



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF AUCKLAND

Catholic Schools Office
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Proverbs 4:13

CATHOLIC SPECIAL CHARACTER EXTERNAL REVIEW REPORT

ST. PIUS X CATHOLIC SCHOOL GLEN INNES

9-10 APRIL, 2013

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name:	St Pius X Catholic School, Glen Innes
Address:	103 Castledine Cres, Glen Innes Auckland 1072
School Type:	Full Primary
Principal:	Mr Paul Coakley
Director of Religious Studies:	Mrs Ana Tui
Board of Trustees Chairperson:	Mrs Rose Ngakiau
Parish Priest:	Fr. Ioane Anitele'a MF
Reviewers:	Mr Neil Laurenson Mrs Colleen Gleeson
Accompanying Principal:	Mrs Maraia Herbert-Pickering
Current Roll:	156
Report Confirmed:	May 29, 2013

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

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

Catholic Community: Te Iwi Whanui Katorika

The extent to which the school is a Christian community where Gospel values are central, where faith is nourished, and where Christian celebration in the Catholic tradition is highly valued.

Pastoral Care: Manaakitanga

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

Religious Education: Te Whakaakoranga Whakapono

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

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

CATHOLIC COMMUNITY: Te Iwi Whanau Katorika

The extent to which the school is a Christian community where Gospel values are central, where faith is nourished, and where Christian celebration in the Catholic tradition is highly valued.

St Pius X Catholic School, Glen Innes warmly welcomed and embraced the opportunity for review and development. The Board of Trustees, Principal, staff, students, parent and parish community welcomed the reviewers and all shared openly their thoughts and opinions.

Situated in the Tamaki area, the school serves the parish of St Pius X, Glen Innes. It shares a large site with the church and presbytery. It is surrounded by state housing which is currently being upgraded through the Tamaki Transformation urban renewal scheme.

SPIRITUALITY

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

"It is a glorious thing to devote our talents and energies to the preservation of the faith".

(Margaret Aylward, 1867)

This statement, made by the founder of the Holy Faith order of Sisters, exemplifies the vocations of the members of the St Pius X school community. Links are explicitly fostered between the community's love of God, walking in the footsteps of Jesus Christ and the charism of the school.

EVANGELISATION

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

The school proclaims the mission and Gospel of Jesus Christ. Parishioners commented that there was an increase in the numbers joining the Sacramental programmes and that the Parish youth group was strong and growing with students who had left the school to go to college but wanted to remain part of the St Pius X community.

PARTNERSHIP

Education is a collaborative responsibility.

The Principal, staff and Board of Trustees work to build strong relationships with families, the parish and the wider community. The parish and school work so closely together that they are spoken about as 'one'. Parents, who spoke to the reviewers, talked about their awareness that parents need to work in partnership with the school to support their children's education. The Principal meets with each family on enrolment and explains the expectations of this partnership.

Links are fostered with other surrounding Catholic schools, through sports and cultural events and Catholic Schools Day. A neighbouring parish supports the school by supplying food and gifts to many of the school's families in need. Strong links with the local state schools in the Tamaki area are

evident through the Manaiaikalani programme and Tamaki cluster events. The school liaises with the Catholic secondary schools to support the transition of their students.

The school/Parish community have established a Playgroup for preschoolers. Operating each morning from the parish hall, it provides the community with a Catholic option for early childhood education for up to 30 children. Until the end of 2013 it is funded by the Ministry of Education through an early childhood initiative. The community are beginning to look into ways of sustaining the playgroup after the contract ceases.

Home School Partnership meetings are held regularly to consult and provide information for parents. The parents who spoke to the reviewers all commented on the fact that it was important for parents to be in partnership with their children's education. The Principal explained that parent engagement had improved and 90% of parents attended parent interviews. At the time of review there was no official PTFA at the school however parents supported the school and initiated fundraising when it was needed.

A group of Marist Brothers have formed a partnership with the school to support the senior boys. They come once per week to organise outreach, sport and fun activities for the boys.

St Pius X Catholic School is a Duffy 'Books in Homes' School and children benefit from receiving books, entertainment and hearing role models throughout the year.

VALUES

The school identifies and actively promotes Gospel values.

St Pius X Catholic School, Glen Innes has identified their core values as those rooted in the spirit of the Holy Faith charism – Faith, Charity, Humility and Simplicity. Respecting the dignity of each person is a value that the school particularly emphasises.

"We work hard to ensure that we respect the dignity of each person in every aspect of our work"

(Director of Religious Studies Questionnaire)

A Virtues Programme is implemented throughout the school and the 52 virtues are taught and integrated into the school programmes. The Director of Religious Studies has begun to link the virtues to the Religious Education Strands and curriculum topics to ensure they are integrated effectively. Teachers are encouraged to use the virtues "language" inside and outside the classroom and 'Virtues Certificates' are awarded to children seen to be modelling a virtue.

SCHOOL CULTURE

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

St Pius X Catholic School follows the charism of the Sisters of the Holy Faith, the founding order. The children were very aware of the foundress of the order, Margaret Aylward, and the special relationship the school still has with the Holy Faith Sisters.

A programme is being developed to ensure the children are aware of and understand the Holy Faith charism. Two of the Sisters are regular visitors to the school and are an excellent resource for the continued development of the programme.

The patron saint of the school is St Pius X chosen because of his love of the poor. The children were able to talk about St Pius X and his teachings and were able to relate their knowledge to the recent election of Pope Francis. The Principal had created very visual timelines of the succession of Popes from St Pius X to Pope Francis which were evident in the school corridors.

The school Motto is "Advance in Faith, Hope and Love" which was evident throughout the school and printed under the emblem. The emblem for the school is the emblem of the Holy Faith Sisters. The senior students were able to articulate the meaning of the motto and the symbolism of the emblem. Children in all classrooms, spoken to by the reviewers, were able to articulate what the emblem meant and that they model the school motto by "following the footsteps of Jesus".

The school has a strong sense of community and tradition. Some families are second generation at the school. The Principal and teachers know every child by name and older children look after younger ones. Parents commented that they liked the school because it was small and friendly. The love, warmth and happiness of the children was an aspect of the school which the reviewers found most compelling and was testament to the school's child centred approach. The Board of Trustees commented that the teachers were at the school because it was "their vocation, not just a job". They were dedicated and passionate about their work at the school.

"Whatever we do, the child is at the centre".

(Staff questionnaire)

St Pius X Catholic School's entrance foyer and corridors depict the Special Catholic Character through colourful and attractive displays and symbols. The displays in the entrance foyer were relevant to the current work being done in classrooms. A new school sign erected at the school gate clearly states that St Pius X is a 'Catholic' school.

LEADERSHIP

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

The Principal of St Pius X Catholic School is a first time Principal who has successfully led the school for 4 years. The Board of Trustees acknowledged his commitment and passion for providing a quality Catholic education that is relevant to the students of St Pius X and is evident in his words and actions. He reports monthly to the Board of Trustees against the Strategic Plan, including Special Catholic Character, and supplements this with a report which includes statistics and achievement data, a diary of events and celebrations, issues and concerns.

The strong Catholic leadership of the Principal was affirmed by the Board of Trustees. Board members commented that the student achievement results and the behaviour of the students was testament to this leadership and ensuring the dignity of each and every person was his strength. The Principal supports families with welfare and immigration issues where needed.

"Seeing the Principal as a Special Minister at Masses and giving the "homily" at Prizegiving is powerful."

(Board of Trustees interview)

The Board of Trustees is ably led by a Chairperson who has the Catholic Special Character at heart. The Board members who met with the reviewers were able to express how the school's Catholic Special Character impacts on their role of governance.

"Every decision that we make must reflect the footsteps of Jesus. It has to benefit the whole child. We want to ensure that St Pius is truly Catholic in what we do"

(Board of Trustees Questionnaire)

The Board is stable and committed to the development of the school. They consult with the school community regularly mainly through discussions at parent/teacher meetings and informally within the parish.

The Board of Trustees have all participated in regular training with the School Trustees Association, Ministry of Education, Board of Trustee Forums for the Manaiakalani cluster and Catholic Education Services workshops. It is suggested that the Board consider having a page on the school website where families can go for information and reports.

A Special Character Committee consists of the Parish Priest, the Principal, the Director of Religious Studies and one Proprietor's Representative. They meet monthly and report to the Board of Trustees. They ensure that Catholic Special Character compliances and self reviews are implemented and completed in a timely manner.

The Parish Priest is new to the parish however he has already established a strong relationship with the school and was observed by the reviewers teaching a song in one classroom as part of his weekly visits.

The Board of Trustees report regularly to parents through the "Board Talk". The school newsletter provides information and notices relevant to parents and is posted in the school and church foyers. The Principal informs parents, through the school newsletter, of the work being done in classrooms in Religious Education. It is suggested that more background information for parents may be helpful as the school does not distribute the "Whanau" book. Relevant parts of the Whanau book could be used in newsletters.

STEWARDSHIP

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

The Board of Trustees recognise their responsibility to ensure that Catholic Special Character permeates the whole curriculum and the school environment. They understand that partnership with the Parish is an important aspect in developing an effective school environment. The Parish and school see themselves as one.

St Pius X Catholic School has begun to put all documentation online, in fitting with the elearning vision for the school. The reviewers would like to commend the Principal for the presentation of documents in such a 'cutting edge' fashion.

The Charter and Strategic plan has a very strong Catholic Special Character content in the Vision, Mission Statement and Strategic goals. The Mission statement "Excellence in education: working together as a Catholic community" is evidence of the commitment to partnership.

Strategic goal reports, including Special Character, elearning and literacy and numeracy, are presented to the Board of Trustees by the senior management team annually. A thorough Religious Education report is presented by the Director of Religious Studies each year as part of the school's self review process.

The Staff Handbook is online with all other documents pertaining to the Special Catholic Character, however if the handbook were viewed independently it should be noted that it has no reference to the Special Catholic Character of the school. It is suggested that some information on the charism, ethos of the school, prayer and devotion expectations be added to this document. New teachers are inducted into the Special Character of the school by their team leaders and the Director of Religious Studies. An induction is planned for the new Board of Trustee members after the 2013 elections. The prospectus and enrolment pack for the school provides clear and concise information about the Special Catholic Character of the school.

As a response to the 2009 External Special Catholic Character Review recommendations all policies make reference to the Special Catholic Character of St Pius X Catholic School.

The process for self review is clearly defined, the process and outcomes of the self review are reported to the Board of Trustees annually by the Director of Religious Studies. This, along with the Proprietor Representatives report, written in collaboration with the whole Board, forms the Annual Report to the Proprietor. Recommendations and areas for development are discussed and either responded to immediately or added to the Strategic Plan. It was suggested that the Board of Trustees may choose to look in depth at one aspect of the dimension being reviewed rather than trying to cover a whole dimension in the year.

All staff had a specific goal for Special Catholic Character in their performance agreement. Professional standards for teachers include a Special Character section of standards and indicators.

PRAYER AND WORSHIP

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

On the first day of the review, the reviewers were warmly welcomed with a liturgy which strongly reflected the Special Catholic Character and the many cultures that make up the school community. This welcome was led entirely and confidently by students. The children's reverence and participation showed their ease and familiarity with the practice of communal prayer. The Playgroup also attended this welcome and these children participated as part of the school.

The reviewers visited three classrooms at prayer time. These prayers were student led at all levels of the school. Most were based on traditional prayer, gospel reading, spontaneous prayer and singing. There was evidence of the teachers adding variety to the prayer sessions. Children were focused using candles, items relevant to the Religious Education focus, cultural items and bibles placed on a cloth appropriate to the liturgical season. The school also prays the School Prayer together each morning at the 'morning line up'.

Staff prayer is held on a Monday morning before school and teachers are rostered to prepare this. Each weekly school assembly begins with a prayer which classes are rostered to prepare.

Each week a class attends the regular Friday morning Parish Mass. Special School Masses and liturgies are held throughout the year for Soul Friends, Ash Wednesday, Mothers and Grandparents

Day, St Pius X, the feast of Margaret Aylward, St Patrick's Day and the Year 8 Leavers Mass etc. A Special Mass is planned after the Board of Trustee elections to welcome and bless the new Board members. The Director of Religious Studies plans and organises all school Masses. In Term 4 the syndicates celebrate Mass together. Once per year the school and parish celebrate a combined Sunday Mass.

All Sacramental programmes are organised and implemented by the Parish. The school shares in these celebrations through the close partnership between parish and school.

The New Entrant classroom has a 'Prayer Basket' which is sent home with children to encourage family prayer. The basket contains a cloth, light, rosary beads, prayer cards etc. Parents spoke positively about having the prayer basket in their homes. The children were keen to show the basket and explain how they used it at home.

A designated space in the school was designed by the school community as a Prayer Grotto. Children spoke of using this space in their own time to pray. The children respect the space as a special place for quiet reflection. It is suggested that classes sometimes use the grotto as a place for class prayer to encourage its use more regularly.

The Year 8 children go on a leadership retreat each year at the St Francis Retreat Centre.

"Both my children pray each night with absolute faith they are being heard".

"Reading the gospel at school before the Sunday Mass is excellent, they know it before we go to Mass"

(Parent questionnaire)

SOCIAL JUSTICE

The school promotes social justice.

St Pius X Catholic School provides many opportunities, including Social Justice Week, for the students to develop an awareness of others, of issues in and beyond their immediate community and empathy for those who are hurt and suffering and it contributes to raising awareness and action for justice within the school and the wider community. Caritas resources are used regularly as part of the teaching programme.

"We celebrate the Social Justice Week through prayer, use Caritas material to invoke awareness, compassion and caring for those that are treated unfairly."

(Staff questionnaire)

The Director of Religious Studies has begun to establish links with St Peter Chanel School in Tonga, so the children can identify and understand the struggle of life for these children. In Lent the school collected for the Caritas Appeal and invited a speaker from Caritas to address the children. The school participates in Mufti Mania each year and collected for the Christchurch Earthquake appeal.

A Holy Faith scholarship is awarded by the school to one child each year at the Prizegiving ceremony to support the payment of school fees.

COLLABORATION WITH THE PARISH

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

The Parish of St Pius X, Glen Innes welcomes the school's presence.

"The School and Parish are one".

(Parishioner comment)

The Board of Trustees sees having the Parish Priest interested and supportive, as very relevant to the school/parish relationship. The Parish Priest, who is new to the parish this year, is also a member of the Board of Trustees and is on the Special Character committee. He visits a classroom each week and participates in all school events. He is very aware of the needs of the children and endeavours to make the Sacraments and liturgies relevant to them. He is keen to become more involved in school activities.

One of the Holy Faith Sisters and some parishioners come to the school on a regular basis to support the reading programme and work with the children. Some parishioners give sponsorship for children in need. The school supports the St Vincent de Paul group and they in turn support the school when needed.

Many of the Board of Trustees members are parishioners. The Principal or Board of Trustees Chairperson regularly attends Parish Council meetings. The Parish supports the funding of the Pastoral Worker based at the school. The school has full use of the Parish hall and all parish amenities.

The school newsletters are posted in the Church foyer and the Parish newsletter includes school notices. The school supports the Parish fair and other fundraising activities.

St Pius X children are trained by parishioners as altar servers for parish and school Masses and the school musicians and liturgy choir participate in school/parish Masses. The Parish Youth Group numbers are increasing and parents and Board of Trustee members commented that they felt it was because of the work done at the school encouraging prayer, continued faith development and strong links with the Parish.

"We are a very caring community. People are accepted and supported. We have very strong links with the St Pius X Parish".

(BOT questionnaire)

AREAS FOR CATHOLIC COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- That the school website include a Board of Trustees page.
- That some information on the charism, ethos of the school, prayer and devotion expectations be added to the Staff Handbook.

- That the Principal uses relevant excerpts from the “Whanau Book” to inform parents with background knowledge of the Strands being taught.
- That Special Catholic Character components be added to the Staff Handbook.
- That teachers regularly take their classes to the grotto for prayer to encourage its continued independent use.

PASTORAL CARE: **Manaakitanga**

The school community nurtures, supports and cares for individuals.

RELATIONSHIPS

The school is a friendly, welcoming, co-operative learning environment where the dignity of each person is respected

As visitors to the school, the reviewers experienced warm and generous hospitality from all members of the school community. It was evident that the school has a strong history. Parents commented that the school had a strong sense of “community and belonging”.

The Board of Trustees, staff, parents and Parish happily work together with respect and co-operation to provide a nurturing environment. Parents acknowledged that teachers were passionate, approachable and respectful to them and their children. All teachers had a warm and caring relationship with the children.

The school has an inclusive environment where all students are acknowledged for their special talents. They work closely with a variety of outside agencies including Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) and the Health Nurse to develop Individual Education Plans for those who need it. The Reading Recovery and Rainbow Reading programmes are implemented to support students.

A Pastoral Worker is employed to liaise with parents, children, the school and parish. She works tirelessly to support families and link them to the appropriate agencies. She works on truancy, behaviour, welfare and financial issues with confidentiality and discretion. A fluent speaker of Samoan, Tongan and English with strong links to the parish and school, she is able to support families to maintain their pride and dignity. She also runs the Playgroup and a holiday programme in the Parish hall. Many examples of support and kindness to staff and families were discussed with the reviewers during their visit and the school is to be commended for the huge amount of work they do discreetly for those in need.

St Ignatius Parish, St Heliers provides support for many families at the school, providing breakfast foods and sponsorship to those in need. St Pius X Catholic School also has strong links with its neighbouring Catholic schools St Michael’s, Remuera, St Patrick’s, Panmure and St Mark’s, Pakuranga. It also has a good relationship with the secondary schools it contributes to. The school community is proud of the successes of their past pupils, many of whom have become prefects and leaders in their secondary schools.

Children enjoy having ‘Soul Friends’ and the idea of older children helping younger ones was very evident across the school. The children commented that they had good relationships and respect for their teachers and that the teachers are “*kind, they talk to us and treat us like their own children*”.

St Pius X Catholic School is a member of the Tamaki cluster of schools who work very closely together and share resources. They are also founding members of the Manaiaakalani cluster of schools who work together with the Ministry of Education and the Manaiaakalani Trust to provide 'cutting-edge' technology and 21st century pedagogy for teaching and learning.

The school is one of the few schools in New Zealand with a Holy Faith charism and it retains a strong relationship with the remaining Holy Faith Sisters in Glen Innes. They are invited regularly to the school to share in celebrations and events.

A group of Marist Brothers have formed a boy's group for Year 7 and 8 boys. They meet weekly after school for two terms doing jobs around the school and parish grounds, playing sport and having fun. They support the teachers at the school camp and act as excellent father figures and role models for the boys.

ORGANISATION

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

During the review visit, the reviewers heard of the many times care and support was given to families and individuals. The strong relationship between the Pastoral Worker, the school and parish were cited as reasons for the excellent organisation for pastoral care. Visits to homes, prepared meals, flowers/cards sent, help with transport, clothing etc are all organised discreetly and for as long as necessary.

BI-CULTURAL COMMITMENT

The school is committed to the Treaty of Waitangi.

St Pius X Catholic School recognises the importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi / The Treaty of Waitangi and the status of Maori as Tangata Whenua. There are no Maori children in the school at present, however Te Reo was used in the welcome for the reviewers and time is allocated in some classroom timetables for Maori language teaching and learning.

In response to the 2009 External Special Catholic Character Review recommendations there was evidence of Maori language in some classroom displays and a Maori overview has been developed to encourage teachers to teach Te Reo and Tikanga Maori in their classrooms.

The school plans to consult with the Maori community twice per year, however this has not happened recently as there are no Maori families at the school. Five teachers have completed the Maori Spirituality course.

CULTURAL AWARENESS

The school recognises and honours cultural diversity.

St Pius X Catholic School has a predominantly Pacific Island roll. Teachers are very careful to pronounce children's names correctly and honour the cultural diversity within their classrooms. Children are encouraged to share prayers in their own and others' native language in the classroom and at Masses.

There was a strong Pasifika presence in all classroom and foyer displays, especially in the Religious Education focus. As many children are second language learners and some new to New Zealand the teaching programmes are planned to cater for their specific needs. The Pasifika staff members share their expertise and experience with the school community.

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Discipline processes are just, compassionate, respectful and consistent.

Parents interviewed by the Reviewers commented that there was a noticeable difference between the behaviour of their children and those of other schools in the community. They discussed how the excellent behaviour management in the school was one of the reasons they had chosen St Pius X Catholic School for their children.

The school has taught a Virtues programme since 2007 which has been integrated across the curriculum. The Director of Religious Studies has begun to highlight the virtues relevant to each Religious Education Strand and Module for ease of integration.

A Peace Zone is identified in each classroom for children who need to think about their actions and a Peace Room was established in 2007 as a time out zone at lunchtime. It is a quiet place where children can go if they cannot manage themselves in class or on the playground. It has proved successful for discipline as well as pastoral care for some children. The Associate Principal runs the programme and talks to the children about appropriate behaviour. There is a "3 strikes" policy before a restorative meeting is called with parents and children.

A post box has been introduced as a way for children to self refer confidentially. The future plan is for Peace Officers to be trained in peer mediation and to support teachers with issues in the playground.

Restorative justice is used for all behaviour management throughout the school and children are asked "What would Jesus do?" Children are rewarded for positive behaviour with "Caught Being Good" awards and Virtues certificates.

"The strength of this school is how they deal with God's special ones. It is sometimes hard, messy and difficult but it is our job as Catholics".

(Parent comment)

Leadership opportunities are provided throughout the school. All children are given the opportunity to lead prayer and act as monitors in their own classrooms. The Year 8 children are all expected to take on leadership roles as wet day monitors, road patrol monitors and librarians. SPX TV, a weekly television programme written and produced by the students in the senior school to celebrate the week's events, also provides opportunities for leadership. The Year 8 retreat each year focuses on leadership roles and responsibilities. All Year 8 children may apply for an Honours Badge for exceptional leadership. Those who meet the specific criteria are presented with a badge at a presentation ceremony. Parents are invited to the presentations.

Te Rangitira is a newly established group for Year 6 to 8 children who have a talent for leadership. This was initiated to encourage responsibility, confidence and service. The children applied and were nominated by teachers and interviewed for a place in the group. So far they have organised a basketball tournament between classes and a rubbish squad to ensure the school environment is tidy. They formed a quiz group to play against St Ignatius School and then ran a quiz at school.

SERVICE

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

Many opportunities are provided for children to give service to their school and community. They act as altar servers at school and Parish Masses and help with hospitality when needed. They support the Parish fundraising activities and help parents to fundraise for school projects. Gold coin mufti days and donating food for the foodbank are regular events.

The children raise money for their own camps and activities. They have sausage sizzles, discos, stalls etc. They participate annually in Mufti Mania and emergency appeals such as the Christchurch Earthquake and the Pacific Island tsunami and tornadoes. They enter "Jump Rope for Heart" to raise money for the Heart Foundation.

The school choir and music groups entertain the elderly at the annual Grandparents Day and visits to Grace Joel and Mercy Parklands rest homes to sing Christmas Carols. They also sing at Parish funerals when asked.

The Marist Brother's Boys group serve the school and Parish community by gardening and cleaning up the grounds and local reserves.

AREAS FOR PASTORAL CARE DEVELOPMENT

- Continue to develop the Te Rangitira leadership programme.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: Te Whakaakoranga Whakapono

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

LEADERSHIP

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

The Director of Religious Studies has taught at St Pius X Catholic School, Glen Innes for 7 years. She works collaboratively with the Principal, staff and Parish personnel to ensure that a strong partnership exists between the school and parish. Her calm approach to the job ensures that professional development, liturgies and other important religious occasions are carried out effectively. She is a valued member of the Senior Management Team and ensures the Special Catholic Character is maintained in all work and decisions.

The Director of Religious Studies plans and prepares all full school Masses and celebrations. She supports new teachers to the school and teachers new to Catholic schools with guidance and resources. She is very aware of the non preference children and families new to the school. An induction programme is implemented for them which includes a visit and tour of the Church and discussion of the induction booklet presented to them about prayer and school expectations.

The Director of Religious Studies in collaboration with the Principal designs, implements and reports on the findings of the Special Catholic Character internal review each year. The findings are discussed with the Board of Trustees and recommendations are included in the Strategic Plan. This report is included in the Proprietor Representative's annual report to the Bishop. The Director of Religious Studies, with the Principal, also updates the Special Character section of the Strategic Plan monthly for the Principal's Board report.

Release time is provided to the Director of Religious Studies for one and a half hours per week. She meets regularly with the Principal to keep him informed and to discuss issues when necessary. She observes a prayer session in each classroom each term and she observes a Religious Education session in each room once per year. She looks at all teachers' Religious Education planning and their evaluations are collected by her each term, relevant comments are made where necessary.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM *The Religious Education programme is professionally delivered.*

The classroom, foyer and corridor displays throughout the school are evidence that Religious Education has a high status at St Pius X Catholic School. The Religious Education Curriculum is very full, the strands and modules are well covered and the Special Catholic Character is being integrated into some topic studies.

The St Pius X Catholic School Curriculum Handbook has a Religious Education section which clearly outlines the expectations for Religious Education teaching and learning. The Director of Religious Studies has posted online many documents and statements related to the Special Catholic Character of the school. This is a work in progress and will be developed over time.

Each term the overview plans for 1 week of Prayer, 1 week of Charism and Strand /Module work. Staff plan the Strand overviews co-operatively and individual teachers plan for the Year level/s they teach. The junior team (Y1-4) use a planning sheet consistent with other curriculum areas. Specific achievement objectives, learning experiences and assessment tasks were evident in some of these plans. The senior team (Y5-8) plan online using a Religious Education Google Site for each classroom. The Year 5 to 8 children all have an individual one-to-one device and all planning, activities and assessment tasks are posted on the Site for children to access. This planning was set out clearly, well integrated, organised and linked to resources.

In the junior team the children responded to their learning by using worksheets from the original 'student workbooks' or writing and drawing activities. The children's Religious Education books were beautifully presented and the children were very proud of their work and could articulate what they had done and learned. In the senior team the Religious Education pedagogy was being developed to better suit the use of one-to-one devices and to continue the 'Learn, Create, Share, Reflect' pedagogy used in all other curriculum areas. In this team there was evidence of differentiated teaching and strong student voice. The children created a response or a reflection of their learning and posted this onto their own individual blog so it could be shared. The children were very keen to show the reviewers their slideshows, films and writing. All children were engaged in their learning and worked individually, in pairs or small groups. They were very proud of their work and were able to articulate what they had learned. The school is encouraged to continue to develop the pedagogy used in Religious Education across the school and to align it with pedagogy used in other curriculum areas.

In response to the 2009 External Special Catholic Character review recommendations the Year 8 curriculum is being used in conjunction with the Year 7 curriculum because of the composite class structure. A 'teacher inquiry' approach to Religious Education would see teachers planning for the needs of the children and from an over-arching key idea within the Strand levels. This approach could be used to ensure that children leaving St Pius X were fully prepared for Religious Education at Year 9.

The reviewers were impressed with the independence and self management of the senior students, especially in leadership roles and in the use of the technology. The children were proud of their blogs and the teachers commented that many past pupils still used their blogs and continued to comment on the children's work.

Assessment tasks seen in teacher planning by the reviewers were relevant to the achievement objectives. They were either put into the children's Religious Education books or on their blogs with teacher comments. Assessment data for Religious Education was not collated consistently across the school and it is suggested that this information may be stored in the school's Student Management System along with other curriculum data.

The learning environments were all vibrant and the displays were relevant to the Religious Education Strand being covered and had a strong 'Catholic' flavour. Teachers made good use of the digital resources and interactive whiteboards.

INTEGRATED CURRICULUM

Catholic teaching is integrated with other curriculum areas.

At St Pius X Catholic School the topic work is planned under an over-arching theme each year. In 2013 the theme is "Embracing Others", Term 1 focus is Social Justice, Term 2 is Water, Term 3 is Diversity and Term 4 is Celebration. From the planning of the senior school inquiry it was evident that the teaching and learning was implemented from a Catholic perspective:

"Context: Embracing Others

Thinking: How can we treat others with fairness and respect? What would Jesus do?

Big Idea: Be fair, be just, do what's right.

Being Catholic: St Pius X students will experience and participate in the faith and practices of the Catholic Church."

(Senior school Inquiry planning document)

The next step for the school would be to ensure that these ideas were obvious in all classroom displays and included in the students' response to their learning.

St Pius X Catholic School is a Health Promoting School and promotes eating healthy food and being Sunsmart. The integration of the 'Myself and Others' Module into the Health Curriculum ensures a Catholic perspective. The Pubertal Change programme is delivered each year by an external provider who has worked in Catholic Schools for many years. Parents are consulted beforehand and can be part of the programme. The school Health Nurse regularly attends Home/School Partnership meetings.

The school is aware of the environment and endeavours to provide opportunities for children to experience a variety of ways to care for God's creation. Children regularly plant vegetables and share in the gardening chores around the school grounds. A 'Butterfly Garden' has recently been planted to encourage the Monarch butterflies. There is a recycling programme for paper, plastic and cans in the school and the children are very aware of ensuring that all rubbish is put in the bins.

The Year 7 and 8 students attend either a camp or an outdoor activities week each year.

RESOURCES

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

The school is well resourced and the Director of Religious Studies ensures that all classrooms have the necessary resources and items to deliver the Religious Education programme and provide an environment that reflects the Special Catholic Character.

The Religious Education Advisors have been asked to run staff meetings. The Board of Trustees completely funds the use of the Digital Resource across the school and interactive whiteboards are used effectively as a teaching tool in some classrooms.

The Holy Faith Sisters are an invaluable resource to maintain the charism of the school.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

The Director of Religious Studies is an excellent role model for teachers as she works towards a Diploma in Religious Studies stream Religious Education. She attends all the Director of Religious Studies workshops and the Conference each year. She presents a staff meeting once per term using the resources provided by the Religious Education Advisors. All teachers are expected to attend the Religious Education Cluster meetings three times per year.

Each teacher has a Special Character goal as part of the Performance Management programme which states that 12 hours of professional development in Religious Education is the expectation each year. The Principal has Endorsed Leadership Level certification, three teachers have Leadership level and should be encouraged to seek Endorsement in 2013. Two teachers are in a position to seek Classroom level and two teachers are working towards Classroom level. The Director of Religious Studies needs to ensure that the teachers who qualify for a new Certification level contact the Religious Education Advisors to complete the process.

All beginning teachers and teachers new to Catholic schools attend the professional development provided by the Diocese. The majority of the staff have completed the Diocesan "Understanding Sexuality" course. The Board of Trustees Chairperson, the Principal and two senior staff members attended the Catholic Convention in Wellington in 2012.

The Principal reports to the Board of Trustees on all Religious Education Professional Development each month. The Principal attends principal development days and the ACPPA conference.

Additional information was collected during the review in an area of special national interest, namely professional development in Catholic Character and Religious Education.

COMMUNICATION

The school communicates with parents/caregivers about Religious Education.

In response to the 2009 External Special Catholic Character Review the Principal shares his faith through the school newsletters, he includes some explanations about Liturgical seasons, feasts and informs parents of the current Strand topic. The next step for the school would be to include some information from the Parent/whanau booklet on each Strand as background information for parents.

The school has a website which could be developed to provide more information for parents on the school charism and the Religious Education programme. The senior children post their Religious Education work on their blogs which can be accessed by parents. The junior children take home their Religious Education book each term to share their work with parents.

The fortnightly school newsletter is displayed in the Church and the school foyer. Parents are informed of the Religious Education programme and children's progress at Home/School Partnership

meetings. They have many opportunities to be involved in the school by attending Masses, liturgies and special events.

AREAS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

- To continue to develop the online Religious Education documentation and resources.
- To continue to develop the pedagogy used in Religious Education across the school and to align it with pedagogy used in other curriculum areas.
- That Religious Education Assessment information may be stored in the Student Management System along with other curriculum data.
- To ensure that the thinking, big idea and Catholic perspective of the over-arching theme were obvious in all classroom displays and included in the students' response to their learning.
- The Director of Religious Studies needs to ensure that the teachers who qualify for a new Certification level contact the Religious Education Advisors to complete the process.

CONCLUSION

St Pius X Catholic School, Glen Innes provides a child-centred, nurturing learning environment that focuses on the whole child and the achievement of excellence. The spiritual and academic leadership of the Principal, a dedicated staff and the close links with the St Pius X Parish together combine to form a successful Catholic community. The Holy Faith charism and values provide the school with an ethos that permeates school life.

The children spoken to by the reviewers were living testament that the school is achieving what the community aspires to in their Vision:

"The St Pius X students will have faith in their knowledge and skills, fulfil their personal best in hope and relate to the world in love".

The children are confident, happy and engaged in their learning. Along with their families they are proud members of the St Pius X school community.

"St Pius School gives my children the opportunity to grow in their faith"

"It is everything we do to live a Catholic way of life. Our children are rewarded with Virtues Certificates when they show Catholic behaviour and we try to live like that at home too".

"I believe that St Pius School is helping my son spiritually, because the knowledge he has gained in the short time he has been at the school is very much visible through his actions within the family."

(Parent survey comments)



Neil Laurensen
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