

**Diocese of Dunedin  
Catholic Education Office**

**External Review  
Catholic Special Character Review for Development**

**REPORT ON  
St John's Catholic School, Ranfurly**

School Type:	Full Primary Years 0-8
Visit:	7-10 May 2018
Principal:	Susan Mulholland
Reviewer:	Phil O'Connell-Cooper
Accompanying Reviewer	Deborah Whitty



## School Information

**Name:** St John's School, Ranfurly

**Address:** 6 Stuart Road, Ranfurly 9332

**School Type:** Co-Educational Full Primary (Year 1-8)

**Decile:** 8

**Staffing Roll for 2018:** 64      **Actual Roll at Time of Review:** 59

**Maximum Roll:** 75

**Non-preference Maximum:** 4      **Actual Non-preference at Review:** 4

**Teaching Staff:** 3.68

**Roll generated** 3.73

**Other:** 3      - office administrator  
- cleaner  
- BOT funded part-time teacher

**Ethnic Composition:**

NZ European/Pakeha	49	83%
Maori	3	5%
Pasifika	0	0%
Other	7	12%

**Board of Trustees Chairperson:** Mr Philip Dowling

**Principal:** Mrs Susan Mulholland

**Director of Religious Studies:** Mrs Claire Mulholland

**Parish Priest/Chaplain:** Fr Gerard Aynsley

St John's Catholic School, Ranfurly, is a hidden gem in the Maniototo. From the moment you enter the school, it is very obvious that this is not just a school, but a sacred place where people are highly valued, trusted and respected and where following Jesus is a way of life.

St John's is a welcoming place with a serene, calm and purposeful atmosphere. There is a strong sense of belonging. In the displays in the foyer and school passageways, there are significant reminders of all aspects of the school's Special Catholic Character.

The Focus Assembly-our Special Character in Action- (held each Monday morning) has been identified by the students and teachers as one of the most significant times in the week.

Pastoral Care is a way of life and includes both school and parish.

The children are engaged and feel safe in their learning. They are confident in themselves. They can articulate their learning and are very supportive and understanding of each other, recognising that everyone learns in different ways and that it is a good thing to receive additional help when needed. There is a family atmosphere where children help and include each other.

The school is led very well by the Principal and DRS, with staff working collaboratively as a highly functioning team. Teachers are committed and dedicated, willing to learn and grow. They recognise and use each other's strengths. They live and model the school's values. Everyone working in the school places high value on Special Catholic Character.

Parents are very supportive of the school and many go out of their way to support the children and their teachers, particularly with transport and supervision for events outside the school in which the children are involved and by becoming involved in events and activities at the school.

The Board of Trustees has capable leadership working with a team of experienced and new trustees. A priest has recently been appointed to the Board by the Proprietor, and this contribution is appreciated. The PTA group is very dedicated and recently completed a large project which has enabled the school to have a multi-sport turf. They are also very proactive in pastoral care in the school and parish community.

The contribution of the priests from Mercy Parish in Dunedin, and formerly from Alexandra, is appreciated by the Principal, Director of Religious Studies, teachers and children, enabling regular celebration of Mass and the sacraments, support for the teachers, children and families and opportunities for the children to get to know them.

The Proprietor can be assured that St John's School has demonstrated that the Special Catholic Character is instantly recognisable and a lived reality. The school is "creating confident, compassionate and resilient learners, who reflect their school's Mercy Charism and the teachings of Jesus".

## Catholic Special Character Dimensions and Focus Areas

### DIMENSION 1: TE TŪTAKI KI A TE KARAITI | ENCOUNTER WITH CHRIST

How 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?

#### FOCUS AREAS:

##### **Spiritual Formation**

How does the school provide ongoing Catholic spiritual formation to assist individuals to deepen their personal relationship with Christ?

*The Focus Assembly – Special Character in action - is one of the most significant ways, highly valued by staff and children alike, that everyone in the school is learning through scripture and prayer more about Jesus and how to follow him. Prayer in the morning and throughout the day is regular and meaningful. Children have the experience of praying in various ways and the Senior Students lead morning prayer in their room. They also lead and guide the younger children in more formal prayers, such as the Rosary in May and October. The Principal, Director of Religious Studies and staff take opportunities to pray and also to be formed in their faith through opportunities offered e.g. at Twilight Meetings. The DRS is planning, with the help of senior students, to develop a Sacred Space outdoors which can be used as a quiet spot for prayer and reflection.*

##### **Evangelisation**

How does the school, through its practices and communications, facilitate an encounter with Christ and spread the Good News to both churched and unchurched members of the community?

*The staff strongly acknowledge and recognise that being role models in living out the school values, through their actions, their faith, their reverence and engagement in prayer and liturgy, their kindness and their teaching is what will have the biggest impact on children's own faith development. They have concerns about the number of children enrolled in the school who are not yet baptised and have a determination to help develop the children's faith and knowledge and that of their parents, hopefully leading them to making that commitment. The Board of Trustees recognises the efforts that the school has made so far. Teachers are also thinking about how they better ensure that children from non-Catholic families are helped, along with their families, to feel valued as part of the wider family. The Director of Religious Studies is keen to develop the tradition of a Welcome Ceremony/Liturgy for new students and their families.*

*Up till 2017, the school used an information booklet for parents, devised by the DRS, which included a summary of the learning for each strand. These booklets will be updated and simplified this year in line with the Bridging Document. Information about Catholic Special Character and RE learning is included in the newsletter.*

*The updated website includes some Catholic Character information and this will be added to over time. Throughout the school, especially in the Foyer and passageways, there is a richness of information displayed. The theme of every Focus Assembly is displayed as an ongoing reminder to children and adults.*

*The Sacramental Programmes, including preparation for Baptism, are all run by the school. Without a resident parish priest, greater evangelisation responsibilities lie with the school. They are supported by the parish priest, Father Gerard Aynsley, and Board appointee, Father Sani Lam, both based in Dunedin. Celebration of the sacraments is very important at St John's, and recognition is given, in the report to the Proprietor, of the excellent contribution by the Director of Religious Studies. The Principal keeps an up to date record of the preference enrolment data which is shared with the DRS. They aim to strengthen their compilation and use of this data, working as a staff, with the parents, to ensure that the Baptism programme occurs annually.*

### **Faith-based Leadership**

How does faith-based leadership effectively shape the school's vision and direction, so as to ensure a genuine and ongoing encounter with Christ?

*"The Principal and staff have ensured that the special character of the school has been maintained and is integral in all aspects of school life. The commitment of the Principal and staff is even more evident, since Ranfurly has no resident priest." (from Report to the Proprietor 2017)*

*Both the Principal and Director of Religious Studies are faith-filled people who nourish the faith of others and work together with all staff to ensure the school is a family where faith, love and hope are nurtured and grow. There is a desire by all to learn and grow.*

## **DIMENSION 2: TE WHAKATUPU MĀ TE MĀTAURANGA | GROWTH IN KNOWLEDGE**

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

**FOCUS AREAS:**

### **Leadership**

How does effective leadership enable growth in knowledge and understanding, which are necessary factors in the disciple's journey?

*The Principal and Director of Religious Studies provide effective leadership in Religious Education, prayer, liturgies and ongoing learning. The Board of Trustees generously released the DRS for two years to take on the part-time role of Religious Education*

*Adviser to several schools in the Diocese. She also continued her leadership role at the school as well as doing the REA work.*

*Family matters requiring the focus of the DRS this year has meant that the Principal continues to provide leadership normally fulfilled by the DRS. The school operates just as a well-functioning family does, with everyone willing and able to ensure that people are supported, roles are fulfilled and the teaching and learning continues without disruption. The school is looking at ways they can manage further study in collaborative ways and where possible, onsite.*

### **Religious Education**

*How is the Religious Education programme given high status, and what evidence is there that it is soundly managed, appropriately resourced, and professionally delivered by qualified Kaiako (teachers)?*

*In the school's Curriculum Delivery Plan, emphasis is placed on "Religious Education as the prime Essential Learning Area and central to the Catholic Character of the School". This was shown to be the case by time allocation, the placement in the timetable and particularly in the high standard of planning, and the quality teaching and learning observed during the review. Children are really engaged in their learning and were able to talk about their learning with confidence and understanding. The school aims "to help children develop a relationship with God, to understand what the Catholic Church believes and teaches and how Catholic people live and pray so that they become living witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ". (Curriculum Delivery Plan) The Religious Education programme is taught in a way that ensures that what they are learning is related to real life, an integration of believing and living. Teachers talk about their own faith and share how it is growing. Children like what they learn in Religious Education – "not everything can be explained – there is mystery -; we like the mix of topics covered; it stays interesting".*

*"The commitment and dedication of the staff to the special character of the school is evident in their attendance at the Bishop's Forum, Commissioning Mass, various DRS meetings and Catholic Teachers Twilight 'Professional Development' Meetings. Staff meetings regularly include Professional Development, upskilling staff on Strands of the Religious Education Curriculum." (Report to the Proprietor) The Principal also attends Catholic Principal Meetings and Professional Development. Teachers also attend the Catholic Schools' Convention every three years.*

*To enable these connections and professional learning to occur, much travel is required which means significant additional time commitment by the staff and a financial commitment by the Board of Trustees. The Catholic Education Adviser provides*

*assistance to the school onsite when possible. The DRS attends meetings run by Catholic Education Advisor for support, advice and professional learning.*

### **Catholic Curriculum**

How is the Catholic worldview integrated into the daily practices of the school and into all curriculum areas?

*The Focus Assembly every week clearly connects living and learning at St John's in a Catholic context and this is interwoven throughout the day and week regardless of the kind of learning that is occurring. Through learning activities using the Caritas resources, through actions inspired by the Young Vinnies, through attitudes of social justice inspired by the Mercy Charism and Values, the adults and children in the school are living and learning their faith every day.*

### **DIMENSION 3: TE WHAKAATU KARAITIANA | CHRISTIAN WITNESS**

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

#### **FOCUS AREAS:**

##### **Catholic School Community**

How does the school, as an authentic Catholic community, promote and support active Catholic witness and practice in the school and in the parish community of which it is an integral part?

*The Principal, Director of Religious Studies and other staff are active witnesses of faith in the school and also in the Parish. Together they create a genuine Catholic Community, living lives of faith, hope and love. The Principal is secretary on the Parish Council. The school takes part in parish Masses and events. Children take an active role in Sunday Mass through rostered altar serving and bell ringing roles. This is driven and supported by the school with the teacher of the senior students leading and motivating students in these roles. Children's artworks related to the liturgical year and other learning in Religious Education, are displayed in the church which is appreciated by parishioners. Locals are invited to school Masses, liturgies and other events. The relationship with the parish has grown. The school newsletter is available in the church leading to positive comments and responses from parishioners.*

## **Partnership and Collaboration**

Recognising that education is a collaborative responsibility, how does the school build strong commitments to all the groups it relates to including its whanau, its parish, its founding religious congregation, its Proprietor and its Bishop? How do ākonga (students) develop an understanding of, and respect for, the cultural diversity of New Zealand?

*The school recognises and interacts with all relevant groups within and connected to its community. Parents are welcome at the school and information is provided face to face, through newsletters, website, through other digital platforms and through the children. St John's is connected to other Catholic Schools, particularly those in Central Otago and the Lakes District. They are involved in a Community of Learning which includes St Gerard's in Alexandra. The Principal of the local Area School is a member of the St John's Board of Trustees. Senior students attend Technology classes at the Area School and also other events. Both St Peter's and St Kevin's Colleges share their prospectus with the school and these are readily available for parents. Most graduating students attend the local high school or one of the Dunedin Colleges.*

## **Te Tiriti o Waitangi**

How does the school, as an authentic Catholic community, demonstrate a strong commitment to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi, reflecting the commitment of the Aotearoa New Zealand Catholic Church to bicultural partnership?

*St John's has a commitment to the principles of Te Tiriti/The Treaty and this is shown by children learning Te Reo, waiata, karakia and also learning the history through focus on The Treaty itself and for the middle and senior children, the Maori Land Wars. Children were highly engaged, connected and curious about this learning which is led by a tutor (provided by REAP /Rural Education Activities Programme) who is very aware of the school's Catholic Character. Feedback from consultation with Maori families earlier this year, indicated that the "school's Catholic Special Character fitted in well with the underlying principles of tikanga for Maori students".*

## **Pastoral Care**

How does the school ensure that education occurs in a safe, nurturing environment supported by a strong pastoral care network in which each member of the community is known, respected, cared for and aware that they are loved unconditionally by God?

*The Staff treat each other with aroha, mana and tapu. In turn, this is reflected in the way the children treat each other and also the adults around them. There is a safe and*

welcoming environment. Students comment “our teachers support and encourage us; teachers help us when we are struggling.”

*The school welcomes children who have special learning needs. NZ Sign Language is used in the school and is the legacy from having student with a severe hearing impairment attending St John’s during her Primary schooling. At that time all staff members learned NZSL and continue to use it to this day.*

*As mentioned earlier, St John’s is a family. They pray together. They share each other’s concerns and worries. They respond so generously in times of difficulty and crisis. The Principal and Director of Religious Studies show strong leadership in pastoral care but the attitude permeates through all the staff regardless of their role, the Board of Trustees, the Parent Teacher Association, the children, the parents, the parishioners. The two priests from Dunedin spend as much time as possible in the school and district and support the work of the school.*

*Quotes from staff: “The Principal is a great listener; we nurture each other; we are a family- nurtured and valued; we have respect for each other; our faith helps us; in my twenty-five years at St John’s I have always been supported, valued, respected; staff are more than colleagues-there is a deeper relationship; people listen.”*

### **Service and Outreach**

Recognising that each person is called as a Christian to take care of others and to work for justice and equality, in what ways does the school explicitly base service and outreach activities in the Gospel message, and grow the practice and understanding of caring for others?

*I quote from the 2017 Report to the Proprietor: “The Young Vinnies continue their active service in the larger community in the Maniototo. Their activities have included a 24-hour challenge, a work day, a bake stall and a talent show, raising a significant amount of money for Caritas. The students support national events such as Clean Up NZ Week and regularly hold mufti days to support various charities. Visits to the Hospital and Chalet by the students are greatly appreciated. Residents at the Chalet are also invited to the school for various events.” The teacher of the Senior students is proactive in helping and encouraging them to recognise injustice, to respond to people in need, to be inclusive, to be active Catholics in the school, parish and wider community.*

#### **DIMENSION 4: TE KAITIAKITANGA ME TO WHAKAPAKARI I TE TUAKIRI KATORIKA | SAFEGUARDING AND STRENGTHENING CATHOLIC CHARACTER**

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

##### **The School's response regarding progress from the recommendations of the 2015 review:**

1. That data from the self-review process has strong links to goals in the annual plan:  
*Attempts have been made to link data from self-review into annual plan under "Catholic Special Character".*
2. That the strengthened charter has aspirational goals for Special Character rather than business as usual tasks:  
*Aspirational goals for Special Character have been written into Charter under Strategic Section 2018 -2020 "Catholic Character Goal".*
3. That the Staff and Board look at the enrolment data and consider an evangelisation plan:  
*Staff and Board have not formally looked at enrolment data in this way but both the Director of Religious Studies and Principal have and will continue to invite parents of children not baptised to enrol their children in the Baptism preparation programme run by the DRS. A meeting for those interested was held by the Parish Priest and DRS in Term 1 2018 and will be followed up.*
4. That the Board of Trustees continue to support the formation and development of staff:  
*This is still an area for development. As a staff the DRS supports everyone with professional development and professional readings at each staff meeting. What has been covered is displayed so that it can be used as reference and reminders There has been discussion, as a staff, about undertaking Catholic Institute papers, but as yet this is to be actioned. The Board of Trustees support all three fulltime teachers to go to the Catholic Convention.*
5. That the school continue to explore aspects of the digital resource that will support their teaching of Religious Education:  
*All staff are using Faith Alive and the Catholic Diocese of Dunedin website resources.*
6. That the school consider other opportunities to help parents find faith-based material that will help them support their child:  
*Wednesday Word was used when it was given to the school. The DRS has developed sacramental programmes which she teaches which include parent information and work for children to do at home with their parents.*
7. That the Parish and School look at building leadership for Eucharist as a way of providing more opportunities for Eucharist:  
*Since the last review the school has had more opportunities for Eucharist through the priests who come to Ranfurly from Dunedin, and (previously) Alexandra. At present, the DRS is the only Eucharistic Minister on the staff.*

## **FOCUS AREAS:**

### **Stewardship**

How does Governance and Management safeguard and strengthen Catholic Character within the areas of Organisation, Employment, Professional Development and Enrolment?

*The vision and mission statements strongly reflect the school's Catholic Special Character. The strategic direction is clear with objectives reflecting these statements and linked to the School's Values. The planned actions for 2018, in relation to Special Catholic Character link well to their stated goals of further developing partnership with and receiving support from other Catholic Schools, the parish community, the priests who serve the parish and ultimately sharing their Special Catholic Character with the community.*

*Catholic Character Review is an area for further development, particularly in light of the change to the Dimensions and focus areas, to ensure there is a cycle of review that reflects these.*

*While the Board is aware of the appointment and employment procedures that need to be followed, no permanent appointments have been required.*

*Catholic Character responsibilities at Board and staff level are understood.*

*Enrolment procedures are in line with requirements but in the absence of a resident priest, the school experiences some difficulties and delays with regard to correct completion of and signing off on Preference Certificates.*

### **Legal Obligations**

*St John's is compliant with its integration agreement with regard to:*

- 1. Number of S464 positions held*
- 2. Maximum roll compared with actual roll*
- 3. Number of open place students*
- 4. The attestation document is completed annually. A comprehensive report for the Proprietor is completed and submitted annually. The school communicates with the Proprietor as required.*

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT FROM THIS REVIEW**

### **ENCOUNTER WITH CHRIST**

#### **Spiritual Formation**

- *Ensure that relevant scripture, related either to the Liturgical Year, the current Learning in Religious Education, school values and/or the theme for the day, is an essential part of the daily morning prayer*
- *That the excellent and very meaningful weekly whole school Focus Time, be renamed to truly reflect its rich emphasis on Special Catholic Character*

#### **Evangelisation**

- *Continue to use the data available on preference of enrolment forms to support the efforts being made to work with families whose children are not yet baptised, with the aim of leading them and their children into fuller connection with their faith and parish community.*
- *That the Director of Religious Studies has the opportunity to expand the current Special Catholic Character Information on the Website and also be able to regularly update details on learning, prayer and liturgy in order to help the adults in the school family grow in their knowledge and understanding.*

#### **Faith-based leadership**

- *That the Board supports all teachers of Religious Education to work towards a formal qualification in Religious Education or Special Catholic Character.*
- *That consideration is given for all teachers and also to Year 7 & 8 Student's, with the guidance of the DRS, to have the opportunity to prepare and lead Focus Time, thus growing leadership.*

### **RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE**

#### **Religious Education**

- *Provide opportunities through professional development for teachers to become familiar with the Religious Education Bridging document to incorporate the necessary changes into their teaching practice, using the resource provided by National Centre for Religious Study and support from the Catholic Education Adviser.*
- *Encourage and support each other to become involved in study papers in order to build up knowledge in theology and scripture, especially as it relates to the Religious Education Curriculum and collaboratively find creative ways to enable teachers to fulfil this commitment, with the support of experts, such as the Catholic Education Adviser, and to manage this mostly within current school expectations and timeframes.*

**CHRISTIAN WITNESS**

***Catholic School Community***

- *Consider ways of revamping the school values in line with the Mercy Charism so that through a single lens the school's identity and way of living and learning are clear to all.*

**SAFEGUARDING AND STRENGTHENING CATHOLIC CHARACTER**

- *With support from the Catholic Education Adviser, set up a system of internal Catholic Character Review focusing on one dimension (or aspect thereof) per year and, using identified areas for growth, set related goals for the following year.*
- *That the Principal and Parish Priest consider ways to simplify the process for enrolment, to ensure that the Preference Certificates are correctly completed, taking into account the distance that the Parish Priest and the families have to travel.*

**Catholic Special Character Review Team**

**May 2018**

**Phil O'Connell-Cooper**

**Lead Reviewer**

