

**CATHOLIC SPECIAL CHARACTER
EXTERNAL REVIEW REPORT**

**MARIST CATHOLIC SCHOOL
HERNE BAY**

26-27 MARCH, 2014

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name:	Marist Catholic School, Herne Bay
Address:	82 Kelmarna Ave, Ponsonby, Auckland 1011
School Type:	Contributing, Years 1-6
Principal:	Mrs Robyn Pivac
Director of Religious Studies:	Mrs Indu Netto
Board of Trustees Chairperson:	Mrs Sarah Withell
Parish Priest:	Fr. Rory Morrissey (Herne Bay) Fr Robert Steele (Ponsonby)
Reviewers:	Mr Neil Laurensen Mrs Colleen Gleeson
Accompanying Principal	Mrs Michelle Jadoo
Current Roll:	185
Report Confirmed:	10 April, 2014

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.

Marist Catholic School, Herne Bay 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 Central Auckland, the school serves the parishes of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Herne Bay and Sacred Heart Parish, Ponsonby. The school shares the site with Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church and the Catholic Chinese Community building.

SPIRITUALITY

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

The spirituality of Marist Catholic School is seen in the way staff and students relate to each other, welcome visitors and support each other and the wider community. Through its Marist charism and values it provides encouragement and resources for individuals within the school community to develop their own faith journey.

"The Marist way is to think, act and judge in the way of Mary".
(Student Leader interview)

"The faith and values taught at school are brought home by my children in the way they think, speak and act."

"There are many Marist strengths that can be attributed to the Catholic Special Character. These all relate to the Marist spirit and the values-based approach to education".

"We see an increased awareness of the presence of God in our child since he has been at Marist"
(Parent survey responses)

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. Parents spoke of how welcome they feel at the school and the strong sense of family, warmth and caring which provides a nurturing environment for the personal spiritual growth of children.

In conjunction with the RCIA and Sacramental programmes, eight children, some with other family members, have been Baptised into the Church at class Masses held at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church.

PARTNERSHIP

Education is a collaborative responsibility.

The Principal, staff and Board of Trustees work to build strong relationships with families, the Parish communities and the wider community. All members of the school community spoken to by the Reviewers said that they felt welcome in the school and appreciated the 'open-door' policy.

Marist Catholic School has many partnerships with outside agencies including the Special Education resource people. They also work closely with the Marist Sisters and the Auckland Seminary.

The Marist Catholic School PTA meet at least twice per term. They initiate events and fundraising and get support from the school, parent and parish communities at all events. The Movie night, Silent Auction, Quiz night, and a Cookbook (proposed for 2014) are organised by the group to support the school. They also run a Disco each year for the children. They report monthly to the Board of Trustees.

The school also provides before and after school care in partnership with SKIDS.

VALUES

The school identifies and actively promotes Gospel values.

Marist Catholic School, Herne Bay has identified their core values as:

"Respect, Integrity, Courage and Humility (RICH values)"

In the school documentation, each value is clearly linked to the Gospel. The RICH values are embedded in the 'Marist way' and are "underpinned, enriched and enhanced by Whanaungatanga, Arohatanga and Manaakitanga". (BOT survey response)

Each term two focus values are chosen. Humility and Whanaungatanga were the focus in Term 1, 2014, during the review.

The values can be found in the school Charter and displayed around the interior of the school. The children were very familiar with these values and were able to articulate to the reviewers what they looked like in action.

RICH Challenges are set each year for all children in Year 3 to 6. These activities are regarded as the children's 'ministry' and include tasks in Giving, Service in school and the community, Physical activities and the outdoors, Academic excellence and Excellence in the arts.

'Most Valued Person' certificates are awarded at weekly assemblies to children who are seen to be living by the Marist values. The Monsignor Cronin award is awarded to children displaying the "3Ps" – prayer punctuality and politeness.

The value of excellence is encouraged throughout the school in everything that is done.

"With Jesus Christ as our guide we will be confident, lifelong learners who aspire to excellence in all we do"

(School Vision Statement)

In response to the 2013 internal Special Catholic Character self review, the Board of Trustees included the Seven Catholic Virtues and ensured that the Special Character policy reflected not only the school's mission, vision and RICH values, but also the values expressed in the Diocesan Vision Statement for School 2013 "Living as Disciples of Christ". The next step for the school is to incorporate the teaching and living of these Virtues into the 'Marist Way'.

SCHOOL CULTURE

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

Marist Catholic School follows the Marist charism, to think, feel, act and judge like Mary. All students are aware of the charism and what it looks like in everyday life. Parents, staff and Board members were able to articulate the charism and values clearly. The Marist charism and values are integrated throughout the school curriculum and are included in the Graduate Profile. On Marist days, prayer cards and medals are presented to each child by the PTA.

The school Motto is "With God to Love and Serve". The senior students were able to articulate the meaning of this motto. The school emblem of sun's rays rising above the horizon, a cross on a blue background, above it the name of the school and below it the motto. Inside the rays are the 4 RICH values. The emblem is evident on school uniforms and is displayed in classrooms.

The four houses, Cana, Galilee, Jordan and Bethlehem were named for their place in the Gospels. The senior children were able to explain what happened at each place.

The school has a strong sense of family, some families are second generation at the school and there is a mix of many cultures. The Principal and teachers know every child by name and there is a strong sense of Teina/Tuakana (older children looking after younger ones). The parents all liked the idea of it being a small school where "there is a welcoming, 'country' feel". (Parent interview comment).

"We believe that the Marist Catholic school community strengthens us as a family unit and reinforces our bonds with each other and with members of the Marist community"

"My children feel that they belong to a wider family which enriches their lives".
(Parent survey response)

The reviewers were impressed with the genuine warmth and happiness of the children, all were friendly and helpful. Parents, teachers and Board of Trustee members all spoke of the friendly, polite and caring atmosphere within the school. The children felt safe at school and they commented to the reviewers that there was no bullying or nastiness.

The school's entrance foyer, corridors, staffroom, and classrooms depicted the Special Catholic Character through colourful and attractive displays and symbols. The Fr Mullins Reflection Room, where the reviewers met with the Student leaders was a quiet and peaceful space often used by the students, teachers and parents. The children were able to explain what the room was for but did not know the significance of Fr Mullins in its inception.

"The Catholic Special Character is the integral part of all ways in the school".
(Parent survey response)

LEADERSHIP

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

The Principal of Marist Catholic School, Herne Bay has successfully led the school for 14 years. Her commitment to providing a quality Catholic education that is relevant to the students of Marist is evident in her words and actions and was acknowledged by the Board of Trustees. The Board commended her for her commitment to the school. She reports monthly to the Board of Trustees against the Strategic Goals, including Catholic Character. She has an excellent rapport with parents and is approachable. She is often seen out on the driveway in the afternoons chatting with parents and children

Many of the Board of Trustees members are new to their role. The new Chairperson has the Catholic Special Catholic Character at heart and some experience as a Board member. The Board members who met with the reviewers were able to clearly express how the school's Catholic Special Character impacts on their role of governance. They have a page on the school website to introduce themselves to the community. They consult with parents regularly informally and through surveys and consultation meetings.

"The Catholic Special Character provides the framework within which the whole school curriculum is delivered and is integral to all our Governance policies and everything that takes place in the school."

(Board questionnaire comment)

The Board of Trustees is representative of the school community and have all participated in training with the School Trustees Association and Catholic Education Services workshops and Ministry of Education webinars. They keep in touch with what happens in the school by attending school Masses and assemblies and attending the "Board Walk" each term to have morning tea with the staff and visit classrooms to talk to teachers and children. The new Parish Priest at Sacred Heart Parish, Ponsonby is a member of the Board and is keen to participate closely with the school.

A Special Character Committee consisting of the Principal, Proprietor representatives, the Parish Priest and Chairperson, in consultation with the Director of Religious Studies, meet regularly when necessary. They prepare a report for each Board meeting and ensure that Catholic Special Character Compliances and self review reports are completed in a timely manner. The Parish Priest is new to the parish, however he has already developed an excellent working relationship with the Principal, staff and the Board of Trustees.

A large leadership team has been formed by the Principal, consisting of the Deputy Principal, Director of Religious Studies and Team Leaders. The senior management team are all skilled practitioners and share the Principal's vision for the school and her high standards.

The school communicates to parents through the fortnightly newsletter which includes reflections from the Principal, Deputy Principal and Director of Religious Studies. The newsletter is posted on the school website. The Board of Trustees publish a newsletter each term to keep parents informed of their work.

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 their parishes is an important aspect in developing an effective school environment.

In response to the 2010 External Special Catholic Character review the Board has introduced a Governance Manual which refers to the Special Catholic Character throughout and has adopted the "Code of Ethics for Boards of NZ Catholic Schools."

The Charter and Strategic plan has a very strong Catholic Special Character content in the Strategic goals. The actual outcomes of the Special Catholic Character goals are reported monthly to the Board of Trustees. The Principal reports to the Board under the headings of the National Administration Guidelines (NAGs) and Special Catholic Character.

The school has a comprehensive Special Catholic Character Policy and most policies have a Special Catholic Character component.

"The Catholic Special Character underpins all of the Board policies and procedures for the school".

(BOT Questionnaire response)

New teachers are inducted into the Special Catholic Character and particular ethos of the school by the Principal and the Director of Religious Studies. Team leaders support teachers and new teachers to the school commented to reviewers that they were well supported by all staff members.

The Proprietors Representatives and all Board members take an active role in the Catholic Special Character internal self review process. The process is clearly defined and data is gathered using mainly surveys. The Board of Trustees works closely with the Principal and Director of Religious Studies to complete the review annually which forms part of the Annual report to the Bishop. All findings are either acted upon at the time of review or put into the Strategic Plan.

The Performance Management process is based on attestation and appraisal. Each teacher has a Special Catholic Character goal and clear guidelines are set for teaching Religious Education and these are monitored throughout the year. In response to the 2010 External Special Catholic Character review, special character indicators have been added to the job descriptions. These could be further enhanced by using the Catholic Professional Standards for further indicators. The Principal is appraised by a contracted consultant.

The school Prospectus outlines the Special Catholic Character of Marist Catholic School as does the booklet for New Entrants.

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 welcomed at a prayer assembly. The assembly was led by students and the prayers represented the 17 cultures that make up the school community. The students' reverence and participation showed their ease and familiarity with the practice of communal prayer.

The reviewers joined two classes for prayers during their visit. These prayers were student led and the students were reverent and respectful of this sacred time. The children were focused using candles, crucifix, statues and photos, items of relevance to the Religious Education focus or their culture, and Bibles placed on a liturgical cloth appropriate to the season. In one of the classes a table had been prepared for a re-enactment of the Last Supper. A variety of methods to pray was used, including art, spontaneous prayer and reflections, bible reading, singing and traditional prayer. Staff prayer is held each Monday morning before school. Teachers take turns to organise and lead these prayers.

Meditation, appropriate to each Year level, is held each Friday across the school at a specified time. Teachers and students all enjoy this time for reflection and prayer. The school recites the Rosary together as a Marist family during the months of either May or October.

A Dedication Mass is held at the beginning of each year and school Masses are held at the beginning and end of each term. School/Parish Masses are held at the beginning of Terms 1 and 3 on a Saturday evening at Sacred Heart Church, Ponsonby. Liturgies or Masses are organised on other special days. Each class participates in a class Mass once per term. School assemblies are also seen as an opportunity for the school to unite in prayer. Parents are invited and strongly encouraged to attend all morning prayers, assemblies, Masses and liturgies. Teachers gather at the start of Lent each year for morning Mass and then share a staff breakfast.

The Board of Trustees spend a day of Retreat each year at the Friary, the staff attend the Mass on that day. The staff have a separate retreat day at the Friary and the Board of Trustee members join them for Mass. The Year 6 students also have a day on retreat each year.

All Sacramental programmes are organised and implemented by the Parishes. The Year 6 children have an annual retreat, the latest was run by Fr Bernie Thomas.

Prayer bags are sent home from each class containing rosary beads, coloured liturgical cloth, prayer cards and a crucifix. A notebook is also included for children and parents to write a prayer of reflection. Parents commented positively about how the children pray at home.

The Fr Mullins Reflection Room is a space in the administration area of the school for prayer and quiet reflection. It is open to all to use and is equipped with icons, books, candles etc. During the review interview with student leaders held in the Fr Mullins Reflection Room the students knew very little about Fr Mullins or Monsignor Cronin, both of whom played a major role in the history and charism of Marist School. It is recommended that both Fr Mullins' and Monsignor Cronin's contribution to the school be included in the charism and history teaching programme.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

The school promotes social justice.

Marist 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. It contributes to raising awareness and action for justice within the school and the wider community.

The Marist RICH Challenge provides opportunities for students to support local and wider community groups and become more aware of their circumstances and needs. Students choose a 'Giving' challenge and work throughout the year to support their particular chosen group.

The school supports several charities including Caritas, the Auckland City Mission (Orange day to provide blankets and tinned food), St Vincent de Paul with tinned food, Jump Rope for Heart and World Vision through the Kids for Kids Concerts, Breast Cancer and Starship hospital. The charities supported can change each year depending on need.

Every two years a Market day is held where children contribute to stalls and organise the day to raise money and awareness for Caritas, in 2013 it was for the Tongan relief fund. The emphasis is put on the awareness and understanding of the plight of the people rather than the money raised.

COLLABORATION WITH THE PARISH

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

The Parishes of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Herne Bay and Sacred Heart, Ponsonby welcome the school's presence.

"There is a very strong feeling of connection between the school and both Herne Bay and Ponsonby parishes".

(Parish survey comment)

The Board of Trustees sees having the Parish Priests interested and supportive, as very relevant to the school/parish relationship. The Parish Priest of Sacred Heart Parish, Ponsonby is a member of the Board of Trustees, visits two classrooms per week and has morning tea with the staff.

The school newsletter includes Parish news and the Mass and Reconciliation times from both Parishes. The school has recently changes the time of its weekly Wednesday Mass from midday to 9:15am to enable more parents to attend the Mass.

A Seminarian works in classrooms one day per week. This programme works well for both the Seminarian, getting to know how schools work and gaining experience working with young children, and the school having a male role model and an extra pair of hands in classes. They contribute in many areas of school life and have been particularly helpful with computer graphics.

Both Parishes run a Sacramental Programme. The school supports these programmes by advertising them in newsletters and acknowledging and supporting the students during the programme. Work during the Sacrament Strand highlights the students' journey.

AREAS FOR CATHOLIC COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- The next step for the school is to incorporate the teaching and living of the Seven Catholic Virtues into the 'Marist Way' as written in the Special Character Policy.
- Job descriptions could be further enhanced by using the Catholic Professional Standards for further indicators of performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CATHOLIC COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- That both Fr Mullins' and Monsignor Cronin's contribution to the school be included in the charism and history teaching programme.

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. All teachers had a warm, gentle and caring relationship with the children. Parents commented that the school had a family feeling.

The Board of Trustees, staff, parents and Parish communities happily work together with respect and co-operation to provide a nurturing environment. This teamwork and collaboration makes for a happy and cohesive learning environment. The Director of Religious Studies is to be commended for the relationships she has formed and maintained with both Parishes and the co-ordination of the contribution from each Parish into the life of the school.

The school has an inclusive environment where all children are acknowledged for their special talents and given every opportunity to share their talents. They work closely with a variety of outside agencies to provide independent education plans for students in need. Teacher Aides are employed to support students and teachers with remedial and extension work.

The ancillary staff at the school are valued and take part in professional development with teachers where applicable. The teacher aides and administration staff commented that they were looked after and cared for by the staff and felt very much part of the school. The school uses the strengths of teachers and teacher aides to enhance the teaching and learning.

In response to a recent internal self review a buddy system for teachers has been established to support and learn from each other. The Principal and Senior Management Team work closely with teachers to provide support when needed.

The school has a good relationship with neighbouring schools and the Catholic Colleges of St Pauls, St Peters and St Mary's.

"Respect for the individual is paramount in teacher's relationships with students".

(Staff questionnaire response)

ORGANISATION

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

Many examples of support and kindness to staff and families were discussed with the reviewers during their visit. The PTA and staff work to build relationships across the school and ensure that all families are well informed and feel welcome in the school community. Each class has a parent monitor who liaises with parents. New parents are welcomed at an afternoon tea and a Family BBQ is organised at the beginning of each year to build a sense of community.

The Principal, staff and PTA ensure that all families know of the support they could receive and organise help and support in times of need, grief or illness. Uniforms, food, stationery and transport are provided when necessary. The PTA has a Pastoral Care Officer to organise any help needed.

BI-CULTURAL COMMITMENT

The school is committed to the Treaty of Waitangi.

Marist Catholic School recognises the importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi / The Treaty of Waitangi and the status of Maori as Tangata Whenua. Teachers were aware of Maori Spirituality and were respectful of the Maori traditions which they shared with children. All teachers are expected to complete the Maori Spirituality course.

The school values of Respect, Integrity, Courage and Humility are underpinned with the Maori values of Whanaungatanga, Arohatanga and Manaakitanga. These values appear on the school emblem in the Charter document. The 2013 Board of Trustees' Retreat day focussed on these Maori values and how they impacted on the school.

A teacher and a teacher aide teach Te Reo in all classes and support teachers in Te Reo and Tikanga Maori. All children know the Sign of the Cross, a Grace and the National Anthem in Maori. A bi-annual trip to Whaiora Marae is organised and senior students prepare a mihi for the powhiri.

The Maori community are consulted three times each year and Maori student achievement and needs are shared and discussed.

CULTURAL AWARENESS

The school recognises and honours cultural diversity.

At Marist Catholic School teachers were careful to honour and respect the cultural diversity within their classrooms. Children were encouraged to share prayers in their own and others' native language in the classroom, at assembly and at Masses. The children learn to make the Sign of the Cross in the languages of many cultures within the school.

Spanish is taught in all classrooms from Year 2 to Year 6. Lead parents in each of the cultural groups support teachers and children to understand their culture. They train groups to perform at the end of year school concert and recently the Samoan lead parent organised a Samoan week, sharing language, food and traditions. The Tongan lead parent organised a Tongan week, providing speakers to work in the rooms and made a Tongan cloak for the school

Consultation for Pasifika parents is held three times each year. The school has planned for professional development for teachers in 2014 to enhance the teaching and learning for Maori and Pasifika students.

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Discipline processes are just, compassionate, respectful and consistent.

The happy, positive relationships and calm learning-focused environment of the school community removes most causes of disruptive behaviour and creates in children a willingness to co-operate and self manage.

Conflict resolution and behaviour management at Marist Catholic School is based on the Marist values, by following Mary – the Marist Way, and asking “What would Jesus do?”. The reflection room and a friendship seat, under a tree in the playground, are available for children if they need some quiet time.

In response to a recent internal self review the ‘Peer Mediation’ programme was renamed the “Marist Buddies”. They have a new uniform and are timetabled to be in the playground at breaktimes. The “Bounce Back” and “Be Safe; Be Strong” programmes are established in the Behaviour Management plan.

SERVICE

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

Marist Catholic School provides children with the opportunity to give service to their school and community. The motto “With God to love and serve” is their banner for service. The RICH Challenges provide a way for children throughout the school to serve the school and the wider community and to live out their faith in action.

Random acts of kindness are organised by the children – taking the flowers from Assumption Day and delivering them to the local resthome, organising to paint and beautify the school environment.

Leadership opportunities are provided throughout the school. All children are given the opportunity to lead prayer and act as monitors in their own classrooms. A Student Leader is selected each year and House Leaders for the four houses. Year 6 students are also chosen to do road patrol, be wet day monitors, Marist Buddies, leading music at Masses and assemblies, School choir, presentation at Mass and assemblies and lunch monitors.

*“Children from Marist School are regular Altar Servers at Sacred Heart Ponsonby Parish”.
(Parish Survey response)*

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 Marist Catholic School, Herne Bay for 7 years and has been in the Director of Religious Studies role for 4 years. She works collaboratively with the Principal, staff and the personnel of both Parishes to ensure that a strong partnership exists between the school and both parishes. Her quiet and gentle approach to the job ensures that relationships, professional development, liturgies and other important religious occasions are carried out efficiently and calmly. 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. She liaises with the Special Character Committee and provides information about Prayers, liturgies and the Religious Education Programme. She works with the Principal and Special Character Committee to implement the internal Special Character review which forms Part C of the Annual Proprietor Representatives report to the Bishop.

Staff meetings are facilitated by the Director of Religious Studies at the start of each strand which focuses on the theological focus. The meetings also allow time for teachers to share best practice and to discuss the pedagogy of Religious Education. The school is to be commended for the time given at each staff meeting for Special Character/Religious Education discussions.

She meets regularly with the Principal to keep her informed and to discuss issues when necessary. As the Director of Religious Studies is a full time classroom teacher, the Principal organises release for her on a weekly basis to prepare Masses and liturgies, observe in classrooms and attend all DRS meetings and conferences. She is generous with her time and ensures that all new teachers are scaffolded to provide a model of the Marist Way for the children and teach the Religious Education programme.

The Director of Religious Studies oversees all teachers' Religious Education planning and looks through a sample of Religious Education books and Progress books. She has developed a comprehensive process for her role as Director of Religious Studies and as an appraiser of Religious Education teaching and learning.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM <i>The Religious Education programme is professionally delivered.</i>

The classroom, corridor and foyer displays throughout the school are evidence that Religious Education and the Special Catholic Character are at the forefront of everything. The Religious Education Curriculum is very full, the strands and modules are well covered and the Special Catholic Character is being integrated into all planning.

Staff plan their teaching programmes individually and effectively for their classes on a consistent planning sheet used across the school. Teachers endeavour to differentiate tasks according to age and ability. The planning and pedagogy for Religious Education aligns well with that of all other curriculum areas using teacher-inquiry and formative practice.

In response to the annual internal self review of Catholic Special Character the Affective Domain and discussions on best practice for Religious Education teaching will be made a priority in 2014.

All Strands are assessed against Learning Objectives. The school has begun to trial the use of pre and post tests for each Strand. Most teachers comment on each page of the student's Religious Education book. The teacher and child write a reflection at the end of each Strand in their Religious Education book and send it home for parents to also make a comment. Parents are to be congratulated for always writing a positive and reflective comment which affirms their child's efforts.

The Religious Education books the students used in response to the teaching and learning were beautifully presented across the school and the students were proud of their work and very willing to discuss, with the reviewers, and reflect on what they had done and what they had learned. An explanation of the charism and values is in the front of each book and at the start of each Strand the Aims and Objectives are clearly stated.

The children spoken to by reviewers, at all levels of the school, were able to talk about their learning, how they were learning and why. The teacher's use of WALTs and the learning talk they used throughout the day was reflected by the children.

The classroom environments were all vibrant and learning focused and the displays were relevant to the Religious Education Strand being covered at the time.

INTEGRATED CURRICULUM <i>Catholic teaching is integrated with other curriculum areas.</i>

At Marist Catholic School, a Catholic perspective was very evident in classroom environments across the curriculum. Most teachers were successfully and deliberately weaving a Catholic point of view into the total curriculum, so that children were naturally making links and seeing that God was present in everything. The school has a comprehensive elearning model and uses inquiry learning

where appropriate. The Religious Education Curriculum has been deliberately linked to the Key Competencies.

The “Myself and Others” module has been integrated through the Marist Catholic School Health programme to ensure a Catholic perspective is provided. The Year 6 teachers teach about Puberty to single sex groups in line with the Catholic perspective. ‘Keeping Ourselves Safe’ is also covered every two years.

Wikispaces and blogs are evident on the school website and some classes have posted Religious Education content to these pages. Marist Catholic School has designed clear digital citizen guidelines for teachers and children.

Environmental awareness is taught at Marist Catholic School in relation to the God Strand. Sustainability is evident with the school discussing ways to reduce waste, limiting lunch wrappings, paper recycling and growing vegetables. Each class is responsible for half of a garden plot, the vegetables in previous years have been sold at Market Day. It is suggested that the school design an environmental plan to ensure the continuation of these programmes.

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 to deliver the Religious Education programme and provide an environment that reflects the Special Catholic Character.

The Religious Education Advisors are used by the school to support beginning teachers and teachers new to Catholic schools and to run staff meetings when requested. The Marist Sisters keep the charism alive by addressing the staff and working with them to enhance their understanding of the Marist traditions.

All teachers are using the digital resource and have an interactive whiteboard or interactive television in their classrooms. Digital cameras, ipads and ipods are available for classes to use daily for all subjects including Religious Education lessons.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

The Director of Religious Studies ensures that Religious Education professional development is given time in all staff meetings and facilitates Strand meetings at the beginning of each Strand, and professional development on ‘The Year of Faith’ and other relevant topics. She supports teachers by modelling and observing Religious Education lessons in each classroom and shares ideas for future development with each teacher. All teachers attend the Cluster meetings provided by the Religious Education Advisors and discuss the ideas in relation to their school.

Guest speakers have been invited to address the staff and provide professional development in the digital resource, Meditation and the Marist charism. The Ponsonby Parish Priest also addresses the staff once per term on the theological focus of a relevant Strand or Module.

In response to the 2010 External Catholic Special Character Review suggestion the school has ensured that all teachers complete the Maori Spirituality course.

The Board of Trustees states in the Performance Management and Professional Development policy that “opportunities will be provided for all staff to undertake professional development and spiritual formation in areas related to the Catholic Character. A minimum of 12 hours is the expectation”. The Principal reports to the Board of Trustees on all Religious Education Professional Development each month. All beginning teachers and teachers new to Catholic schools attend the professional development provided by the Diocese.

The Director of Religious Studies attends all DRS days and the DRS Conference. The Principal attends Principal Development days and the ACPPA conference. All teachers attended the Megan McKenna Day in July 2013.

Teachers are all encouraged to work towards Certification. All of the Senior Management Team have either Endorsed Leadership or Leadership Certification and all other teachers are working towards Classroom Level.

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.

The Principal shares her faith through the fortnightly school newsletters, she includes explanations about Liturgical seasons, feasts and the charism. The Director of Religious Studies writes a ‘RE News’ section in each newsletter. The school’s website is informative and updated regularly.

Parent information sessions are held with parents and caregivers and the Whanau book is compulsory for each family to purchase to support the Religious Education programme.

Parents and Parishioners are invited to classroom prayers and school liturgies and Masses. The Principal chats to parents informally each afternoon as they pick up their children. The open door and welcoming attitude at the school invites parents and the parish to participate and contribute.

AREAS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

- That the school design an environmental plan to ensure the continuation of the Sustainability and Environmental programmes.

CONCLUSION

Marist Catholic School, Herne Bay provides a child-centred, nurturing learning environment that focuses on the whole child and the achievement of excellence. The leadership of the Principal and the Board of Trustees, a committed staff and close links to its Parishes, together combine to form a successful Catholic community. The Marist charism and values provide the school with an ethos that permeates school life.

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

“Quality learning opportunities and the development of the whole person within our Marist Catholic Faith Community”.

The children are confident, happy and engaged in their learning. Along with their families they are proud to be members of Marist Catholic School.

“Marist Catholic School, Herne Bay is a school whose students go on to be individuals of faith and good character, who strive for excellence in all they do, underpinned by their Marist values which are enhanced and enriched by Whanaungatanga, Arohatanga and Manaakitanga”.

(Board of Trustees questionnaire comment)

“The feeling of warmth and welcoming is evident from the moment you step into Marist Catholic School, for everyone. The teachers have a huge desire and dedication to teach our children in the ways of Mary and Jesus”.

(Parent survey response)

Neil Laurenson
Manager
Catholic Education Services

Colleen Gleeson
Review and Development Officer
Catholic Schools Office

Date 10 April, 2014