



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF AUCKLAND

**Pompallier Diocesan Centre,
30 New Street,
Ponsonby, Auckland 1144**

**ĀHUATANGA KATORIKA KAUPAPA
AROTAKE ME TO AHU WHAKAMUA**

**CATHOLIC SPECIAL CHARACTER
EXTERNAL REVIEW REPORT**

**MONTE CECILIA CATHOLIC SCHOOL
HILLSBOROUGH**

Review Visit: 23-24 October, 2019

Confirmed Report: May 2020

NGĀ WHĀINGA O TE AROTAKE - AIMS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

The New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference (NZCBC) wishes the review to show how effective the School is in handing on the faith and forming a new generation of Catholics; this includes evaluating the efficacy of Religious Education and how the whole School community engages in authentic Catholic Christian witness and evangelisation.

The External Review process is based on the requirements of the *Catholic Special Character Review for Development* (Draft) that came into effect at the end of 2017.

In the review, Schools are asked to consider and demonstrate the ways in which they provide for their students:

an encounter with Christ, *Te Tūtaki ki ā te Karaiti*
growth in knowledge, *Te Whakatupu mā te Matauranga*, and
the development of Christian witness, *te Whakaatu Karaitiana*.

The review also investigates stewardship, including stewardship of the relationship between the Church and the State, *Te Kaitiakitanga me te Whakapakari i te Tuakiri Katorika*.

Reviewers encourage and commend best practice, and work with the School to formulate opportunities to further strengthen and develop the Catholic culture.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

School Name:	Monte Cecilia Catholic School, Hillsborough	
Address:	34 Whitmore Rd, Mt Roskill, Auckland 1041	
Principal:	Mrs Michele Mill	
Director of Special Character:	Mrs Hanna Leigh	
Parish Priest:	Fr. Francis Poon	
BOT Chair:	Mr James Russell	
Reviewers:	Mrs. Colleen Gleeson, Mr Philip Mahoney	
Accompanying Principal:	Mrs Gina Benade	
School Type:	Year 1-6 (girls and boys)	
Ethnic Diversity:	Chinese 5%	Latin American 7%
	Indian 18%	Other Asian 9%
	NZ European 15%	Other Pacific Islands 5%
	Maori 2%	Other 3%
	Samoan 27%	
	Tongan 9%	

Introduction

Monte Cecilia Catholic School, Hillsborough had prepared themselves well for their Catholic Special Character External Review. The documentation provided, prior to the Review, presented a good overview of the school and the many activities in which it is involved. Considerable thought and time had gone into the completion of the Review Questionnaires as together they gave a very comprehensive picture of how the school lives its Catholic Special Character.

The Board of Trustees, Principal, staff, parents and students warmly welcomed the Reviewers and were happy to talk about their school, sharing their thoughts and opinions, and were open to any ideas as to where the school should move to next.

When reviewed in 2015 the school was preparing to leave the historic site on which it was built and move to a brand new purpose built site, which opened in 2016. It now sits adjoining the St John Vianney Church and Parish hall. The new site is now well established.

Response to Key Recommendations from the 2015 External Review

- ***The Board of Trustees, the Principal and staff work with a representative from the Sisters of Mercy to clarify the symbolism and significance of the Mercy charism.***

The school made contact with Sr Teresa Anderson rsm from Te Waka Tiaki Mission Team and she has been their “go to” person for information around the Mercy Sisters. The DRS has researched the history of the Mercy crest and the available information is shared on the school’s digital platform for ease of access for teachers.

- ***A new format for Performance Management will be developed to include a Special Catholic Character goal for each teacher.***

The Performance Management process includes clear guidelines for the special character of the school. Job descriptions have a Special Character section and each teacher has a set goal each year for appraisal. These could be enhanced using the draft “Standard for the Teaching Profession: Catholic Elaborations” found on the NZCEO website.

- ***A formal process for observations of Religious Education lessons and prayer sessions needs to be implemented and it is recommended that this begins as soon as possible.***

The Director of Religious Studies observes each teacher take a prayer session in Term 1 each year and observes Religious Education lessons in Term 2 and 3. Feedback is provided and follow-up observations are scheduled when needed.

- ***That the teachers’ Religious Education planning be monitored regularly to ensure consistency across the school.***

This year the Principal and Director of Religious Studies developed an integrated term planning template to be used by all teachers. Teachers are now collaboratively planning in their Hubs and beginning to come to terms with integration of Special Character through the whole curriculum and teaching Religious Education using the ‘Bridging Document’. This is a whole new piece of work which needs further development.

- ***That teachers comment on the child’s work in the Religious Education Journals, as well as the child and parent, and ensure that work is completed and presented with pride.***

The Religious Education Journals were marked by teachers with comments written to the child. They go home on a regular basis to share with parents.

- ***Because the Religious Education Journals are sent home regularly it is important that they are monitored regularly to ensure consistency across the school.***

This is in place and all teachers know the expectations for Faith Journals.

- ***That the school holds regular New Entrant Parent Orientation meetings where the Special Character of the school and the Religious Education Programme is discussed.***

The school now has a new student meeting each year and plans to do this twice per year going forward – depending on the numbers enrolled.

Response to Areas for Development from the 2015 External Review

- ***Further consideration be put into ensuring a formative approach to Religious Education and learning by teaching to identified needs.***

Teachers are using formative assessment strategies (pre-test, prior knowledge brainstorms and discussions) to inform planning for learning. In 2019 teachers are trialling teaching in levels rather than years.

- ***As teacher skill in formative teaching and learning is developed, the pedagogy used in other curriculum areas could also be used in the Religious Education programme.***

Teachers are becoming more confident to use the same pedagogy in Religious Education as in other curriculum areas. This will increase as they feel more comfortable with integration.

- ***That the school continue to develop creative ideas for teaching Religious Education and creating a wider variety of children’s response to learning.***

This has been addressed this year by all teachers as they have explored teaching Religious Education in curriculum levels and in response to student need.

- ***That the environmental programmes continue at the new site and could be written into an inquiry topic to reignite interest.***

Environmental themes and response to Laudato Si during inquiry learning is ongoing.

- ***The school plans to hold a parent workshop about Religious Education and the Special Character of the school.***

The Director of Religious Studies prepared a presentation about “What makes a Catholic School” with particular reference to Monte Cecilia Catholic School as part of her professional development learning this year. This presentation as well as the usual focus on Religious Education and Special Catholic

Character will be used to further educate parents and the wider community about the special ethos of the school.

Encounter with Christ – Te Tutaki ki a Te Karaiti

The School encourages and facilitates the development of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ who reveals the transforming love and truth of the living God.

Areas of Success

Monte Cecilia Catholic School, Hillsborough has a shared understanding of their Catholic spirituality. All members of the staff, Board of Trustees, parents, wider community and students, are able to articulate what it means to belong to Monte Cecilia. The spirituality is also evident in the way in which the staff, students and parents relate to each other and how visitors are welcomed at the front office and then by all staff and students. All staff are positive role models who support, uphold and witness the Catholic Character of the school.

Monte Cecilia has a strongly embedded Mercy Charism. They live by the three Mercy Pillars of Compassion, Care and Concern for the poor and vulnerable, Justice and Respect for Human Dignity and Service. Monte Cecilia's Core values of Truth, Respect, Integrity and Courage are evident and visible throughout the school. Students are awarded certificates at assembly for being seen living these values. The school promotes a weekly 'value', continually reminding students of these values and how to live by them. "Marvellous @ Monte" awards are given out at assemblies for positive attitudes based on the values.

Classroom prayers are a sacred and reverent time across the school. The prayers are varied and all teachers use audio visual equipment to support the theme, waiata and prayers. Students lead prayer where possible. The whole school says the Rosary each day through the month of October. Evidence of the relationship the students are developing with Jesus was found in the reverence students showed during prayers in general. Prayer kete are distributed from each classroom to one family each night, parents spoke very positively about having the experience of family prayer led by their children. Staff gather for prayer on a Monday morning before school. Staff are rostered to prepare the prayer. Up until the end of 2018 a parent prayer group (Mums and Dads in Touch) met each Tuesday at 9am to pray for special intentions. All meetings held at the school are begun with a prayer.

Monte Cecilia school combines with St John Vianney parish community for a Family Mass each term on a Sunday morning. It has been noticed that since these Masses were introduced there has been an increase in the number of school families attending Sunday Mass on a regular basis. A school Mass is held each term at which new families are welcomed into the school and parish. A Mass or a Liturgy is held on feast days and special occasions. Buddy classes take turns to attend the parish Mass each Friday. A Prayer Assembly is held each week, led by the senior students. Reconciliation for the school is scheduled for Advent and Lent each year. The Year 6 students attend a retreat at the Friary each year.

Walking into the school, it is very obvious you are in a Catholic school. The wall art and displays throughout the school all signify the Special Character of the school. There are plans for further development of Crosses to be set up around the playground as a reflective walk. This has begun with a large cross, brought from the old school site, being set up on the field. Other special momentos from the old school have been integrated into the new buildings or displayed in the school library. Plans for scripture stories to be depicted along the retaining wall have begun.

Monte Cecilia Catholic School supports the Sacramental programmes of the parish. The Parish Priest works closely with the Director of Religious Studies to set up regular class visits and more regular Masses. The Parish Priest is a member of the Board of Trustees. He enjoys being part of the everyday life of the school and is invited to all school functions and activities.

The Principal has been at Monte Cecilia for 6 years. She is very visible and knows all families. She is an experienced Principal and is supported in her role by a strong Senior Leadership Team which includes the Deputy Principal and the Director of Religious Studies. All are excellent positive role models who support, uphold and witness to the Special Catholic Character of the school. The Board of Trustees and parents who were interviewed spoke highly of the Principal and staff and how they are the face of Christ to the school community. The Principal is on the Parish Council and is a parishioner at St John Vianney Parish.

Next Steps

The Core Values could be linked to a gospel verse or parable to show that they are Mercy Values but they come from the teaching of Jesus.

Continue to introduce a variety of prayer types to the staff and students, in particular forms of meditation.

Monte Cecilia school and the parish could combine to introduce a Baptismal class, inviting 5.2 to 5.4 criteria students and non-preference students and their families to attend.

Retreats for staff and the Board of Trustees are being considered and should be looked at for 2020.

To re-institute sending invitations to the Sisters of Mercy to all school functions, Masses and celebrations.

Growth in Knowledge – Te Whakatupu ma te Matauranga

The School assists its community to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Jesus Christ, his teachings and the Catholic Church.

Areas of Success

The Director of Religious Studies was appointed to Monte Cecilia as Director of Religious Studies four years ago. She is supported in her role by a previous Director of Religious Studies at the school, another teacher who has also held this role at another school, and all other teachers.

The Director of Religious Studies has been provided with two hours per week release time. This needs to be carefully planned to support beginning teachers and teachers new to Catholic school with planning and implementation. She observes each teacher in Term 1 each year during a prayer session and in Term 2 and 3 she observes teachers taking a Religious Education lesson. She provides feedback to teachers and supports them where necessary. She is an active member of the Board of Trustees' Special Catholic Character committee and reports to the Board through the sub-committee reports. She communicates with parents through the 'DRS Korero' newsletter and through the parent portal with notices of events.

Most teachers are completing the required 12 hours of professional development every year. Since the 2015 review some teachers have completed the following papers towards a certificate in Religious Education teaching:

2016:	TH102	Introduction to Theology
2018:	RE502	Spirituality for Teachers
2019:	RE501	Religious Education Today

One teacher has Graduate Level Certification, three have Endorsed Leadership Certification, one has Leadership level, three have Classroom level and four are working towards Classroom level. Staff meetings led by the Director of Religious Studies have been held this year to discuss the new Religious Education Bridging document and the planning needed for change. Teachers are encouraged by the Director of Religious Education to attend cluster meetings and other professional development provided by the Religious Education Advisors.

The Religious Education Programme is timetabled appropriately across the school. Teachers use the “Faith Alive” resource to supplement the Religious Education Curriculum. Teachers use good formative teaching practice using clear learning intentions. Each student has a Religious Education journal for their learning responses. These are shared with parents regularly and parents comment on the work. Once per term parents are invited to a ‘Learning and Sharing’ time at the school to see and talk about their child’s work, including Religious Education.

The school is trialling a new planning sheet for integration of Special Character and Religious Education throughout the whole curriculum. As further work continues with the understanding of “The Religious Education Bridging Document”, the planning and implementation of Religious Education will develop.

There is a sense of Kaitiakitanga (culture of guardianship of God’s creation) evident in the pride the school community has in their gardens and environment. The school recycles, has a worm farm and gardens and is rubbish free, all children’s rubbish goes home.

The Health curriculum is set within the context of the Catholic Church. Three teachers have completed the “Understanding Sexuality” course and the school has planned for more teachers to complete the “Having Life to the Full” programme in 2020.

All classrooms were vibrant and effective learning environments and teachers have worked hard to make these exciting and a showcase for the work the children have completed. It was very obvious to the Reviewers that they were not only sound working environments, but that they were spaces that reflected the School’s Catholic Special Character.

Next Steps

The Director of Religious Studies and the Principal could work with the teachers who are tagged to ensure they understand the importance of their role in the school.

With more integration of Special Character and Religious Education throughout the curriculum, the school needs to discuss the use of Religious Education Journals and how to share integrated student work with the whanau.

Continue to research and trial the planning and implementation of Religious Education and Special Character as it is integrated throughout the curriculum.

Continue to develop Religious Education assessment processes to support further differentiation of teaching and learning across the school.

More professional development will support the understanding of a “Catholic perspective or Catholic worldview” among teachers.

The pedagogy of teaching Religious Education at Monte Cecilia is teacher dominated. For students to be more independent and self managing learners of Religious Education they need more student agency.

Christian Witness – Te Whakaatu Karaitiana

The School provides a hope-filled Catholic Christian witness which empowers its community members to integrate their faith and their life.

Areas of Success

The way in which the staff of Monte Cecilia School present the face of Christ to others is often commented on by members of the school community. Many people interviewed during the review described the school as having a “family atmosphere”. The school community are proudly Catholic and promote living as witnesses to the life of Christ.

The relationship between school and parish has been developing since the school moved to the parish land. The Parish Priest, Principal and Director of Religious Studies have developed a good working relationship. The school makes use of the parish hall for the SKID’s before and after school programme and school programmes and events. The school and parish both have a link to the other on their website and the school displays student work in the church foyer for special feasts.

The strong focus on Mercy values develops a spirituality of action which include the welcome, hospitality and inclusiveness, felt when you enter the school. The Principal interviews all newly enrolled families and discusses with them the expectations of belonging to a Catholic school. Pancake night is held before Easter for parents to meet with the teachers and get together. At this meeting special mention is made about the Special Character of the school and the Religious Education programme.

The Year 6 students consider themselves as role models. The students take their responsibilities seriously and work hard for the school throughout the year. All students are given leadership responsibility from Year 1 as monitors in their classrooms. The senior school students volunteer as:

- Special Character Leaders who help at liturgies and run prayer assemblies
- House Captains who work with the four Houses of Cecilia, MacKillop, McAuley and Vianney.
- Monte Mentors who look after young children at lunchtime and support the duty teachers.
- Monte Media who do PowerPoint presentations, take photos for the end of year slide show, do interviews for special events
- ICT team who support the school technology.

The School recognises Māori as Tangata Whenua and they have a strong commitment to The Treaty of Waitangi and the bi-cultural foundations of Aotearoa. As visitors, the Review Team were welcomed to the school with a mihi whakatau. Student leaders and the caretaker spoke on the school’s behalf.

The Kapa Haka group led the waiata. The teaching staff use Te Reo for some instructions and specific vocabulary integrated into the programmes. The students pray and sing waiata in Maori and English.

The School welcomes and nurtures its growing cultural diversity. They celebrate the various language weeks and students are encouraged to share their cultures and their faith. The school community are proud to say that inclusiveness is one of their strengths. The cultural festival is well supported by the parents from each culture.

Monte Cecilia School welcomes students with special needs. Resources are put in place to support these students and training and guidance from outside agencies is encouraged and valued. Many programmes are used to support divergent learners to extend their oral, written language and maths. Similarly, gifted and talented students are identified and are mainly catered for in class through project work, however one student does attend the “one-day school” this year.

The school employs support staff who work in administration, in classrooms and with specific individuals who need one-to-one support. They feel valued by the Principal and staff and are acknowledged often for the work they do. They receive training for the various roles they have when it is needed. The Special Education Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCO) supports the Teacher Aides and organises Individual Education Plans for all special needs students. Outside agencies are used where appropriate such as Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLB). One student has a RTD system for the deaf set up in their hub. Reading Recovery and ESOL programmes are ongoing.

Monte Cecilia School has a strong commitment to social justice and service to others. They contribute to the community by being involved in:

- Caritas Challenges
- Cans4Christmas
- Muftimania
- Coastal clean-ups
- Weeding parish gardens
- Choir sing at APPA event
- Red nose and Daffodil days
- Disaster relief when needed.
- Central City Art Expo
- Parish Stations of the Cross

Many parents spoke to the Reviewers about the kindness and generosity of the staff and school community in times of hardship. They spoke of how the Principal, staff and school community go over and above expectation when families are in need. The PTA support with meals, transport, funding support etc. The PTA aim to get families involved in the school. They support the school by making and serving morning tea on special days and at school events. Fundraising events are organised, such as Quiz Nights.

Monte Cecilia Catholic School is a member of the Central Catholic schools Kahui Ako which includes Marist Mt Albert and Marist Herne Bay, Christ the King Owairaka, St Dominic’s Blockhouse Bay, Good Shepherd Balmoral, St Joseph’s Grey Lynn, St Therese Three Kings and St Mary’s, Marist, St Paul’s and St Peter’s Colleges. The Principal is the co-leader of this Kahui Ako this year and the Director of Religious Studies is an ‘Across-schools teacher’.

The school has a strong expectation of respect and honouring the dignity of all. The school has a calm and happy atmosphere, the children are polite and well-mannered and think about “What Jesus would

do". Teachers use the Mercy values to discuss behaviour management situations with children. The school has developed a "Monte Way" of doing everything in the school.

Next Steps

To invite all new families to the school to a meeting to discuss the organisation of the school and the curriculum taught, including the Special Catholic Character of the school and Religious Education programme.

Reinstate the training for leadership for senior students in their particular leadership roles.

Continue to develop a strong relationship between school and parish.

The "Monte Way" could be published as a chart which is visible around the school.

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

The School in its stewardship and compliance with statutory obligations, safeguards and strengthens its Catholic identity.

The Board of Trustees are very proud of the school's Catholic Special Character. The Board members are a mixture of new and experienced members since the recent elections. The Board members take their roles seriously. They are very supportive of the staff and appreciate all they do for the children and families. They report to the parents through a Board letter in the school newsletter each term. They post the minutes of their meetings on the school website and they are in attendance at all school events. They take advantage of the training provided by the Catholic Schools Office. The more experienced Board members were aware of the NZCEO Declaration, Board Handbook, "Catholic Education of School Aged Children", and the Review handbook, all of which they use in their work.

The Principal reports to the Board about the school's Special Catholic Character via her report and the Special Character Committee who hold meetings attended by the Principal, Director of Religious Studies and Proprietor Representatives when necessary. The Board Chairperson has regular weekly meetings with the Principal.

The school's Catholic Special Character self review is completed each year. The 2019 review has begun, based on the Growth and Knowledge dimension, looking specifically at integration of the Religious Education programme.

When a new family is enrolled at the school the Principal clearly outlines to parents their responsibility as first educators of their children in the enrolment pack and interviews with the family. The expectations of belonging to a Catholic community are made clear. The enrolment folder includes the Preference form, and a full explanation of the preference criteria determined by the Bishop's Conference.

The school's strategic and annual planning, and all promotional material reflect the Special Catholic Character. The Board of Trustees is beginning to use School Docs policies and following the Board's review schedule policies will be reviewed to ensure they reflect the Special Catholic Character.

School Data

At the time of the Review the School was compliant with its Integration Agreement in regard to:

- Maximum roll compared to actual role.
- Number of non-preference students
- The number of S464 teachers.

Decile:	6
Roll at time of Review:	162 + 1 International student
Maximum Roll:	227
Staffing Entitlement:	Base: 9.90 Total: 11.13
Required number of S464 Positions:	5
Current number of S464 positions:	5
Ancillary Staff:	Teacher Aides: 2 Admin: 2

As part of the Catholic Special Character Review process, a preference audit was conducted on 18 October, 2019 and updated at the time of the Review. The roll on that day was 163.

Year	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.5	Total	NP
Y1	24		7	4		35	4
Y2	26		3		1	30	2
Y3	10	3	3	1	1	18	4
Y4	15		1	3		19	2
Y5	21		2	1		24	
Y6	23	1		1		25	
	119	4	16	10	2	151	12

Each student has a file, well-marked on the cover. They are stored in drawers in alphabetical order and easy to locate. The school needs to ensure that all preference forms are completed and filed on enrolment. One student is enrolled as an international student but is 5.1 preference.

The audit found that:

- 73% of preference students are 5.1 criteria
- 5% of the students on the maximum roll are non-preference.

Next Steps

Begin to use the draft “Standard for the Teaching Profession: Catholic Elaborations” in all job descriptions and appraisals. This can be found on the NZCEO website.

If students are Baptised while at the school their new preference criteria needs to be changed on the School Management System and a copy of the Baptismal certificate placed in the student file.

The Behaviour Management statement, on Schools Docs, needs to have a Special Catholic Character focus added.

Conclusion

Monte Cecilia Catholic School, Hillsborough is ably led by the Principal and Senior Leadership Team to provide an excellent Catholic education and support for their students. The school's Vision Statement states that:

"Our vision is that we will be people who love to learn, who show respect and are resilient so as to become contributing disciples of Christ who make a difference in our world"

(Monte Cecilia Charter statement)

The senior children, interviewed by the reviewers, were living testament that the school is achieving what the community aspires to.

The school is a calm, inclusive and welcoming learning environment that is providing a quality Catholic education. The Board of Trustees, parents, teachers and children have a clear understanding of the school's goals and all members of the school community live by the Mercy charism. The children are confident, happy, respectful and engaged in their learning. Along with their families they are proud to be members of Monte Cecilia Catholic School.

"It is clear that the school has a view to encourage children to not only reach their potential academically, but to also be Christ's disciples, growing in faith and virtue".

(Parent comment)

Philip Mahoney
Manager
Catholic Education Services,
Auckland

Colleen Gleeson
Review and Development Officer
Catholic Schools Office
Auckland Diocese