

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

---



*He Pūrongo Arotake Mātauranga  
Ahurea Katorika ā Waho.*

*Catholic Special Character  
External Evaluation Report*

**St Paul's Catholic School Ngāruawahia**

Evaluation conducted on 21-22 September 2023

Confirmed Report 14 November 2023

## School Details 2023

**Name of School:** St Paul's Catholic School

**Address:** Belt St, Ngāruawahia

**School type:** Full Primary Year 1-8

**Actual roll:** 108

**Maximum roll:** 150

**Non-preference maximum:** 15

**Actual non-preference number:** 10

**5.1:** 84

**5.2:** 1

**5.3:** 12

**5.4:** 1

**5.5 :**0

**Roll based staffing entitlement:**6.10

**Required number of Special Character CI 47 positions:** 2

**Filled number of Special Character CI 47 positions:** 2

**Principal:** Shaun Emms

**Director of Religious Studies:** Sonia James

**Chairperson, Board of Trustees:** Latisha Utikere

### **Elected Members (C NC)**

### **Proprietor's Reps**

1.Natalie Harnett (NC)

1.Latisha Utikere (C)

2.Joshua Ormsby(NC)

2.Sarah Roche (C)

3.Hope Krause (C)

3.Maggie Webb (C)

4.Ashleigh Prendergast (C)

**Staff Rep:** Kane Wills-Goulin

**Parish Priest:** Father Stuart Young

### **Review Team:**

**Lead Reviewer:** Terry Consedine

**Accompanying Reviewer/s:** John Coulam, Dianne Porter, Paul Shannon

## **The Aims of Catholic Special Character External Evaluation for Development**

The Catholic special character evaluation process produces a focused picture of the impact of Catholic schooling and the effectiveness of its goals on the lives of all tamariki and rangatahi<sup>1</sup>. The process seeks to determine whether they have encountered the living God revealed in Jesus Christ, grown in knowledge of Him and His Church, and as a result are forming a deep and lasting relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church<sup>2</sup>. The process also evaluates how the whole school community engages in authentic Catholic Christian witness and evangelisation.

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

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

---

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

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

## Introduction

St Paul's Catholic School Ngāruawāhia is an integrated state school, located in the small rural Waikato town. The school provides education for 108 students in Years 1 to 8. Forty six of these students are of Maaori descent. The school was established in 1928 by the religious order, Sisters of the Missions. The founder of the order was Euphrasie Barbier. The present senior tamariki have an understanding of the part the Sisters played in the founding of the school and have some understanding of the mission they are charged with continuing.

The school's mission is to provide collaborative, holistic learning founded on Catholic ideals. The vision is to know, love and serve God. Children from St Paul's Catholic School enjoy a positive reputation in the community. The school has a strong opportunity to develop leadership in a variety of areas put into the leadership programme. The school provides a well-balanced academic, social and sporting curriculum through which the Catholic character permeates.

The school's Charter states that 'we want children to be selfless, trustworthy, proud to be Catholic, adventurous, understanding, loving and striving for excellence'. The school has engaged with *Mana Whenua* and has used *Te Manawa Grant* money to explore the local area including environmental Mahi. It is hoped that as a result of the work done by tamariki that the school will receive an EnviroSchools Bronze Certification at the end of 2023.

## **Progress with Recommendations from the 2019 (2 - 3 APRIL) Catholic Special Character Review for Development Report**

### **Key Recommendations:**

- 1. That as the leader of Special Character in the school, it is recommended that the Principal adds Special Character goals (in line with the Annual Plan) as part of his annual appraisal. It would be appropriate to invite a suitably qualified person to assist with this aspect of appraisal.**

*There are Special Character goals in the annual plan and these are part of my performance agreement. I have recently engaged with Brian Sparrow, former teacher and counsellor at St John's College Hamilton, and have met with him - I will continue to work with him for the next 18 months.*

- 2. Explore the umbrella theme of Care for the Environment alongside Catholic teaching and embed it in the School's Local Curriculum.**

*Our Term plans are integrated and have a Catholic theme running through them. We have engaged with Mana Whenua and have used Te Manawa Grant money to explore the local area including environmental Mahi. We are hoping to gain our Enviro Schools Bronze certification at the end of 2023.*

- 3. In preparation for the new Religious Education curriculum in two years time it is recommended that the staff embed the Bridging Document into their planning in Religious Education. In addition Professional Development could be included around integrating the local curriculum into Religious Education.**

*We haven't done much work, if any, using the Bridging Document, although we are now engaging with the new RE curriculum document - this is evident in our Term 3 planning - Dianne Porter facilitated a staff meeting in Term 2 regarding the new document. The junior school is starting to implement this and are currently working on the God strand.*

- 4. Please comment on the significant areas for development that have arisen from the school's annual self review of Catholic special character.**

*We continue to work hard on our restorative practices through our behaviour management plan.*

### **Dimension 1: Te Tūtaki ki a Te Karaiti-Encounter with Christ**

*How effectively does the school encourage and facilitate the development of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ who reveals the transforming love and truth of the living God?*

At St Paul's Catholic School Ngāruawahia there are a number of opportunities for the spiritual development of both the kaiako and tamariki. Each year begins with a rich retreat opportunity for the whole staff which assists kaiako in encountering Christ on the journey of discipleship.

This year, Father Peter Murphy from Auckland, led the staff in meditation with a view to re-enliven meditation for tamariki to have a quiet personal reflection and prayer. It is an intention of the leadership team to re-establish this as part of the regular routine. Each day kaiako take time at the start of the day to place themselves in God's presence and pray together in a variety of forms. Each kaiako takes a turn to lead this for a week.

Each class begins the day with prayer. Class prayer is varied and rich and is an integral part of the daily routine of the school. The nature of this prayer includes individual and dialogue style, using traditional and contemporary forms. The Rosary plays a key role in the month of October and each class takes a turn to lead a decade each day.

Most classrooms have a dedicated prayer table. In order to help tamariki focus on prayer it would be helpful to have these clearly visible in all rooms. Tamariki are involved in setting up these tables and leading the class prayer. Some evidence of children's work in Religious Education was displayed in some rooms, while other evidence could be found on '*Spotlight*' the school portal for communicating to parents.

There are opportunities for tamariki to develop their relationship with Jesus further through celebration of the Eucharist. There is a regular programme of liturgies and Masses that are appropriate for the age and culture of participants, and students have the opportunity to develop these liturgies and to have some leadership roles in them. Each week a class attends the weekly parish Mass and in the week in between there is a whole school Mass. Tamariki take leadership roles in readings and prayers of the faithful. There is a plan to restore the school parish Mass once each term. The parish priest is keen to make these Masses meaningful for the tamariki. To facilitate this, he would value a clearer passage of communication regarding the Mass planning, especially if there are any changes of circumstances or readings.

The school's values, which are clearly sourced from the Gospels are taught, modelled and promoted. As followers of Christ, high value is given to the 'Fruits of the Holy Spirit' for both tamariki and kaiako and these are particularly emphasised through the values of: **Self-less** (Whaiaro-iti), **Trustworthy** (Whakapono), **Proud to be Catholic** (Ngakaunui Ki a Katorikia), **Adventurous** (Rikarika), **Understanding** (Mohiotanga), **Loving** (Aroha), **Striving for Excellence** (E Toho mo te Hiranga). The acronym for St Paul's helps people remember the values and keep them to the forefront. Tamariki spoken to by the evaluators know these values and are making every effort to live them.

There are a number of displays and symbols, including some significant for Maaori, that provide witness to the Catholic special character of the school. Since the last Catholic Character Evaluation, the school has addressed the need for environmental art that reflects the special character of the school. They have replaced the school signage to state that the school is a Catholic school, installed three crosses in a garden facing the school and a painted mural on a school building promotes the school's values. The impact is that it is very clear that the school is proud to be Catholic as well as providing possible reflective areas for both tamariki and kaiako.

The school is on a journey towards incorporating tikanga and te reo Maaori and expressions of Katorikatanga into a number of aspects of Catholic special character, including Masses, liturgies, retreats and prayer. The hope is that tamariki and whaanau Maaori feel valued due to strong attempts to normalise te ao, tikanga and wairuatanga Maaori into the Catholic special character of the school. This is particularly expressed through the active and competent kapa haka group which is well supported by whānau and enthusiastically embraced by kaiako.

There are opportunities to learn te reo through the input of one of the kaiako who is fluent in te reo. Tamariki learn prayer in both languages, story-telling, basic sentences and learning of pepeha/mihi. Alongside this they know some waiata and are confident with the sign of the cross and the prayer before meals in te reo. The impact is that whānau spoken to by the evaluators commented on how much they valued the attempts by the school to ensure Maaori tamariki feel at home with their learning within their cultural context.

Tamariki and kaiako are working to make their encounter with Jesus Christ have a basis in the Gospels. The tumuaki frequently leads the school assembly by breaking open the Sunday Gospel and is keen to ensure that this becomes part of the regular practice for all kaiako. Tamariki also have the opportunity to encounter Christ through the charism of the school's founding order, the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions. Tamariki, spoken to by the evaluators, understood who Euphrasie Barbier is and the part she played with founding the Mission Order and the work they did in founding the school and staffing it over many decades.

The school makes real efforts to proclaim the mission and Gospel of Jesus Christ to all whaanau. The school newsletter provides an opportunity for members of the community to develop and deepen their knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures and teaching of the Catholic Church. Each newsletter has a page which is dedicated to some aspect of Catholic character. The tumuaki chooses a part of the Sunday scripture and provides a short reflection for whaanau. Whānau are invited to Mass on a regular basis. At student-led conferences tamariki reflect with their whānau where they are at with their Dispositions for Learning. These have aspects which are Faith based.

The proprietor appointees are very appreciative of the support the parish priest is able to extend to the school, in particular the support that he gives the tumuaki. They recognise that with fewer priests in the diocese, and no priest resident in Ngāruawahia, the availability of the priests to be present within the school is limited. They noted that the pastoral area contained four Catholic Primary schools and Churches. The school actively supports and promotes parish programmes for the Sacraments of Initiation. The Director of Religious Studies partners up with the parish Liturgical Committee to jointly lead the Sacramental programme. The Proprietor Appointees

lamented that the disruption caused by covid lockdowns meant that a number of opportunities that involved the children in the Sunday Parish Mass had disappeared. The school and Board are keen to seek ways to work collaboratively with the parish to include tamariki and their whaanau in Sunday Mass and to be involved in their local parish. Their hope is that they can further encourage tamariki and their whānau to have the opportunity to be able to participate at Mass by altar serving, bringing up the gifts and possibly being able to be part of children's liturgy.

The tumuaki and the tumuaki tuarua confidently and competently articulate their own faith and are committed to their own ongoing faith formation. They are outstanding in their support for the Director of Religious Studies who is still developing confidence in her role. They all work collaboratively to lead the development of Catholic special character. The tumuaki has done some excellent work in the annual internal evaluation of Catholic special character in line with the National Catholic Education Office Guidelines. The tumuaki plans to expand the involvement of the kaiako in these reviews in the future.

The tumuaki provides authentic faith-based leadership and strong Catholic vision for the school. This includes being an example of Jesus' servant leadership, which is openly witnessed by the school community. This has resulted in a very friendly vibe as part of the culture of the school. All staff are positive role models who support, uphold and witness to the Catholic special character of the school. All tamariki and whānau feel valued and welcome.

### **Next Steps for Development**

- Develop a family prayer pack to support whaanau in assisting tamariki with prayer beyond school.
- Re-establish the practice of the Gospel reflection on Monday morning assembly having a focus of unpacking the Gospel from the Sunday before.
- Re-establish the consistent practice of meditation across the school.
- Re-introduce one Sunday Mass each term that kaiako are encouraged to attend - staff to bring a plate and share kai with the parish.
- Establish a clearer passage of communication with the parish priest regarding any planning of school led parish Masses, especially if there are any changes of circumstances or readings.

### **Dimension 2: Mā te Mātauranga ka Tipu: Growth in Knowledge**

*How effectively does the school assist its community to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Jesus Christ, his teachings, and the Catholic Church?*

The tumuaki and tumuaki tuarua are both faith-filled, positive role models. The tumuaki has held this position for eight years and the tumuaki tuarua for considerably longer. They both provide excellent support to the Director of Religious Studies who is relatively new to her role of leadership in Religious Education. She is taking opportunities to gain knowledge and experience from other members of staff who have some experience in this role. She is gaining ideas from the Directors of Religious Studies in other schools. This, along with her own personal deep faith, will stand her in good stead as she develops further in her role. A philosophy of involving all members of the school in key decision-making processes underpins the work of the school leadership team.

The tumuaki, Director of Religious Studies and the Board of Trustees ensure that there is professional learning and formation in the areas of te ao, mātauranga, and wairuatanga Maaori. The tumuaki works with the Director of Religious Studies to implement the principles of bicultural practice. This helps tamariki Maaori and their whānau, hapū and iwi to achieve equitable outcomes. Kaiako are learning to incorporate wairuatanga Maaori into their teaching of Religious Education. Analysis of data would suggest there is success in this area. The work done by kaiako on Relationship-based Learning, self-reflection and observation feedback from other kaiako have helped develop a culturally responsive pedagogy.

Tamariki are given the opportunity to develop faith leadership, knowledge, skills and experience. They do this by taking leadership roles in the leading of prayer and readings in Mass. There are leadership opportunities in sport where there is excellent support for tamariki to learn the principles of leading. This flows over to a range of leadership opportunities. Some use these skills in their leadership of House groups. There is a Catholic character leader who takes responsibility for a number of special character celebrations.

The tumuaki and Director of Religious Studies are working to collaborate to ensure teacher development in Religious Education and Catholic special character. There is a plan for all kaiako to participate in the *'Having Life to the Full'* course in 2024. This will sit alongside full staff formation in preparation for the new curriculum *Tō Tātou Whakapono Our Faith*. There is encouragement to look at creative ways for kaiako to complete papers to ensure they take the opportunity to increase their in-depth knowledge in preparation for this curriculum.

The Director of Religious Studies is a faith-filled positive role model who works well with the tumuaki to provide ongoing professional learning and formation, for kaiako of Religious Education. She is encouraged to make greater use of the Diocesan Religious Education Advisor to support teachers of RE further in this area.

Teachers of religious education have participated in some Catholic special character professional learning and formation which is recorded for certification purposes. Kaiako expressed that they have effective systems in place which support teaching and learning in Religious Education. There is a staff meeting once a term to plan Religious Education together. A wealth of experience among

the teachers of Religious Education is evident. They are team-like in their approach to planning and preparation of tamariki for Mass.

The school implements the nationally mandated Religious Education curriculum delivering its Achievement Objectives with integrity, according to the time allocation of the New Zealand Bishops. There are effective learning and teaching programmes for Religious Education. Adequate budget is given to ensure it is appropriately resourced.

The tumuaki encourages, empowers, and nurtures faith in others and encourages faith-based leadership from all. The Director of Religious Studies, with the support of the tumuaki, is working to advance her level of certification and qualification levels. Plans are in place to escalate this for all staff. They are looking to provide opportunities for all kaiako to deepen knowledge and understanding of their Catholic faith-based leadership role and capabilities.

Aspects of the new Religious Education curriculum *Tō Tātou Whakapono Our Faith* are being taught at the year one and two levels. Kaiako are enthusiastic about the quality of the resources available. The kaiako follow a school wide Religious Education delivery plan which is displayed in each classroom. Classes have worked on a Caritas unit promoting social justice.

Planning is carried out collectively calling on the experience of each kaiako. Assessment has been the basic facts with pre and post assessment data recorded. It is expected that the process of assessment and reporting to parents will evolve further with the development of the new curriculum. Effective use is made of the National Centre for Religious Studies (NCRS) online curriculum material including '*Faith Alive*' website. A start has been made on using the resources of the new curriculum.

The school has taken further strides to educate for a deeper understanding of the bicultural history of Aotearoa New Zealand. They are working towards a deeper understanding of the bicultural history of Aotearoa New Zealand. The tumuaki and kaiako have been working with the Maaori Achievement Collaborative for the last two years. This has helped grow, not just the achievement of Maaori tamariki, but also the familiarity with te ao Maaori.

The school has a commitment to learning and teaching local Katorika Maaori and Pākehā history especially in the Ngāruawahia area. They are working closely with Mana whenua to support them in this area. Kaiako have begun to implement the concept of ako, and enable teaching and learning relationship of reciprocity where the roles of learner and teacher are shared in the classroom. This has been particularly guided by the Kāhui Ako with the use of an outside provider to lead the Relationship-based learning. Te Reo Maaori and Tikanga Maaori are integrated into the classroom programmes. Kaiako observes one another's teaching and give each other feedback.

Tamariki view society in the light of the Gospels especially through their use of Caritas educational material. This is especially evident in Lent and Social Justice week. Outreach involvement is a

consequence of their learning. The school develops students' awareness of their responsibilities as global citizens as well as citizens of Aotearoa, New Zealand. The strong and enthusiastic focus on the environment through enviro schools, alongside the leadership training through sport, provides a strong connection with life. The school makes use of Religious Education Advisors from the diocese to assist with aspects of Catholic special character. Whānau are informed regularly of the content and emphasis of the Religious Education programme especially through 'spotlight', a school app that connects teachers with parents.

An area the school intends to focus more on is to ensure school policy has those aspects of the Health Curriculum which involve human sexuality education. This will ensure policy is set in the context of the teachings of the Catholic Church and delivered using culturally responsive pedagogy. In order to achieve this all kaiako intend to participate in the '*Having Life to the Full*' course beginning early in 2024. This will enable the kaiako team to be 'on the same page' when it comes to developing and delivering the school Health and Sexuality Education programme in line with the revised '*Framing Document for Human Sexuality Education*'. The school will consult with their whānau and community before the Health and Sexuality Education programme is delivered. The impact will be that all aspects of the Health Curriculum, including human sexuality and personal relationships, will be taught from a Catholic perspective at all levels.

Kaiako new to Catholic schools receive ongoing support to enable them to understand the Catholic special character of the school. This enables them to effectively integrate a Catholic perspective across the curriculum. This comes in the form of support from the tumuaki and from within the learning hub.

### **Next Steps for Development**

- Continue to promote the Sacramental Programmes within the school and in the parish.
- Tumuaki and Director of Religious Studies to attend the Catholic Convention in 2024.
- The Director of Religious Studies will seek opportunities to enhance her experience in the teaching of Religious Education and the maintenance of Special Catholic Character from more experienced practitioners by visiting other schools.

### **Dimension 3: Te Whakaatu Karaitiana-Christian Witness**

*How effectively does the school provide a hope-filled Christian witness which empowers its community members to integrate their faith and their life?*

The school has had a history of promoting and supporting active Catholic witness and practice in the school and in the parish. They understand that Christian witness is a response in faith and action to our encounter with Christ. The restrictions of Covid have set some of these opportunities back. The kaiako and Board are keen to see the opportunities for tamariki and their families to be reestablished. They are keen to see tamariki involved in altar serving taking up the gifts and possibly re establishing children' liturgy for the younger ones

The Board of Trustees is strongly supportive of the tumuaki, as an authentic Catholic community leader. He demonstrates a strong commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its principles of protection, partnership, and participation, thus reflecting the Church's commitment to bi-cultural partnership. With the help of the *Active New Zealand Tu Manawa Grant* the school has been able to work with mana whenua over the last two years to assist with building Maaori tikanga throughout the kura. They have also assisted in helping build understanding of the local area and its significant places. Recently, the local iwi worked with tamariki in an effort to strengthen kapa haka. The impact of this work is seen in the school's participation in significant local activities such as the local Waka Festival, and the attendance at the Catholic Cultural Festival where the kapa haka group performed. As part of the parents' day, tamariki were able to learn about the history of hangi and enjoy it as part of the day. There has been work done in recent times to make kawakawa balm as part of environmental and Rongoā Maaori learning. This came as a result of the environmental work carried out by a small group in the Hakarimatas. The kaiako involved with this work took the opportunity to link it to Pope Francis' *Laudato Si Encyclical*.

The school works to build and maintain respectful and affirming relationships with whānau Maaori so that they feel welcome and 'at home' One parent spoken to by the evaluators put it this way

*"As a Maaori Whānau we value the way the school celebrates and embraces our culture and the efforts made to help us be a part of this school. We value the Maaori displays and history on the wall" (Maaori mātua)*

The school engages in authentic consultation with its Maaori community and mana whenua, and is working with them to learn the history of the area of Ngāruawahia. Wherever possible ideas of whānau are incorporated into the life of the school

Acknowledging that whānau are the first educators of their tamariki, the school actively works to build whānau participation in the faith development of their tamariki, their education and in the wider life of the school and parish. The school is very keen to work collaboratively with the parish community participating in parish community celebrations of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. The school and parish work collaboratively to promote the involvement of tamariki and their whānau in the life of their parish community. The parish priests are invited to have an integral

part to play in the life of the school. There is a Sacramental programme which includes Baptism, reconciliation and confirmation. Invitation is made to whānau to attend the weekly Mass on a Sunday and Wednesday via the school newsletter.

The school is a welcoming environment where all are treated with hospitality, aroha and courtesy. The school culture is characterised by warm relationships at all levels, friendly communications, active listening, and a sense that all are treated with respect. The school works in partnership and collaboration with all whānau. The school supports and cooperates with other Catholic schools for the benefit of all ākonga, and kaiako. They participate in kapa haka festivals and play sports with other Catholic schools. The kaiako are connected by being part of the Catholic Kahui Ako

Systems are in place to ensure that tamariki are personally known, cared for, and provided with support as required. Counselling is offered to students who need it. The smallness of the school is a big help in this regard. Behaviour management processes are just, fair, clear to all, and guided by restorative practices, linked to Catholic Social Teaching. The school has thought deeply about this area and has come up with [Five Dispositions of Learning](#) outlined in the school's website: Empathetic, Creative Problem Solvers, Resilient, Capable Communicators, and Hauora. Kaiako teach tamariki to identify the five dispositions and how the dispositions can be helpful to use when challenges come their way. These help tamariki with their reflection of where they see themselves in five different areas. They share this with their parents and teacher at the start of the year and mid way through the year.

As part of restorative practice kaiako have been upskilled and senior tamariki can opt to become peer mediators active on the playground at lunchtime. The peer mediators help to make the school environment a happier, safer, and more peaceful place to be. They are given training to solve problems in a constructive and cooperative way. They now have badges and are given rewards for encouragement. The impact of this programme is that seniors feel they can contribute in a constructive way to build and support relationships in the Junior school. Tuakana/teina is encouraged on Monday lunchtimes with the WILSS initiative.

Pastoral care systems and procedures are responsive to the needs of kaiako and reflect Gospel values. The tumuaki buys a cake for the staff each week, for Friday morning tea. There is care for the well being of staff by allowing three of the five full time teachers to have flexible working agreements. Each teacher gets two work life balance days each year paid for by the Board.

Service and outreach opportunities based on the Gospel message are a developing focus of the school. The school takes opportunities to support local and national Catholic groups in their campaigns and activities. There is work going on to build a Christ-centred culture of justice, service, and outreach in national, and international communities. Each year, the school has a Solidarity Day where all the children in school eat rice and nothing else. This is to remember that some countries have nothing to eat but rice. There are non uniform days and tamariki give gold

coin donations. This teaches the tamariki to share with the less fortunate in the community. The school supports Caritas.

Tamariki are learning to understand the mission of serving and sharing especially through the leadership programme. An example is the games led by senior tamariki in the WILSS (Waikato Institute for Leadership & Sport Studies) lunchtime initiative. During Lent tamariki and kaiako together take the opportunity of giving to the poor. The school is seeking opportunities for tamariki and kaiako to contribute actively to the life of the local community.

### **Next Steps for Development**

- To use the feedback from the Catholic Character Evaluation community survey to inform some next steps for 2024.
- Investigate ways we can take Christ into the community and offer tamariki more opportunities to provide service to others as a living of their Faith.

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

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

At the time of the review the school had submitted its attestation document covering off the compliance requirements to the diocesan office by March 2023 and the Proprietor's Annual report for 2022 has also been submitted to the diocesan office. These documents all show that the school is operating within its statutory Special Catholic Character compliances in relation to the required number of tagged teachers pursuant to *Clause 47 of the Education and Training Act 2020* and is below its allowed non preference numbers.

The school records the preference status of students on their management system and a report for analysis of preference criteria is easily accessible from this system. An audit was undertaken of the records relating to the students' preference status and these were found to be properly recorded and had been validated with up to date documentation

The Board indicated that they are committed to growing teacher knowledge in the teaching of Religious Education especially in relation to the new curriculum *Tō Tātou Whakapono Our Faith*. The evaluators have recommended that the teachers be introduced to the new curriculum and that the diocesan RE Advisors be used to facilitate this training. As mentioned above the evaluators noted that apart from the future enrolment of five staff in the upcoming *Having Life to the Full Understanding Sexuality* course in January 2024, no teachers have undertaken PD for qualifications in RE or Catholic Character in the past two years.

The principal explained that the reason for this was the added pressure Covid had placed on his staff in recent years. It was explained that Te Kupenga had piloted a new online course for

teachers new to Catholic schools called *Whakataki Ki Nga Kura O Te Hahi Katorika*. During 2023 some 50 teachers have participated in this course. Many other courses have been offered by Te Kupenga with online /blended options thereby facilitating a variety of teaching models.

In some cases Boards have encouraged kaiako completion by offering a time allowance for kaiako to complete assignments for PD as a way to increase knowledge in Religious Education and Catholic Character and complete qualifications.

A review of the letters of appointment for kaiako clearly show that the respective responsibilities of the tagged or untagged kaiako contain the necessary expectations in relation to their support of the Catholic Character of the school.

However as an addition to the Staff Growth Cycles and learning conversations that accompany these, consideration should be given to including the [Catholic Elaborations](#) to enhance these opportunities, (the [Conversation Starters](#) for Board meetings can be helpful also).

The Board members commented on how welcoming and hardworking the principal is. The Board Chair makes an effort to meet with the principal regularly to ensure the relationship remains strong between the Board and Management.

Board meetings always start with a prayer and all Board members are rostered on throughout the year to lead this prayer. The Board receives in every tumuaki monthly report a statement on Catholic Character. As from the start of 2023 they receive a more indepth Catholic special character report written by the Director of Religious Studies every six months. Prior to this year there was only an annual report received.

As has been mentioned earlier in this report the Proprietor Appointees lamented that with a change of parish priest and the disruption caused by covid lockdowns a number of opportunities that previously enabled the children to be involved in the Sunday parish Mass have disappeared. Coincidentally this was also mentioned by others at the community meeting. The opportunities they would like to see return are that of altar servers, offertory procession and children's liturgy. Remarkably despite this last year, five of the students at the school were baptised Catholic and another two will be received into the Church as part of the parish sacramental programme later this year.

The Proprietor Appointees are very appreciative of the support the Parish Priest extends to the school, in particular the support that he gives the Principal. They recognise that with fewer priests in the Diocese, and no priest resident in Ngaruawahia the availability of the priests to be present within the school is limited. They noted that their pastoral area contained four Catholic Primary schools and Churches.

### **Next Steps for Development**

- Terms plans have Catholic Character components.
- The Board recognises the need for some Board members to attend PLD provided by the Diocese to provide a better understanding of the requirements of Catholic special character.
- Ensure that the [Catholic Collaborations](#) are part of the Professional Growth Cycles of the tumuaki and other kaiako.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Continue to build kaiako knowledge and confidence in effective implementation of the new Religious Education Curriculum Tō Tātou Whakapono. Alongside this continue the development of the use of te reo and tikanga (wairuatanga) as part of localized curriculum including founding Catholic stories of the school.
- The tumuaki, and Board are keen to work cooperatively with the priests to search for ways to provide more opportunities for tamariki to get to know their priests and take the opportunity to be involved in the parish in an effort to encourage more whānau to join them in the celebration of the Eucharist in the parish on Sunday.
- All teachers will take part in 'Having Life to the Full' PLD in 2024 as part of a school wide effort to re-evaluate the health and sexuality programme through a Catholic lens. In the years following that the Leadership Team and Board have come up with creative ways to support kaiako to complete further Te Kupenga papers to increase knowledge of the faith as preparation and foundation for the new curriculum.

The evaluation team is confident that the tumuaki has the willingness and ability to address these recommendations fully before the next external evaluation. The Catholic Education Office staff are available to assist the tumuaki, Board and kaiako in compiling an action plan to address these recommendations.

The evaluation team thanks the community of St Paul's Catholic School Ngāruawahia for the welcome, hospitality and cooperation extended to them and for the opportunity to experience the way that they safeguard and strengthen their Catholic special character. The organisation and preparation for the external evaluation by the school is greatly appreciated.

**Terry Consedine**  
*Lead reviewer*

**Dianne Porter**  
*Religious Education  
Advisor*

**Paul Shannon**  
*Religious Education  
Advisor*

**John Coulam**  
*Education Manager*

N.B. This report will be shared with  
NZCEO and the Hamilton Diocesan  
Schools Council.