



**CATHOLIC DIOCESE
OF DUNEDIN**

Covering Otago & Southland

He Pūrongo Arotake Mātauranga

Ahurea Katorika ā Waho

Catholic Special Character

Evaluation for Development



St Mary's School

Gore

Evaluation conducted on 24th – 25th May 2023

Confirmed report 6th June 2023



School Details

Name of School: St Mary's Gore

Charism: Mercy

Address: 14 Ardwick St Gore 9710

School type: Year 0 – 6 Contributing Primary

Actual roll: 198

Maximum roll: 235

Non-preference maximum (5% of maximum roll) : 12

Actual non-preference number: 12

Roll based staffing entitlement: FTTE 11.00

Required number of Special Character CI 47 positions: 6

Filled number of Special Character CI 47 positions: 8

Principal: Mallory Hood

Director of Religious Studies: Paula Gray

Presiding Member – Board of Trustees: Brendan Terry

Parish Priest / Chaplain: Rev Jaime Lalaguna

Evaluation Team

Lead Evaluator: Paul Richardson

Assisted by: Teresa Jarvis – Principal – St Thomas Aquinas Winton

The Aims of Catholic Special Character External Evaluation for Development

The Catholic Special Character Evaluation process produces a focused picture of the impact of Catholic schooling and the effectiveness of its goals on the lives of all tamariki and rangatahi¹. The process seeks to determine whether they have encountered the living God revealed in Jesus Christ, grown in knowledge of Him and His Church, and as a result are forming a deep and lasting relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church². The process also evaluates how the whole school community engages in authentic Catholic Christian witness and evangelisation.

The evaluation also investigates how the school is acting as kaitiaki of Catholic special character including meeting its statutory compliances.

A collaborative external evaluation process between school and the evaluators helps the school see what it is doing well and identify next steps.

Evaluation Dimensions

- Te tūtaki ki a Te Karaiti - Encounter with Christ.
- Te whakatupu mā - te mātauranga - Growth in knowledge.
- Te whakaatu Karaitiana - Christian witness.
- Te kaitiakitanga me to whakapakari i to tuakiri Katrorika - Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Character.

History St Mary's School

St Mary's is a Catholic School teaching children from New Entrants to Year 6. A few days after the Sisters of Mercy had arrived in Gore, they met 43 Catholic children who lived in the area and arranged them in primary and secondary age groups. The sisters taught the primary school children in the Town Hall until the school was built. The secondary school students were taught in a room in the Convent. In October 1890, the new St Mary's School was finally opened. The parents of the primary school children paid the sisters for teaching their children by giving them food and other things they needed. The sisters knew that they needed more classroom space - many more primary students wanted to go to St Mary's School, and more girls in Gore wanted to attend secondary school. In 1936, a new primary and secondary school was finally built to provide for the many Catholic children in the area. The school is founded on the Mercy and Gospel values; they come from the words and letters of Catherine McAuley, the founder of the Mercy Sisters - Nga Whaea Atawhai o Aotearoa.



¹ New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference. *The Catholic Education of School Age Children*. Wellington:2014.

² Ibid.

Progress with Recommendations from the 2019 Review Report

In line with the Strategic Direction of the school, aim to further develop teaching and learning in RE that enables students to integrate their faith and life. Building on your current exploration of more effectively delivering Religious Education, consider ways to strengthen the pedagogies which lead towards deeper learning.

Te Whakatupu Mā Te Mātauranga: Growth in Knowledge

1. Re-visit the Religious Education Bridging Document, taking time to unravel the eight fundamentals starting with Being Spiritual Te Taha Wairua through to Understanding the Journey - Kia Mārama ki te Huarahi

Staff meetings, led by the DRS, focused on working through different aspects of the Bridging Document. Staff attended PLD - Twilights, staff meetings and observations with the REA. PLD time is now used to understand the new Religious Education curriculum document Tō Tātou Whakapono - Our Faith, and also involved, Jumbo Day, DRS meetings, Twilights, PLD for junior teachers alongside other Southland Catholic schools, meetings with the regional REA.

2. Link current professional learning or pursue other professional learning development opportunities to enable teachers to deepen their understanding of the critical features required to enable deeper learning in Religious Education

The new curriculum and Caritas resources have provided this with staff delving deeper into the Catholic Social Teaching principles through the Caritas resources. Through the principles being integrated through termly RE plans, teachers have made connections to the Religious Education strands. This has challenged staff to deepen their understanding of how Catholic Social Teaching applies Gospel values to current social issues. Students have had the opportunity to reflect and respond to these resources which has encouraged them to consider how the principles are connected to their daily lives. Observing the children making decisions about social actions is considered crucial.

3. Consider the approaches used in the Caritas teaching and learning resources to identify and analyse the key elements of this resource which makes it so successful

Staff reflected and identified the most appropriate activities that make use of Caritas teaching and learning resources successful. The activities include ways to reflect and connect as an individual, with family and with community. Students benefit from a variety of learning experiences and presenting their ideas in various ways such as using technology and creative artistic displays. "We liked the scripture and story sharing side of the lessons and resources."

Te Whakaatu Karaitiana-Christian Witness

4. Having explored both Caritas and a range of teaching pedagogies, continue to work collaboratively to develop teaching and learning experiences which will more deeply engage the students, enable their faith to grow and their social justice responses to broaden.

Planning is done collaboratively, in year groups covering levels 1 - 3. Planning is done leading up to the teaching of each strand ensuring all learning outcomes are covered across all levels. Staff meeting time is allocated to find appropriate resources to engage students. New Entrant - year 2 teachers have been involved in planning sessions with the regional REA, DRS and other schools.

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?

Spiritual Formation

A spiritual life, grounded in Mercy values and heritage and centred on the person of Christ is at the heart of everyday life at St Mary's School. It is immediately obvious on entering the school reception area that this is a spiritual place. The warmth of welcome from staff and visual Mercy focused environment emphasising *faith, hope and love* are invitations to encounter Christ. The evaluation team received a whole school welcome in the parish church in a moving liturgy that represented the unity and strength of faith which this school is known for. Ākonga and staff participated in student lead prayer and reflection. The children's reverence, self-discipline and singing was genuine and inspiring. This was also evident during classroom visits for prayer and Religious Education and a junior class Mass where a number of families were present.

The DRS spoke of a shared spirituality when colleagues and parents and visitors express a feeling of welcome and encounter. Staff actively portray Jesus as a role model which they believe impacts positively on behaviour. Supported by the DRS, their concern for the spiritual formation of children is recognised and deeply appreciated by parents.

Children spoken to are acutely aware of the Catholic Special Character of their school. They see themselves as followers of Jesus and can talk about this within the context of their school values. They could also articulate with confidence, the meaning of each of these virtues and name in Te reo Māori. *Faith – Whakapono, We belong to God. Hope – Tumanako, Good today, better tomorrow. Love - Aroha, We belong to God, all of us is his.*

Evangelisation

The principal is aware of a community spirituality and numerous opportunities to encounter Christ including liturgies to mark special occasions, national events, and school Masses. The impact of this is that people feel welcome and included.

A sacramental programme is conducted annually within the school and is led by the DRS. The effectiveness of this formation can be seen in the high level of uptake and strong family support which may also involve parent formation. This evangelising influence can also be seen in the involvement of non-preference ākonga making a faith commitment. This year's programme has included 13 baptisms. The leadership of the DRS extends across both school and parish. Her commitment and dedication are exemplary, and the impact of her commitment is recognised and appreciated by the principal, staff and community. The presiding member views the support of the parish priest with organisational challenges as vital.

Faith-Based Leadership

Faith based leadership is a long standing strength in the school. This is particularly evident through the teamwork of the principal and DRS, and a loyal staff, who in turn encourage leadership opportunities amongst students. *‘Our leaders role model leadership that makes others aspire to follow their example.’ [St Marys’ Vision]* The principal and staff display a ‘distributive’ style of leadership to effectively shape the school’s vision and direction. The recent appointment of the new principal is a popular one among staff, parish and the wider school community. This internal appointment has ensured faith based continuity, described by staff as a ‘seamless transition,’ following on from the highly respected and much loved previous principal.

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?

Leadership

The leadership has immense capability to enable growth in knowledge and understanding. Both the principal and DRS have participated in the Aspiring Leaders Programme and appreciate the strong support from the board to support continued growth and development. The principal acknowledges the work of the DRS as a ‘visible leader in our faith community.’

Religious Education

It is clear that Religious Education has high status, is soundly managed, appropriately resourced and impacting on ākonga who are being well served through shared leadership and collaborative planning. This is also reflected in the strategic goal that also acknowledges the National Education Learning Priority – ‘Learners at the Centre.’ The effective delivery of the Religious Education curriculum is supported through collaborative planning across the year groups, classroom observations, and sharing feedback at staff meetings. There is also a strategic developmental focus on *Tō Tātou Whakapono – Our Faith*, involving support from NCRS and regional Religious Education Advisor ‘to familiarise kaiako with the theology and content of the themes and cross themes of the new curriculum.’

The level of qualifications amongst staff is variable although all are actively engaged in progressing through the accreditation levels under the guidance of the DRS who recognises their active involvement and openness to committing to further their studies. The professionalism and collaborative approach of kaiako are acknowledged by the principal, as is support and growth for the DRS. She acknowledges an ongoing need for support and currently allocates release time whenever possible. It is intended that the DRS resumes more formalised release time in 2024, under new classroom arrangements. The current situation is due to the internal mid-year appointment of the new principal and a desire to avoid disrupting current teaching arrangements.

Staff are to be commended for prioritising the needs of ākonga and acknowledge that current arrangements are not sustainable in the long term.

The staff team expressed confidence with the introduction of the new Religious Education curriculum. Junior classes have begun implementing the new achievement objectives and creating their own resources as they anticipate the national release of the resourced programme.

In class observations the rapport between kaiako and ākonga was natural, positive and welcoming. Lessons were well structured, well-resourced with enthusiastic participation of ākonga. The children take pride in their work and willingly shared and discussed their workbooks. Classroom environments are attractive with numerous examples of student work accompanying school values displayed throughout the school. The impact of learning is reflected in parent comments expressing surprise at faith knowledge expressed at home and natural discussion that follows about the teachings of Jesus.

In discussion with a large student group representing all year levels we discussed the various events that occur throughout the liturgical year of the church. The effectiveness of Catholic schooling for these children was evident in their understandings about the seasons of the church and describing the various feast days and events. Several students talked about their current learning for Ascension and Pentecost and could link this back to Christ's passion, and resurrection. Inspired by their teachers they showed an awareness of school values and could also refer to some of the Catholic Social Teaching Principles. There was a particular reference to *stewardship* with environmental initiatives in the school and wider community and senior students shared that they had just returned from a tree planting excursion, a local council initiative.

Catholic Curriculum

A Catholic worldview and its integration into daily practice is a focus in all curriculum areas. There is also a strategic intention in 2023 to incorporate this in correspondence and to allocate staff meeting time. At the classroom level ākonga read, write and create work that reflects a Catholic world view. This is evident in classroom displays and the a current inquiry focus 'Turangawaewae,' involving the principal 'stewardship – kaitiakitanga.' The impact of this learning was evident in some knowledgeable discussion with ākonga. The principal also referred to a focus within school prayer, explicit use of Caritas resources, references in newsletters and school communications as well as the various service and outreach activities. [Dimension 3]

Further Development

- The principal acknowledges an ongoing need for DRS support and allocates release time whenever possible. It is intended that the DRS resumes more formalised release time in 2024, under new classroom teaching arrangements.

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?

Catholic School Community

The combined strengths of the St Mary's community and adherence to its core values, reflected in words and actions of board, management, kaiako and ākonga are the basis of its authenticity as a Catholic community. There are many examples of active Catholic witness and practice in the school and in the Blessed Sacrament Parish, of which it is an integral part. The principal has a welcoming presence and enjoys good working relationships with the parish priest and senior management of St Peter's College which is a natural progression for ākonga beyond year six. She also has an effective outreach in the community through informative newsletters containing thoughtful reflections relevant to the liturgical seasons. There is a sense of unity among staff who are present at key community events. A number of staff also participate in the parish with children's liturgy, eucharistic ministry and church cleaning.

A large representative group of enthusiastic parents met with evaluators and were effusive in acknowledging strength and authenticity within the community. Their comments included a deep appreciation for the newly appointed principal and the value that teachers bring to their tamariki. 'Starts from the top and works through the school.' They see the school as welcoming, loving, real and practical, with a sense of inclusiveness and a place that includes and celebrates all cultures.

Partnership and Collaboration

A recognition that education is a collective responsibility is evident in relationships with whānau, parish and proprietor's office. The principal sees the school values as a central to the school's vision, learning and student formation in a proud Mercy tradition. The portrayal of the school in this light is an effective message for those considering Catholic education at St Mary's and a natural point of reference when challenges arise. Meeting and welcoming families at the gate, welcome liturgies, shared lunches, assistance on trips and camps is routine and natural. The school also has links with the wider community as a Kahui Ako member. This also assists with its commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Through a Turangawaewae learning inquiry, whānau had an opportunity to share their stories in an authentic way. In partnership with other schools ākonga attended an East Peak hikoi, learning about local history and narrative. Kahui Ako has also enabled further development of Te ao and Te reo and with resourcing for kaiako. Staff recently participated in a hui with Māori whānau facilitated by a member of the local community. The principal describes this as an area of growth. 'We continue to build the trust and the reciprocal relationships including informal professional discussion about links between Māori and Catholic spirituality.'

Pastoral Care

It is without question that education occurs in a safe and nurturing environment. This is enshrined in the vision statement and is well-articulated by board, management, staff, whānau and tamariki. *'We treat everyone the way we want to be treated, and respect everyone for who they are and their differences.'* [St Marys' Vision]

The principal is an effective pastoral leader ensuring that staff are affirmed and appreciated and promotes opportunities to gather in prayer, socialise, and participate in well-being surveys. She believes in a high trust culture where people look out for each other and feels personally well supported by the board. Staff responses were extremely positive and referred to a number of initiatives including staff prayer and social events, surveys and a strong sense of being there for each other. Mindfulness opportunities are also available. From discussion it would appear that staff morale is high following the challenges and restrictions of the pandemic. Parents expressed their appreciation for cultural inclusiveness, mutual family support and community activities. This is also a current focus for the Home and School group following successful fundraising initiatives.

Service and Outreach

Student leadership is a tradition within the school and is also regarded as a strength. The school is explicit about its outreach activities and is actively involved in community initiatives. Mission day is a popular annual event with a recent visit to local rest homes with Easter cards. Other activities have included canned food, mufti days, making boxes for veterans, raising money at home for the missions and undertaking Caritas challenges. They were also winners in the local Kaitiaki challenge. Year 6 ākonga participate in the National Young Leaders' gatherings. At the time of meeting, a group of senior students had just returned from planting trees in a district council project. The impact of these initiatives is a strong sense of enthusiasm and the satisfaction of helping others. 'You feel excited. If you do something for other people, you feel good.' Parents expressed this as service in action that 'flows through to later in life.'



ST MARY'S SCHOOL ABOUT 1945-46

DIMENSION 4: Te Kaitiakitanga me te Whakapakari I te Tuakiri Katorika-Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Special Character

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

Stewardship

Safeguarding and strengthening Catholic Special Character is clearly reflected in the school's strategic vision, planning and annual targets. A three year strategic goal of continuing to deliver, 'high quality Religious Education and place our learners and their whānau at the centre of education,' emphasises its high status and aligns this with National Education Learning Priority – Learners at the Centre. This is supported with a 2023 focus for development of the new curriculum *Tō Tātou Whakapono – Our Faith*. Another goal in 2023 aims to continue to build relationships with Rūnaka and Kāhui Ako. This is a commendable initiative which could lead to a strengthened relationship with local mana whenua.

The board regularly receives detailed information about the various Catholic Special Character initiatives. Special character and Religious Education reports are shared at each board meeting and cover aspects of the evaluation dimensions with incidental explanations throughout and opportunities for asking questions. The DRS is considering adding strength by using dimension headings and introducing impact or effectiveness statements where appropriate. Two proprietor appointees who are also on staff at St Peter's College bring strength to the board.

The process of internal evaluation is well embedded and the DRS is looking to add further strength in the process. We discussed narrowing the dimension focus to achieve more specific growth outcomes to support effective strategic planning. Involving proprietor appointees, who already have a sound knowledge of the dimensions, would add further strength.

Legal Obligations

A review of the annual attestation document shows a high level of compliance. This includes:

- Confirmation that the overriding principle of the Safeguarding Policy adopted by the proprietor is reflected in the wording of the school's Child Protection Policy.
- Attesting that the school has sufficient measures in place to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults during all school related activities. (Children's Act 2014)
- Confirmation that the Health Curriculum is delivered in accordance with the Special Character of the school. The next community consultation is due in 2023.

Preference roll as at the date of the evaluation

| Preference Category | Number of Students | % of Current Total Student Number |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 5.1 | 110 | 56% |
| 5.2 | 5 | 3% |
| 5.3 | 52 | 26% |
| 5.4 | 16 | 8% |
| Special circumstance | 4 | 2 % |
| <i>Preference (not stated)</i> | | |
| Non-Preference (12 allowable) | 10 | 5% |
| International | | |
| Total roll | 198 | 100% |
| Maximum roll | 198 / 235 | 84% of capacity |

Further Development

- A strategic goal in 2023 is to continue to build relationships with Rūnaka and Kāhui Ako. This is a commendable initiative which might also lead to a strengthened relationship with local mana whenua.
- Special character and Religious Education reports are shared at each board meeting and cover aspects of the evaluation dimensions with incidental explanations throughout and opportunities for asking further questions. The DRS might consider adding strength by using dimension headings and making some impact or effectiveness statements where appropriate.
- The process of internal evaluation is well embedded and the DRS is looking to add further strength in the process. We discussed narrowing the dimension focus to achieve more specific growth promoting outcomes to support effective strategic planning. Involving proprietor appointees, who already have a sound knowledge of the dimensions, would add further strength.
- Consider referencing the NZCEO ‘conversation starters’ alongside professional standards and Catholic elaborations as a way of adding strength to the document.
- The presiding member is advocating formalised training for proprietor appointees and Catholic Special Character training within the board.

Catholic Special Character Evaluation Report Summary

Areas of growth since the 2019 review

Spiritual Formation

Children see themselves as followers of Jesus and can talk about this within the context of their school values. They could also articulate with confidence, the meaning of each value and name it in Te reo Māori. *Faith – Whakapono, We belong to God. Hope – Tumanako, Good today, better tomorrow. Love - Aroha, We belong to God, all of us is his.*

Faith Based Leadership

The school vision has evolved and this is an ongoing process. The values, faith, hope and love are intrinsic in the school and its vision. There is a leadership emphasis on making links with everyday life.

Evangelisation

The effectiveness of sacramental formation can be seen in the high level of uptake and strong family support which may also involve parent formation. This evangelising influence can also be seen in the involvement of non-preference ākongā seeking to make a faith commitment.

Leadership

Staff recognise the work of the DRS in sharing information and including them in the planning and implementation of special character events..

Religious Education

There is a strategic developmental focus on *Tō Tātou Whakapono – Our Faith*, involving support from NCRS and the regional Religious Education advisor ‘to familiarise kaiako with the theology and content of the themes and cross themes of the new curriculum.’

Catholic Curriculum

A Catholic worldview and its integration into daily practice is a focus in all curriculum areas. There is also a strategic intention in 2023 to incorporate this in communications and to allocate staff meeting time.

Partnership and Collaboration

Kahui Ako has enabled further development of Te ao and Te reo, with resourcing for kaiako and staff who recently participated in a hui with Māori whānau, facilitated within the local community. The principal describes this as an area of growth. ‘We continue to build the trust and reciprocal relationships, including informal professional discussion about links between Māori and Catholic spirituality.’

Service and Outreach

Senior students were recently involved in planting trees in a district council project. The impact of social outreach initiatives is seen through enthusiasm and the satisfaction of helping others. ‘You feel excited. If you do something for other people, you feel good.’ Parents expressed this as service in action that ‘flows through to later in life.’

Key Recommendations to support development

Te Whakatupu Mā Te Mātauranga - Growth in Knowledge

- The principal acknowledges an ongoing need for DRS support and allocates release time whenever possible. It is intended that the DRS resumes more formalised release time in 2024, under new classroom teaching arrangements.

Te Kaitiakitanga me te Whakapakari I te Tuakiri Katorika - Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Special Character

- Special character and Religious Education reports are shared at each board meeting and cover aspects of the evaluation dimensions with incidental explanations throughout and opportunities for asking further questions. The DRS might consider adding strength by using dimension headings and making some impact or effectiveness statements where appropriate.
- The process of internal evaluation is well embedded and the DRS is looking to add further strength in the process. We discussed narrowing the dimension focus to achieve more specific growth outcomes to support effective strategic planning. Involving proprietor appointees, who already have a sound knowledge of the dimensions, would add further strength.

In conclusion

The evaluation team is confident that the St Mary's School Board, principal and senior leaders have the willingness and ability to address these recommendations. Ongoing assistance is available from the Catholic Education Office.

We extend our sincere thanks to the board, leadership, staff, whānau and ākonga of the St Mary's community for the warm welcome, hospitality and cooperation extended to us, opportunities to engage with various groups and for the opportunity to experience the way that they safeguard and strengthen their Catholic Special Character. The organisation and preparation for external evaluation by the principal and senior leaders is appreciated.

Ngā mihi nui

Paul Richardson B Ed, Dip Tchg, Dip Ed L, Dip RE, CFLE

Lead Evaluator

6th June 2023