

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF AUCKLAND

Catholic Schools Office

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Proverbs 4:13

File Ref: 5/15

10 October 2016

The Chairperson
Board of Trustees
St Leo's Catholic Primary School
P O Box 32064
Devonport
AUCKLAND 0744

Dear Jodi,

The Confirmed Catholic Special Character External Review Report is enclosed. It is now being forwarded to Bishop Pat and the New Zealand Catholic Education Office.

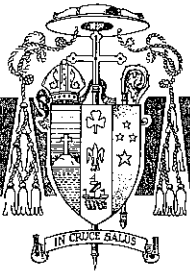
Congratulations to the Board of Trustees, staff and community on the fine standards of Catholic Special Character evident at St Leo's Catholic Primary School Devonport. Thank you for the welcome and co-operation of all during the Review process. We appreciated the openness and assistance offered to us. It was a privilege to be present with your school community.

May God bless the Board of Trustees and staff, as you continue to provide quality Catholic Education for the children and families at St Leo's Catholic Primary School.

Yours sincerely,

Colleen Gleeson
Review and Development Officer

Copy: The Principal



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**CATHOLIC SPECIAL CHARACTER
EXTERNAL REVIEW REPORT**

*Te Purongo Kaupapa Arotake Mo Nga Ahuatanga
Katorika*

**ST LEO'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY
SCHOOL, DEVONPORT**

3-4 AUGUST, 2016

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name: St. Leo's Catholic Primary School

Address: 102 Victoria Rd, Devonport, Auckland 0624

School Type: Contributing for Boys and Girls Years 1-6

Principal: Mrs Elizabeth Walker

Director of Religious Studies: To be advertised

Board of Trustees Chairperson: Mrs Jodi Gill

Parish Priest: Fr John Fitzmaurice

Reviewers: Colleen Gleeson
Philip Mahoney

Accompanying Principal: Mr Paul Coakley

Current Roll: 84

Report Confirmed: October 4, 2016

Introduction

St Leo's Catholic Primary School, Devonport welcomed and embraced the opportunity for review and development. The Board of Trustees, Principal, staff, parents, students and parish community warmly welcomed the reviewers and all shared openly their thoughts and opinions.

Situated on the North Shore of Auckland, this school is on a corner opposite the St Francis and All Souls Church, Devonport. The site also houses the parish/school hall. Devonport is a small village linked to the city by ferry and there is one road into the village.

Response to Areas for Development and Recommendations from the 2012 External Review

In Term 1 each year all students spend time learning about the Saint their room is called after, and the namesake of their school, St Leo.

- Each class celebrates its Saint with a shared lunch and activities related to the Saint on the specific feast day.
- St Leo is celebrated by the whole school in mid November with a school Mass followed by activities about St Leo and the history of the school.
- All Saints Day is celebrated with children choosing their favourite Saint, researching and sharing information about their Saint with others.
- More books have been purchased for the school library about Saints.

Rite 2 Reconciliation be provided for school students once or twice per year during Lent and/or Advent.

- All eligible children attend Rite 2 Reconciliation in Lent.

A Special Character goal be developed for each teacher to be appraised.

- In 2016 all teachers have the Special Character goal of continued professional development in the form of taking a paper at The Catholic Institute of Aotearoa for their own personal faith development.

Future reviews on the Religious Education dimension should include a more rigorous and in-depth look at Religious Education teaching and learning in each classroom which include Prayer session and Religious Education lesson observations in each classroom followed by feedback and feed-forward to each teacher.

- The school has tried many different ways to collect data for their self reviews. They are very aware that the way they collect data must be specific and relevant to the area they are reviewing.

The Director of Religious Studies to observe a prayer session and Religious Education lesson in each classroom at least once per year and provide feedback and feedforward.

- The Director of Religious Studies observes each teacher taking a Religious Education lesson and a prayer session each year. She gave verbal feedback to each teacher.

Significant areas of Special Catholic Character Development since the last review are:

- A variety of types of prayer are now used in classrooms. All teachers teach the prayer module and had many resources in their planning folders to guide and support many types of prayer.
- Religious Education assessment has developed and all classes complete a pre and post assessment task before and after each Strand.
- The school employed a specialist Maori tutor in 2013 to 2015. In 2016 teachers are using what they have learned to continue Te Reo and Tikanga Maori throughout the school. Teachers were found to be giving instructions and affirmation in Maori, Maori prayers were used throughout the school and Maori vocabulary was visible in every classroom.
- All teachers are using an effective pedagogy in Religious Education, now working in the 'teacher inquiry' model using a formative teaching approach.
- The children's Religious Education journals are evidence that more creative responses to children's learning are encouraged.
- A draft Health Curriculum statement has just been completed by the Principal and Board of Trustees which includes the "Myself and Others" module. A consultation meeting was held prior to the "Keeping Ourselves Safe" programme being delivered with discussion on a Catholic Perspective used as a filter for all Health programmes.

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.

Areas of Success

Building a stronger spirituality has been a focus of St Leo's Catholic School, Devonport for the 2016 year. Spirituality is very evident in the way the staff and students relate to each other, welcome visitors and support each other and the wider community. Three teachers have undertaken a Spirituality paper this year at The Catholic Institute of Aotearoa. The small size of the school allows it to be very nurturing and has a family atmosphere.

The school is evangelising to the students and their families and building formation in the staff. The school proclaims the mission and Gospel of Jesus Christ and provides a place to encounter the living God. The school encourages all eligible children to join the Sacramental programmes delivered by the parish and some parents have also taken the opportunity to join the Sacramental programmes themselves. The Parish Priest encourages all children who receive Eucharist and Confirmation to be trained as altar servers for the school and Parish. This initiative has been very successful with an increase in families attending Sunday Mass.

The Principal has led the school for two years as a first time Principal. She is supported by a strong Deputy Principal who shares the Principal's vision for the school. Her practical and efficient manner has seen the school change over the past three years in its approach to teaching and

learning and the collaboration of staff. The Board of Trustees, Parish Priest, parents and teachers spoke highly of her leadership.

The Principal, Staff and Board of Trustees work to build strong relationships with families, the Parish and the wider community. Parent participation is encouraged and has grown through an active PTFA who organise a balance between raising funds for the school and building community. They meet monthly to organise sausage sizzles, discos, movie night, the school fair and socials events for parents on Mothers and Fathers days. A Board of Trustees member, the Principal and Deputy Principal attend all PTFA meetings.

St Leo's Catholic School has a calm, quiet and family oriented atmosphere. The school is trialling the idea of no bells which reinforces the quietness and this has been most successful. The signage, foyer and corridor displays and exterior grounds visually reflect the Special Catholic Character of the school.

St Leo's Catholic School is an authentic Catholic community where Mercy values are central, faith is nourished and Catholic celebration is highly valued. This is evident in:

- The deliberate display of the school values in every classroom. Values are unpacked each term and regularly referred to. The 'Spirit Award' is presented fortnightly to a child who always lives by the Mercy values.
- Student knowledge of the school's Mercy charism, the Saints the classrooms are named after and St Leo, the patron.
- A clear vision of what a graduate from St Leo's looks like using 'Mercy Values' in an acrostic version of the attributes of a graduate.
- Monday morning prayer assembly, including reflection on the Sunday readings.
- Daily staff prayer and prayers before all meetings. The staff have a prayer intentions book which is referred to during prayer time.
- Each class attends a weekly Mass on Tuesdays and full school Masses are held on special feast days. A Parish and School Mass is held twice per year on a Sunday.
- New students are formally welcomed and are presented with a St Leo's candle at one of the Sunday family Masses.
- The school has a strong partnership with Carmel and Rosmini Colleges.
- Partnership with local Peninsula schools is evident eg. Cluster choral, speech and dance events and festivals, use of nearby school's swimming pool.

The School and Parish work closely together. The Parish Priest has morning tea with the staff each Wednesday morning and then visits one classroom. The school supports the Sacramental Programme at the Parish, with a small number of parents running the programme. Some of the teachers belong to the Parish and participate in the Parish programmes and are Ministers of the Word and the Eucharist. Parish and school personnel work closely together and share resources and facilities, they have a strong commitment to the common good. The Principal and a Proprietor Representative on the Board of Trustees attend Parish Council meetings.

"There is a very good sense of the school being a 'Parish school' and each feels comfortable in the others' space".

(Parish Survey comment)

Opportunities for Development

A variety of prayer styles are used throughout the classrooms and the prayer modules are used in classes. The children are reverent and respect the special times for prayer. Teachers could look at new ideas to focus children during prayer time to ensure they are engaged in listening and talking to God on a personal level.

A Prayer Kete could be re-established in each classroom to support Prayer and the home/school partnership for the Catholic education of each child.

The school could circulate the Sunday Mass Readings on a Friday afternoon to each family for discussion and reflection, to enrich the Monday Prayer assembly and the Sunday Mass for families.

Pastoral Care – Manaakitanga

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

Areas of Success

St Leo's Catholic School nurtures, supports and cares for all individuals within its community. As visitors to the school, the reviewers experienced warm and generous hospitality from all members of the school community. Being a small school in a small community, all families know each other and there is a family atmosphere across the school. The Tuakana/Teina (older children caring for younger ones) relationships come naturally to children. The relationships modelled by the adults in the school community is reflected in the happy relationships of the children. Staff are affirmed and work happily as a team, support staff felt valued and communication was open and transparent. The relationships and collegiality within the school was seen by all as a strength of the school.

St Leo's Catholic School is very responsive with pastoral care. In this small community people know when help is needed and tend to support those in need quickly and effectively. Each family is asked, on enrolment, what they are able to do to support with transport, meals, uniforms etc. The school secretary ensures that all needs are met. The reviewers were told of many situations where this care and support was provided.

The school has an inclusive environment where all children are acknowledged for their special God-given talents. The school provides Reading Recovery, STEPS and ESOL programmes. They work closely with a variety of outside agencies including specialists for ORS funded and special needs children.

The St Leo's Catholic School community recognises the importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the status of Maori as Tangata Whenua. A specialist Maori Tutor was employed until the recently, supporting teachers with Te Reo and Tikanga Maori and taking each class weekly for Te Reo. Some staff have attended Te Reo courses and The Maori Spirituality course. Teachers are now teaching their own class Te Reo and integrating Maoritanga into all curriculum areas. There was evidence of the Maori language in classroom displays and teacher instructions. A Kapa Haka group was established by a group of parents who have since moved on. This group performed at the Peninsula Kapa Haka Festival two years ago. The school is seeking outside support to re-establish the group.

The school has a diverse cultural mix including Pacific Island, French, German, Italian and Spanish. Children are encouraged to share their culture and language with others. The Sign of the Cross and prayers are said in different languages. Cultural items are on display throughout the school.

St Leo's Catholic School provides many opportunities for the students to develop an awareness of others, of issues in and beyond their immediate community and an empathy for those who are hurt and suffering. They raise money for Caritas charities and invite Caritas speakers to address the school, donate food and goods for the Parish foodbank and have mufti days or fundraising for countries in crisis, such as Syria and Fiji. The children were made aware of the plight of others on a very successful "Solidarity Day" where they ate only rice for lunch, dressed in second hand clothes and built shelters. Each year before Christmas, the school collects presents for the elderly in the Parish and for children at a low decile Auckland school. Children often initiate an activity to support a cause they feel strongly about.

St Leo's Catholic School provides leadership opportunities throughout the school. All children are given the opportunity to lead prayer and act as monitors in their own classrooms. The senior students apply for positions as Whanau Group, Enviro and School Gen (Solar panel) Leaders. Others serve as monitors for wet days, road patrol, sports shed and librarians. The school has participated in the local community 'Beach Clean' each year and entertain older parishioners once per year with music and dance groups. Senior students work through a Merit Award system in Community, Sport, Cultural and Academic areas to earn badges.

The happy, positive relationships and calm learning-focussed environment of the school community removes most causes of disruptive behaviour and creates in children a willingness to co-operate and self-manage. The school encourages a high level of respect and dignity for all. Behaviour management is aligned to the school values and is based on a restorative justice approach.

Opportunities for Development

To ensure the continued development of Te Reo and Tikanga Maori across the school, a progressive curriculum for Maoritanga could be developed and all teachers could be expected to undertake the Maori Spirituality course.

Religious Education – Te Whakaakoranga Whakapono

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

Areas of Success

The Director of Religious Studies had recently resigned prior to the review visit. The Principal has assumed the duties of the Director of Religious Studies until the position is filled. Observations of the teaching and learning of Religious Education and prayer sessions were carried out in each classroom and verbal feedback was provided to teachers. The Director of Religious Studies provided support and guidance for teachers in planning and resources. A consistency across the school Religious Education programme, with clear guidelines on planning, pedagogy, assessment and expectations for classroom environments was evident. Pre and post assessments provide data

for differentiated teaching using a teacher inquiry model. The digital resource is planned for in some year levels and all teachers made use of the technology available to them. The learning environments were used as flexible spaces and the Religious Education displays were relevant to the Strand being covered.

Students record their learning responses in a Religious Education journal. Teachers are using creative ways to respond to learning. The Achievement Objectives for each strand are pasted into the books and at the end of each strand a comment sheet is included for teacher, student and parent comments.

The Principal and Board of Trustees have recently completed a draft Health Curriculum statement which includes the "Myself and Others" module to ensure a Catholic perspective. An information evening was recently held with the wider school community on the Health Curriculum, including the Keeping Ourselves Safe programme.

St Leo's Catholic School has Silver Award status as an Enviro school. They have vegetable gardens, a worm farm, butterfly garden, wasp traps, a water tank and solar panels on the roof. They recycle paper and food scraps.

Extra curricula activities are made available to children through:

- A specialist Music teacher who takes private tuition for a variety of instruments and takes a choir and ukulele group.
- A specialist Dance teacher takes private lessons each week and also takes a school group.
- A Year 6 students' Waterwise programme which includes sailing, kayak and boogie board rescues.

Professional development is provided for teachers through:

- Cluster meetings attendance,
- All teachers required to complete a paper in either Introduction to Spirituality or RE101 for new teachers.

One teacher has Leadership level Certification, one teacher has Classroom level and three teachers are eligible for Classroom level. There are four teachers working towards Classroom Level.

Communication from St Leo's Catholic School and the school community is through:

- The fortnightly school newsletter
- Emails, Facebook.
- An excellent website which includes messages from the Board of Trustees, PTFA and a link to the online Whanau book and the Parish.

Opportunities for Development

The newly appointed Director of Religious Studies needs to ensure that:

- Feedback to teachers is given verbally and in written form with discussion.
- Teacher planning, evaluation, assessment and student books are monitored.
- Religious Education staff meetings are held regularly.
- Integration of the Special Character into all curriculum areas is included at the planning stage and evident in the teaching and learning.

All staff should be expected to attend the Understanding Sexuality course and to work towards Certification levels with further professional development in Religious Education.

Stewardship and Compliance – Tuaritanga me te Hanganga Ture

The extent to which the Board of Trustees provides systems and processes to govern and comply with the school's Integration Agreement.

Areas of Success

Since the recent Board of Trustee elections a new Board has been formed with only one member from the previous Board. They see it as their "Catholic duty to make sure that every single one of our children gets the best education they possibly can as well as feeling safe, nurtured and happy in the school environment". They see the Special Catholic Character as being fundamental to all decision making. The Special Catholic Character sub-committee meet twice per term with the Principal and Director of Religious Studies. This committee runs the annual Special Character self-review programme and any special character events. The Board of Trustees communicate to the school community through a newsletter each term which appears on the school website. They have enlisted training with School Trustees Association and the Catholic Education Services as well as the North Shore Catholic Schools Cluster group induction for new Boards.

86% of the preference children in the school are Baptised Catholics. The school endeavours to work with the other 14% and encourage them to participate in the Sacramental programmes available in the Parish. The school is compliant with the 5% non-preference roll as stated in the Integration Agreement and the correct number of 'tagged/S65' teachers.

Opportunities for Development

As the Board of Trustees reviews each school policy they should ensure that the Special Catholic Character is embedded throughout the policy.

Each year the school should consider reviewing only one or two areas within the chosen Special Catholic Character dimension. Look to implement a rigorous review to provide relevant findings and a way forward for the school in the chosen area.

Recommendations

- The Mercy values of the school should be linked to Gospel stories and in particular the Parables.

- The Board of Trustees should look at sections of the 2014 NZ Bishop’s Conference booklet “The Catholic Education of School-Age Children” at each of their meetings to become familiar with it.

Conclusion

St Leo’s Catholic School provides a happy, cohesive Catholic learning environment. The school has committed staff, a good connection with the Parish, supportive families and children who love coming to school.

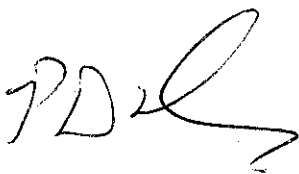
The senior children interviewed by the reviewers are living testament that the school is achieving what the community aspires to in their Mission Statement:

“Our Catholic School is part of a Christ centred community of faith, founded and guided by the enduring values of the Mercy tradition. Accordingly, we educate the whole child, promoting total development of mind, body and spirit, upholding both excellence and integrity amongst all students and in all school endeavours.”

The school provides many opportunities for each child to have a genuine and ongoing encounter with Christ, to grow in knowledge and understanding of Christ’s teaching and to live a life of Christian witness within the Catholic Church.

“The strong sense of community underpinned by the Catholic Character is what makes our little school unique”.

(Board of Trustee survey comment)



Philip Mahoney
Manager
Catholic Education Services



Colleen Gleeson
Review and Development Officer
Catholic Schools Office

Date: October 4, 2016