealand's bicultural heritage and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Situated in the heart of Takapuna, the school acknowledges the mana whenua of this area. Through strong relationships, inclusive practices and a commitment to excellence, St Joseph's continues to provide an authentic Catholic education that prepares young people for the future while remaining grounded in faith and tradition.



Dimension 1 — Te tūtaki ki a Te Karaiti

Encounter with Christ

Question: 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?

Finding

Opportunities for encountering Christ is most definitely a strength evidenced through the warm, authentic relationships experienced across the kura.

Evidenced in this Kura

Whakapakari Whakapono — Faith Formation

- Faith formation is deeply embedded in daily life of the kura, with Gospel values consistently modelled and integrated into teaching, behaviour expectations, and relationships. This was witnessed at the prayer assembly attended by the evaluators.
- Tamariki are actively engaged in learning about scripture and faith. *“I love reading the bible and stories about saints as I find the history really interesting and it helps me to know more about Jesus and God”* (student voice)
- Whole-staff professional learning in theology has strengthened staff confidence and capability to lead faith learning, supported by leadership modelling commitment as “we are all learners.”
- The kura has a strong culture of pastoral care. Support staff shared experiences of how the love of God in action is evident particularly during times of need and how school support helped them through a very difficult personal time.

Rongopaitanga — Evangelisation

- The kura promotes an encounter with Christ through a visible culture of love, respect, and inclusion, where relationships reflect Christ-centred values in everyday interactions as seen by evaluators in the way Kaiako, support staff and ākonga care for and include tamariki with different abilities.
- Engagement with whānau and the wider community is intentional and relational. Whānau are invited to attend all class/school events.
- Kaiako voluntarily attend weekly staff prayer, taking turns to lead meaningful and creative ways of encountering Christ. Mostly, all Kaiako attend.
- Monsignor and the Tumuaki shared their aspiration to support and encourage students holding Preference Certificates 5.2 and 5.3 to participate in the RCIA programme.

Ārahitanga Whakapono — Faith-based Leadership

- Leadership is highly visible, relational, and grounded in Gospel values, modelling faith through presence, accessibility, and daily interactions with tamariki and staff. The Tumuaki is well known for welcoming whānau each morning in the carpark, often sporting a costume or ‘crazy’ hat. (Tamariki voice)

- Leaders demonstrate authentic faith leadership by example, including active participation in theological learning (RE 501 being the most recent paper completed) and teaching alongside classroom kaiako.
- The Senior Leadership is longstanding and highly experienced. They espoused how they have a collaborative and cohesive approach that ensures shared responsibility for maintaining and strengthening the Catholic character of the kura.
- Robust systems for staff induction and ongoing formation ensure all staff, Catholic and non-Catholic, are supported to contribute meaningfully to the special character of the school. The DRS spoke of how she appreciates the support given to her from both tagged and non-tagged teachers when planning schoolwide special character events.

Effect for Tamariki

Tamariki are given the opportunity to experience a deepening personal relationship with Jesus, as they see faith authentically modelled by leaders and staff, enabling them to confidently live Gospel values, care for others, and recognise faith as a meaningful and active part of their daily lives.

Opportunities for Growth

NA

Agreed Next Step

Partner with the parish to develop clear pathways to encourage students holding Preference Certificates 5.2 and 5.3 to participate in the RCIC programme.

Dimension 2 — Mā te Mātauranga ka tipu

Growth in Knowledge

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

Finding

- The Kura is very effective in supporting its community to grow in knowledge and understanding of Jesus Christ, his teachings, and the Catholic Church. Strategic, relational leadership, ensures a well-aligned, faith-centred curriculum.

Evidenced in this Kura

Ārahitanga — Leadership.

- Leadership and governance demonstrate a clear, strategic commitment to deepening understanding of Catholic faith, with strategic and annual planning explicitly aligned to Gospel values and special character priorities.
- Leaders actively build staff capability in Religious Education and theology, modelling ongoing faith formation and supporting staff to partake in RE papers through Te Kupenga.
- The Director of Religious Studies completes both formal and informal classroom observations ensuring consistent teaching quality.
- A strong partnership between Board, leadership, and parish provides coherent support for sacramental programmes and faith learning. The DRS is highly experienced and supports the parish sacramental team.
- Leadership has driven significant progress towards being tūturu Katorika and tūturu Māori, fostering authentic bicultural development through partnerships with Ngāti Paoa and engagement with Piritahi Marae.

Tō Tātou Whakapono — Religious Education

- Religious Education programmes are well-planned and meaningfully delivered. Evaluators evidenced quality, inclusive pedagogical practice as consistent across the kura.
- Tamariki demonstrated an understanding of Gospel values such as love, acceptance, and inclusion, and were able to articulate examples of these to evaluators in relation to their own lives.
- Tamariki attend prayer assembly every Friday morning. Homegroups are rostered to attend Parish Mass on Thursdays once per year. Years 5-6 celebrate a special Mass each year and Years 0-4 celebrate a special Liturgy. Once per term the whole kura celebrates Mass. Whanau are invited to attend all these celebrations.
- Ākonga voice indicates a high engagement with Religious Education teaching and learning; however, they did suggest that learning through the opportunity to visit places of religious significance such as other parishes, historical Catholic sites and places of other religious denomination would be very interesting to them.

Mārautanga Katorika — Catholic Curriculum

- The curriculum of the kura intentionally integrates Catholic identity across all learning areas, making faith visible, relevant, and connected to daily lives of tamariki.
- Leadership has placed an emphasis on initiating a localised Catholic curriculum, weaving together local stories of faith (e.g. Bishop Pompallier, Chief Eruera Patuone, the Mercy Sisters) to deepen understanding for tamariki and the community of the beginnings of the school and the land on which the school stands.
- Bicultural development is authentic and deeply embedded, supported through engagement with The Māori Achievement Collaborative (MAC) and local iwi partnerships.
- Students experience a curriculum that connects faith, culture, and identity, strengthening both their knowledge of the Catholic tradition and their sense of belonging.

Effect for Tamariki

Tamariki experience a curriculum that connects faith, culture, and identity, strengthening both their knowledge of the Catholic tradition and their sense of belonging in Aotearoa.

Opportunities for Growth

NA

Agreed Next Step

Continue to refine St Joseph's local curriculum through the collaborative design of a Religious Education programme informed by Tō Tātou Whakapono - Our Faith, ensuring Religious Education remains at the heart of the school curriculum.

Dimension 3 — Te whakaatu Karaitiana

Christian Witness

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

Finding

Christian Witness is a significant strength across the kura. Staff, tamariki, and community members describe a culture where Gospel values are lived out authentically in daily interactions, schoolwide practices, and community engagement.

Evidenced in this Kura

Te Hāpori o te Kura Katorika — Catholic School Community

- The kura fosters a strong sense of belonging and identity, with many staff and whānau having deep, long-standing connections to the parish and kura community.
- Catholic character and Mercy Values are highly visible and lived across the community, shaping expectations, behaviour, and daily interactions. Tamariki frequently referred to the Mercy values of the kura when offering explanations to evaluators.
- Tamariki contribute positively to the community through engaged, respectful participation, demonstrating pride in their school and faith identity.

Mahi Ngātahi me te Mahi Tahi — Partnership and Collaboration

- Strong partnerships between Board, leadership, and parish ensure a coherent and unified approach to faith formation and Catholic character.
- The school has deepened authentic relationships with Ngāti Paoa and local marae, strengthening bicultural understanding and collaboration.
- Leadership actively fosters collaborative practices among staff, building a cohesive, supportive culture focused on shared responsibility.
- Whānau spoke of the strong communication that they appreciated, the warmth of Kaiako, and the open door of the tumuaki and leadership team.

Hāpai Tangata — Pastoral Care

- The school provides strong, faith-centred pastoral care for staff, tamariki and the wider community when required.
- Leadership prioritises relational presence and wellbeing, creating a safe and supportive environment for both staff and students. Whānau appreciate how Mr Bridgman and Mrs Bridgman (Tumuaki and his wife), greet every child by name each day at the gate.
- Evaluators were invited to join in with staff as they celebrated the opening of the Fifa World Cup. Collegial fun and joy were truly evident.

Ko ngā mahi ratonga — Service and Outreach

- Service is integrated into the life of the kura as a practical expression of Catholic Social Teaching, encouraging students to care for others and respond to need.
- The kura prioritises support for Catholic charities such as Caritas. Tamariki are expected to earn the money that they bring for the missions/fundraiser by helping at home.
- Tamariki enthusiastically relayed stories of their ‘Cereal Dominoes’ fundraiser, where boxes of cereal donated by whānau were lined up across the school grounds and then donated to charity.
- Students demonstrate understanding of service through lived actions, including inclusion, respect, and support for peers. This was seen by evaluators.

Effect for Tamariki

Tamariki experience a strong sense of belonging and care, enabling them to live out their faith through compassionate relationships, active service, and meaningful connection with their community

Opportunities for Growth

NA

Agreed Next Step

To further strengthen the school’s Catholic and bicultural character (tūturu Katorika, tūturu Māori), the school could:

- continue to develop and embed a school-wide Te Reo Māori progression plan, supported by regular, timetabled instruction to ensure consistent acquisition and use of language across the kura
- provide opportunities for senior ākonga to engage in visits to other Catholic parishes, historical faith sites, and places of other faith tradition to deepen the understanding of the Catholic tradition within a broader faith context
- strengthen the partnership with Ngāti Pāoa and the Māori Achievement Collaborative (MAC) to co-construct a school narrative that authentically reflects local Māori heritage, Catholic identity, and the Mercy charism

Dimension 4 — Te kaitiakitanga me te whakapakari i te tuakiri

Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Special Character

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

Finding

Stewardship is highly effective, with governance demonstrating strong commitment to safeguarding Catholic identity and steadfastly enacting the Vision and Gospel Values of the Kura.

Evidenced in this Kura

- The Board exercises effective stewardship rooted in Catholic identity, which is witnessed in all their documentation.
- Catholic Social Teaching actively shapes governance discussions and decision-making, underpinned by strong use of evidence and data.
- Staffing is carefully overseen, with the Board engaging in CI-47 appointment processes to ensure alignment with the school's special character.
- The Board demonstrates a commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and bicultural practice, with te ao Māori, mātauranga Māori, and tikanga reflected in strategic priorities and policy development and allocated resourcing to ensure the kura can maintain their links with local iwi.
- Enrolment procedures show clear alignment with diocesan expectations, alongside a commitment to meaningful partnership with parents and whānau through faith-focused engagement.
- The Board and Leadership have a strong, professional relationship. The Board supports the Tumuaiki yet understands the clear boundaries that must exist between governance and leadership.

Effect for Tamariki

As a result of a Board totally committed to ensuring excellence for all, Tamariki experience a thoughtfully resourced education that is centred on Gospel values.

Opportunities for Growth

Evaluators discussed with the Board the potential of initiating the regular practice of Board Self Evaluation. This could be in the form of an anonymous survey generated by the Presiding Member seeking feedback and feedforward from Board members to sustain the quality practices already in place.

Summary of Agreed Next Steps Dimensions 1-4.

Partner with the parish to develop clear pathways to encourage students holding Preference Certificates 5.2 and 5.3 to participate in the RCIC programme (*Dimension 1*)

Continue to refine St Joseph's local curriculum through the collaborative design of a Religious Education programme informed by Te Tātou Whakapono (*Dimension 2*) ensuring Religious Education remains at the heart of the school curriculum

To further strengthen the school's Catholic and bicultural character (tūturu Katorika, tūturu Māori), the school could: (*Dimension 3*)

- continue to develop and embed a school-wide Te Reo Māori progression plan, supported by regular, timetabled instruction to ensure consistent acquisition and use of language across the kura
- provide opportunities for senior ākonga to engage in visits to other Catholic parishes, historical faith sites, and places of other faith tradition to deepen the understanding of the Catholic tradition within a broader faith context
- strengthen partnership with Ngāti Pāoa and the Māori Achievement Collaborative (MAC) to co-construct a school narrative that authentically reflects local Māori heritage, Catholic identity, and the Mercy charism

Summary

The Evaluation Team is confident that the leadership team (The Board, Tumuaki, Director of Religious Studies and Deputy Tumuaki) have the willingness and ability to address these recommendations fully before the next external evaluation. Catholic Education Services is available to assist the Tumuaki and the Board in compiling an action plan to address these recommendations.

The Evaluation Team thanks your community for the warm welcome, hospitality and cooperation extended to them and for the opportunity to experience the way they safeguard and strengthen their Catholic Special Character.

Viki Trainor, Evaluator (Lead)

Christine Smith, Evaluator

Philip Mahoney — Manager, Catholic Education Services

Te Reo Māori Glossary

Kupu — Definition of Reo Māori found within this Evaluation.

Ākonga	Student
Haka	Māori group war dance or challenge
Inoi Māori	Pray in te reo Māori
Kaiako	Teacher
Kete	Flax-woven basket
Kura	School
Māra Hupara	Traditional Māori Playground
Mātauranga Māori	Māori knowledge and worldview
Pepeha	Way of introducing yourself through whakapapa
Rangatahi	Youth
Tamariki	Children
Tangata Tiriti	People of the Treaty (all NZ residents)
Tangata Whenua	Indigenous Māori people
Tauīwi	Non-Māori residents of NZ
Te Ao Māori	The Māori world and worldview
Te Hāhi Katorika	Catholic Church
Te Reo Māori me ōnā Tikanga	Māori language and culture
Te Tiriti o Waitangi	Treaty of Waitangi
Tikanga Māori	Māori customs and correct practices
Tūturu Katorika	Authentically Catholic
Tūturu Māori	Authentically Māori
Tumuaki	Principal
Wairuatanga	Spirituality
Whānau	Family
Whanaungatanga	Relationships and connection