



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

**CATHOLIC SPECIAL CHARACTER REVIEW  
FOR DEVELOPMENT**

Report on an external review of

**TE KURA Ō HATO MARIA  
ST. MARY'S SCHOOL  
TAURANGA**

**SEPTEMBER 2020**

**Review conducted on: 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> September**

**Review Team:**

**Zita Smith** (Lead Reviewer)

**Andrea Colebourn & Dave MacMillan** (Accompanying Principal Reviewers)



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## SCHOOL DETAILS

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**Name** St Mary's Catholic School Tauranga  
**Address** 11, 13th Avenue Tauranga  
**School Type** State Integrated, Co-educational Years 1-6  
**Decile** 8

### **Ethnic Composition (actual number and % to the nearest whole)**

**Maori: (12%)**

**Pasifika: (4%)**

**Pakeha: (55%)**

**Asian: (21%)**

**Principal** James Murray  
**Director of Religious Studies** Teresa Rush  
**BOT Chairperson** Tony Lenton  
**Parish Priest** Father Philip Billing

**Date of on-site review: 14 – 16<sup>th</sup> September**

**Date of this report:**

The Catholic special character review of St. Mary's School Tauranga was conducted by the Catholic Schools Education Service review team of:

***Zita Smith: Lead Reviewer***

***Andrea Colebourn & Dave MacMillan: Accompanying Principal Reviewers***



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## THE AIMS AND FRAMEWORK OF THE CATHOLIC SPECIAL CHARACTER REVIEW

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The New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference wishes the review to show how effective the school is in handing on the faith and forming a new generation of Catholics, and how students have grown in faith as a result of the Religious Education programme.

The External Review process is based on the requirements found in the document, "*Catholic Special Character Review for Development*", Aotearoa NZ Catholic Integrated Schools, NZ Catholic Education Office, 2018 (Draft).

The written report looks at Catholic Character using the four key dimensions:

- Encounter with Christ - *Te Tūtaki ki ā Te Karaiti*
- Growth in Knowledge – *Te Whakatupu mā Te Mātauranga*
- Christian Witness – *Te Whakaatu Karaitiana*
- Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Character - *Te Kaitiakitanga me te Whakapakari i te Tuakiri Katorika*

Reviewers encourage and commend best practice, and, working with the school, provide recommendations to further strengthen and develop the Catholic culture of the school.



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## REPORT SUMMARY

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St Mary's, a full primary school with a roll of over 400 students, was established over 75 years ago in 1942 by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny. Their values, *Verax et Clemens* (truth and mercy) are still integral to the school. The presence of a Chapel in the school supports the strong spiritual climate, nurtured in Catholic faith traditions and regular prayer opportunities. The school is now working to develop greater cohesion and clarity around its central message.

The school is part of the Parish of St. Thomas Aquinas of Tauranga Moana, along with St. Thomas More School and Aquinas College, and is located some distance from the local church of St. Mary's.

Parents describe the school as a community with a Catholic ethos that is immersive and holistic. It is multi-layered, providing many varied opportunities that develop children physically, spiritually, academically and socially, with committed teachers who know their students as individuals. The school has sound procedures, seeking always to serve the common good with strong faith traditions and a drive for high standards of excellence.

The Catholic Character is central to the school leadership. The principal, who took up the position at the start of this year, embodies an authentic, faith based life. He and the DP are a visible and welcome presence in and around the school, connecting with students and their families. The DRS is a strong and supportive leader of the Catholic culture and of the RE Curriculum. Communication is transparent and open.

The mandated NZ Religious Education Curriculum is planned for and delivered with integrity in classrooms where teachers and students relate in a respectful and relaxed manner. Students are engaged and interested in their learning. The school has begun working to integrate RE into all areas of learning with greater student agency, and this will continue to be a focus over the next few years.

The principal, leadership team and staff, with the support of a committed Board Chair and Trustees, are unified in ensuring that the Catholic Character of St. Mary's School is central to their strategic plans for the future.



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## SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE PREVIOUS EXTERNAL REVIEW

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### Key Recommendations from the 2017 Review

- 1. Continue to build and strengthen parish/school relationships.**

Since the last Review, a new parish priest and new principal have been appointed. They have a positive professional relationship. The school is involved in the parish in a variety of ways and the principal and DRS are working to continue to build this relationship.
- 2. Design ways to better involve and communicate with parents about the RE programme and Catholic Character.**

Digital portals *See Saw* and *Hero*, are being used to communicate with parents and to share student work. The weekly Gospel reflection in the Newsletter is a way of connecting parents with Catholic spirituality, as well as through invitations to class and school Masses, Sacramental programmes and Feast Day liturgies and celebrations.
- 3. Ensure regular staff PLD, specifically:**
  - That staff, including the leadership team, to build up their certification hours by attending relevant professional development.**

Greater priority is given to teacher PLD in Catholic Character. This is being managed and tracked by DRS.
  - That all staff complete the Understanding Sexuality course and ensure health topics are linked to Catholic teaching.**

Two teachers are participating in this course in 2020 and other teachers will take this up in 2021. See Recommendations.
- 4. Continue to develop student learning and engagement in RE and Catholic Character.**

The RE Curriculum is being planned and taught with integrity for the required hours. The Catholic Character is a priority in the school and students are immersed in this.

### Issues of Non- Compliance 2017

- 1. The school is non-compliant in the number of non-preference students. This has occurred since 2013. The current number is 35.** This has been addressed and there are now 18 out of a possible 20 non-preference students.
- 2. The correct number of Tagged teachers for St Mary's is 14 including the Principal, DRS and DP.** There are ten tagged teachers required and currently ten employed, with the approval of Education Manager of Catholic Schools in the Hamilton Diocese.



3. **Two new proprietor's appointees are required.** This has been addressed. However there are currently three proprietor's appointees due to a resignation and a fourth is currently being sought.

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## 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?*

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### AREAS OF SUCCESS

#### Spiritual Formation

The school's vision, *"With God, we strive to be our best, be prepared for the world; and be true to our Catholic faith, to others and ourselves,"* is evident as soon as you enter the school. The school's Motto, *Do a little good*, comes from Blessed Anne Marie Javouhey, foundress of the Cluny Sisters and is well known by the students. The St. Joseph of Cluny Motto, *Verax et Clemens* (truth and mercy) is found on the school's coat-of-arms. Students demonstrate sound knowledge about their school's founding order. The Gospel values of tika truth, aroha mercy, whakapono faith and māramatanga wisdom are written and expressed bilingually, and the four learning areas of the school are named after them. Teachers focus on the values through liturgies and class prayer and through expectations for behaviour. "Christ-like Certificates" are presented at assemblies to students who demonstrate the values. The school song incorporates the Gospel values. The "BEs" are phrases painted on school buildings and in the foyer. Examples of these are; Be embraced and welcome. Be the difference. Be Christ-like. Be reflective. Be creative. They describe *how* the values are lived out at St. Mary's.

The school is a prayerful place with varied and rich prayer as an integral part of its daily routine. This includes individual and community prayer using traditional (e.g. the Rosary in the month of October) and contemporary forms. A variety of prayer forms are explored to nurture and express faith e.g. meditation, liturgical dance, drama. Every Monday the school meets for prayer with a focus on a Gospel reading, led by a different teacher and class each week. Recently, because of Covid-19 Level 2, this has been done via Zoom, with students acting out the Gospel followed by a message from the principal. Senior students are buddied with junior classes to lead the prayer and model prayerfulness in a tuakana-teina relationship which teachers report as being very successful. Most prayers are bilingual and students are confident in their classroom greeting which is always expressed in te reo Māori. Staff pray regularly, with two staff members rostered together each week to prepare and lead. Staff report that this enriches their individual spirituality.



There are rich retreat opportunities for the whole staff at the first Teacher Only Day of the year, when they gather at the Cluny Retreat Centre next door to the school. This year's focus was to develop different ways to pray in the school environment e.g. using sacred spaces. The Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny are supportive and generous with their time and expertise, offering themselves as a spiritual resource. They are seen as the community's "living charism." At the end of each year, Year 6 students participate in a spiritual retreat.

Students attend Mass on a regular basis. The school is most fortunate to have a Chapel on site. One class per week attends Mass (counted as a parish weekday Mass) in the Chapel, followed by morning tea for parents and parishioners who are always invited. Once a term, Benediction and Exposition are held in the school Chapel. Also once a term, the school attends a Sunday children's Mass at the local church, where students participate in various ministries. Because the school is some distance from the local church, all students are bussed over to attend Mass in school-time once each term, which usually coincides with a major Feast Day. The school recognises All Saints/Souls Day, when, following Mass, students take flowers to the graves of past Cluny Sisters where they say karakia and sing waiata.

## **Evangelisation**

The Sacramental Programme is parish based with effective communication and support from St Mary's. Those receiving the sacraments are recognized at Monday Liturgy and also in the school Newsletter. Baptism for students already at school is usually run in the school by a teacher while the parish takes responsibility for parent education. Often the baptism will be celebrated within the classroom Mass, and the student recognized at Monday Liturgy. Recently, as a result of personal invitations, the number of in-school baptisms has increased, reducing the non-preference student roll.

The Catholic Character is a main focus of each newsletter. The principal's contribution includes the weekend Gospel with a commentary. The current RE Strand being taught is published in the Newsletter with an explanation for each level with key learnings highlighted. The school website reflects the Catholic Character throughout, as does the Facebook page. The parish and school's Facebook pages often share links, demonstrating a strong connection. Staff communicate the content of RE and the work of their children through digital platforms like *Seesaw* and *Hero*.

Tagged teachers are involved in Parish ministries such as the Parish Leadership Team, Liturgy of the Word, Children's Liturgy, Sacramental Programmes, Music ministry, and Eucharistic Ministry. Non-Catholic staff are invited to learn about the Catholic faith and are supported in their learning as catechumens should they wish to commit themselves to life as a Catholic.



## **Faith Based Leadership**

The new principal leads with tangible, authentic Catholic leadership. He is seen as being a leader who demonstrates faith in action in his every day actions, at liturgies, during staff meetings and in the community. He enables and encourages faith in others and is an active and visible parishioner with ministry roles in the local church.

Along with the principal, the DRS is an active Catholic leader who has worked hard to advance her certification and qualification levels in faith-based leadership.

The principal and the DRS work collaboratively, supported by the senior leadership team to articulate and promote a faith-based vision for the school. They are supported by the Parish Priest and by the Cluny Sisters.

## **NEXT STEPS**

- Ensure a cohesive, clear central message (Refer recommendations)
- Continue to explore the development of an outdoor sacred space





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## 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?*

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### AREAS OF SUCCESS

#### Leadership

The Principal and DRS are faith-filled, positive role models who provide effective leadership, collaborating to ensure teachers receive development in Religious Education and Catholic Special Character. Currently the school leadership, with staff and students, are engaging in discussion and planning on how to synthesise a future-focused culture, faith and life for the school.

The DRS is very well qualified, with a Certificate in Catholic Educational leadership. She provides effective leadership for the delivery of the Religious Education curriculum. She leads planning and provides professional development during staff meetings as well as resources and assistance for the new term and throughout the seasons of the Church's year. She provides support and assistance in liturgical and Mass preparations, ensuring that all liturgical celebrations are of high quality.

The role of the DRS is given appropriate status in terms of such things as being a member of the senior leadership team, having appropriate release time, appropriate management units, and having opportunities for her leadership capability to be developed. The DRS leads an RE Committee of teachers as a way of growing their capability in leading this aspect of Catholic Character.

The leadership team are seen as good decision makers who lead by example with professionalism, compassion and empathy. Teams meet regularly and offer strong support to one another.

#### Religious Education

The mandated NZ RE Curriculum is being taught faithfully and as a priority in the school. Teachers are committed to planning and teaching the curriculum with integrity. The termly planning overview always starts with RE to ensure that it is central to the curriculum. Planning is done collaboratively in teams, using the *Faith Alive* online resource, with teachers taking turns to plan for the week ahead, preparing lessons in the form of slide-shows, with follow-up activities relevant to the learning. Strands are taught over a two year cycle and teachers are working to integrate RE into other areas



e.g. a Gospel as reading with vocab and comprehension. The Caritas Lenten programme is used in Term One, with one of the principles of Catholic Social Teaching as the overarching theme. Pre-tests are carried out before teaching to assess where the students are at and to help determine the focus level (e.g. Y5/6), and the same test is given at the end to determine student learning. Teachers ensure they embed the theology into their weekly planning. They provide a variety of relevant and real-life tasks to engage students and give them experiences of faith in action.

The Senior Team is working to improve engagement with a more student centred, hands-on approach, using Godly Minds (theology focus), Godly Chats (talking and asking about the impact of faith), and Godly Hands (responding through action). The children receive repeated messages and visuals during teaching lessons to help them understand and embed conceptual understandings. The Middle Team is working on developing a localised curriculum, making greater links to the student's lives and the Junior school is developing play-based learning, providing activities where children learn about Jesus and God through play, to which they respond very positively.

The culture of the school is characterised by warm relationships in all classrooms. Children are settled and friendly, showing respect towards one another and to all adults in the school. Teachers have worked to develop strong relationships with students and whanau which are inclusive and respectful. They know their students as individuals and are aware of the needs of the family. Children with special needs are included and accepted.

## **Catholic Curriculum**

All teachers engage in a regular, planned programme of Catholic Character professional learning and development. The DRS keeps a Staff Development Tracker of all PLD and hours that contribute to certification. Teachers keep a Professional RE Journal and have an appraisal Catholic Character goal. PLD is often in the form of Papers offered through TCI. Three members of staff were supported by the Board and principal to complete a Postgraduate study in Leadership and Catholic Culture. Five teachers completed RE 501 in 2019. Two teachers have completed RE101 and TH101 and two teachers are currently completing *"Having Life to the Full - Understanding Sexuality."*

## **NEXT STEPS**

- Develop the teaching of RE as an integrated curriculum (see Recommendations)
- Develop a Health and Sexuality school-wide plan (see Recommendations)



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## TE WHAKAATU KARAITIANA- CHRISTIAN WITNESS

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

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### AREAS OF SUCCESS

#### **Catholic School Community**

The principal, DRS and other teachers in S464 positions are active witnesses of faith in the school and in their parish, through a variety of ministries e.g. Eucharistic Minister, Sacristan, Proclaiming the Word.

The school displays many signs and symbols that bear witness to the Catholic identity of the school. The original school building has the phrase, “*Jesus Christ, True God and True Man,*” engraved above the entrance way, along with the dedication to St. Joseph of Cluny. The school’s Chapel is an obvious sign of faith. Classrooms display children’s work in RE and have a prayer space. The foyer displays the school’s vision over a whole wall. The school Houses, Cluny, Pompallier, Viard and Ryan are named after significant Catholic leaders in the life of the local parish and of New Zealand.

The school is a welcoming environment where all are treated with hospitality and courtesy. A hallmark of the school is transparent communication, led by the principal. The school is seen as inclusive and accepting, where people feel listened to and valued. Diverse cultures are embraced and every year Tongan Language Week, Samoan Language Week and Te Wiki o te Māori are held. A Korean Martyrs’ Mass is held annually in the school Chapel. Korean students lead this, bringing a friend and attending with their families. A morning tea is shared afterwards.

#### **Partnership & Collaboration**

The Catholic concept of community is evidenced in the school, especially through the relationship between the school and the Cluny Sisters, whose support and encouragement for staff and students is both spiritual and practical. The school and parish have a strong relationship. The Parish Priest comes in to the school on a regular basis, sometimes standing outside to talk to parents before school. Several students are parish altar servers, the school *Sursum Corda* Choir sings at a parish Mass four times a year, parishioners are invited to class masses, the school has a display board in the church alongside one for Aquinas College, and the school and parish Newsletters are shared, often linking each other’s information on their respective Facebook pages. The parish community is invited to and support school events e.g. Benediction, class Mass.



The school is actively involved with the two other Catholic Schools in the parish who come together for Catholic Schools Day, sharing a Mass together followed by fun activities. St. Mary's has a strong link to Aquinas College, and 80% of St. Mary's students attend the College for their high school education. Students from the college visit the school to support students in different ways. The principal comes in to talk to senior students each year. He also sits on the St. Mary's School Board. During lockdown, both schools shared similar messages to the community.

## **Te Tiriti o Waitangi**

The school has a commitment to, and educates for, a deeper understanding of the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and the bicultural nature of this country. The school's values, prayers and greetings are all expressed bilingually.

The school has a commitment to learning and teaching about local Māori and pakehā history with a regular focus on the Battle of Gate Pā, Parihaka and Matariki. A liturgy is incorporated into the learning.

The school recognises Māori as tangata whenua and has an understanding of the principles of partnership and participation. Initial connections to the local iwi of Hūria Marae in Judea, have begun. Six teachers have completed a course, He Papa Tikanga through the local Wānanga and are enrolled to continue with He Papa Reo. Cultural responsiveness is a school focus and the Hau Tū self-review tool for curriculum review is being used to support this.

The school works to develop an understanding of Te Ao Māori and communicates this with all ākonga. The school has a Kapa Haka group and has just employed a new tutor to lead this. Over the course of the year staff have presented their pepeha orally, visually and in written form on one of the walls in the staffroom, identifying their iwi, rohe and hapū. A mihi whakatau is held to welcome new students and their whanau each term. Students all learn the school haka.

## **Pastoral Care**

Staff feel affirmed and valued. Staff note that the leadership team is particularly supportive, showing genuine care for them as individuals. The leadership team often provide lunches and morning teas to celebrate special occasions. All those spoken to, affirmed the principal's leadership in demonstrating pastoral care for staff, students and their families. Professional development this year has been around health and well-being.

The mana and tapu of each individual is acknowledged and upheld. Systems are in place to ensure that students and their families are personally known, cared for, and provided



with support as required. Staff are attuned to students with needs and along with the leadership team and office manager who demonstrates a particular ministry in pastoral care, take action to provide support. The school's PTA prepares meals which are kept in the school freezer to be distributed as needed.

### **Covid-19 Level 4 Lockdown:**

The handling of Covid-19 Level 4 Lockdown this year exemplifies the pastoral care of the school. Parents spoken to were unanimous in their praise for the way the school managed the unique situation. Families appreciated the “gentle start and gentle return” to school, led by the principal and staff. During lockdown, communication was regular and transparent. Learning activities were offered but with no pressure to complete them. The Catholic Character was woven into the online learning. The children were encouraged to set up a prayer area, to have prayer time and to attend Mass via Zoom. Special times like Easter and Anzac Day were commemorated through relevant activities, and every day, the Principal read a picture book. Families were contacted regularly and those identified as being vulnerable had additional contact with support offered and provided.

### **Service and Outreach**

The school has an explicitly Christ-centred culture of justice, service and outreach in local, national and international communities. An example of this is its relationship with a neighbouring low decile State school. Students and parents donate footwear and clothing and a group of students visited St. Mary's for a shared lunch and social activities.

The school supports local and national Catholic groups in their campaigns and activities (e.g. Caritas which is the focus for all Term 1 learning in RE) and St. Vincent de Paul.

The school provides opportunities for students to contribute actively to the life of the local community. Some examples of service are regular can donations for St. Vincent de Paul, visiting the local Rest Home, singing in the *Sursum Corda* Choir and running fundraising mufti days. Students in the senior school apply for roles as Communication, Library, Liturgy, Sports and House leaders.

### **NEXT STEPS**

- Paint crosses in the House colours on the areas where Houses gather. (This will be the start of those areas having a visual and some history of that House displayed)
- Complete a mural, creating a replica of the stained glass window in the Cook Islands St. Joseph of Cluny school, using Sr Gabrielle's stained glass window example.



## 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?*

**Actual Roll:** 444

**Maximum Roll:** 500

**Non-preference Maximum** as per Integration Agreement: **Actual No:** 20 (4 % of max roll)

**Actual non preference:** 18 (3.6 % of max roll)

**TOTAL staffing entitlement: 23.7**

**No. S464 positions required** based on **TOTAL** staffing entitlement: **14**

**No. S464 positions required** based on **ROLL-BASED** staffing entitlement: **10**

**No. actual S464 positions: 10**

Preference Criteria	Number of Students	% actual roll
5.1	349	79%
5.2	3	1%
5.3	43	10%
5.4	20	5%
5.5	0	0
Preference with no criteria	0	0
<b>Total of signed preference roll</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>93%</b>
Non-Preference Roll	18	4%
International Fee Paying Students	7	2%



## **Stewardship**

The school's Charter and Strategic Plan which leads with a Catholic Character goal, clearly demonstrates the Board's priorities for the school. The recent process to identify and appoint a new principal to uphold and strengthen the school's Catholic Character, is an example of the Board's stewardship.

Board meetings always begin with prayer. The first strategic priority of the school's charter is focused around the Catholic Character. The Board receives regular reports from the leadership team on progress towards its goals on Catholic Character and on Religious Education, and the DRS will attend to speak to her report when required.

The Proprietor's appointees are reviewing each policy to ensure all policies reflect the Catholic Character. Board members have participated in training offered by NZSTA around the principles of Te Tiriti Ō Waitangi as applied in the governance of the school and cultural responsiveness is to be a key component in all policies as they are reviewed. The Board Chair and principal have a strong and open professional relationship, meeting regularly to ensure any issues are discussed in an honest and confidential forum.

## **Legal Obligations**

The school is meeting its obligations under its Integration Agreement in terms of numbers of preference/non-preference students.

In terms of the numbers of S464 tagged teachers, the school has been approved to use its Roll Based staffing to determine its tagged teacher requirement and this is being met. Two non tagged teachers have completed the required papers in RE and Theology and have gained approval by the Bishop of the Diocese to teach the RE Curriculum.

Currently the Board has three Proprietor's Appointees, and with a fourth having recently stepped down, the process of identifying a new Proprietor's Appointee is underway.

## **NEXT STEPS**

- Include internal evaluation, based on the four dimensions of the *Āhuatanga Katorika Kaupapa Arotake Me Te Ahu Whakamua Catholic Special Character Review for Development*, into the Board Triennial Workplan.
- Make contact with the school's policies and procedures provider, *SchoolDocs*, to ensure greater flexibility in being able to personalise policies to better reflect the uniqueness of the Catholic Character of St. Mary's School.



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## RECOMMENDATIONS

*It is expected that the Board of Trustees and staff will include these recommendations in its strategic and annual plans and address them fully before the next external review. Catholic Schools Education Services staff are available to offer professional support as required.*

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### *Encounter with Christ*

- 1. Rationalize the school's messaging to ensure cohesion and clarity between the vision, values, charism motto and BE behavioural expectations of the school.**
  - Identify Gospel stories that illustrate and enable the school values to be described as *Gospel* values.

### *Growth in Knowledge*

- 2. Continue to develop an authentic, integrated RE curriculum that engages and empowers students.**
  - Plan for RE using an overarching thematic approach (based on, for example, the principles of Catholic social teaching), integrating the Catholic worldview into all aspects of the curriculum.
  - Develop greater student agency in the learning process and student voice to evaluate their learning and describe their faith journey in the light of this (affective assessment).
- 3. Write and teach a school-wide Health & Sexuality programme that reflects the teachings of the Catholic Church.**

The review team is confident that the St. Mary's School leadership (Board, Principal and DRS) have the willingness and ability to address the recommendations of this report.

In concluding this report, the review team wish to thank the St. Mary's School community for their aroha and manaakitanga during our visit and for the opportunity to observe and the privilege to experience the Catholic Character of the school.

Zita Smith  
***Lead Reviewer***