



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF AUCKLAND

**Pompallier Diocesan Centre,
30 New Street,
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ĀHUATANGA KATORIKA KAUPAPA AROTAKE ME TO AHU WHAKAMUA

CATHOLIC SPECIAL CHARACTER EXTERNAL REVIEW REPORT

STELLA MARIS SCHOOL SILVERDALE

Review Visit: 18-19 September, 2019

Confirmed Report: 22 October, 2019

NGĀ WHĀINGA O TE AROTAKE - AIMS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

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

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

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

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

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

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

SCHOOL INFORMATION

School Name:	Stella Maris School, Silverdale
Address:	50 Silverdale St, Silverdale 0944
Principal:	Mr Alan Watts
Director of Special Character:	Mr Karl Hobman
Parish Priest:	Fr. Emile Frische
BOT Chair:	Mr Derek Molloy
Reviewers:	Mrs. Colleen Gleeson, Mr Philip Mahoney
Accompanying Principal:	Mr Paul Coakley
School Type:	Year 1-6 (girls and boys),

Introduction

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

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

Situated in the North of Auckland, the school is a Diocesan school which serves the Parish of Hibiscus Coast, St John the Evangelist, Orewa and St Francis by the Sea, Whangaparaoa. It is the only Catholic School between Mairangi Bay and Whangarei. The school is situated on a large piece of land (4.4762 hectares) in the Silverdale township, 4.8 kilometers from a church.

Response to Key Recommendations from the 2015 External Review

- ***That the Special Catholic Character of the school and the Catholic Church's commitment to bi-culturalism is included in the Treaty of Waitangi Policy.***

This has been completed

- ***That Religious Education be taught by all classes at the same time and the Director of Religious Studies be given release during this time, so as to have the opportunity to observe teachers teaching and provide support.***

The previous Director of Religious Studies did observe teachers and support them with feedback. The new Director of Religious Studies is receiving one day per week release for this year. He leads Religious Education development meetings and attends classroom prayers across the school, as does the Principal. His next step is to begin classroom observations.

Response to Areas for Development from the 2015 External Review

- ***That at the next Charter Review, the school evaluate the core values and possibly combine some so there are not so many and identify the Gospel passages where they can be found.***

The school reviewed its Marian values and has decided to keep them as is. The students, staff and community are familiar with, and try to uphold these values and reinforce them to each other. See next steps on Page 6 of this report.

- ***Once a concise description of the Stella Maris charism is completed it is suggested that it be placed on the school website and in documentation where appropriate.***

A concise description of the Stella Maris charism has been developed and placed on the school website, the charter, all handbooks and in the enrolment pack for new families.

- ***That the staff look at how efficiently they use the spaces they have for effective teaching and learning.***

The atrium spaces are now free of storage and are set up as workspaces. These are sometimes used as an extra teaching and learning space. The resource rooms have been set up as efficient storage rooms and there are less resources cluttering classrooms.

- ***That the school work with the website designer to ensure it can be easily found through a web-search such as 'Google'.***

Metatags have been added to the school website so that when a search is made for 'Catholic school in Silverdale' the first site that comes up is the school site.

- ***That the Annual Plan and the Governance and Management Plan be combined.***

This has been completed.

- ***That the school work with the Parish to provide extra priests for Rite 2 Reconciliation in Lent and Advent.***

The school has endeavoured to arrange this but the availability of priests and the distance appear to be barriers. The new Parish Priest is now providing Rite 2 on several occasions throughout the year at the school and this has been working well.

- ***That a Stella Maris Charism progressive programme be developed for all levels of the school to develop a deep understanding of the symbolism and meaning behind the charism.***

The Director of Religious Studies has made this a focus across the school and has broken the charism down with teachers across the levels. He has established a Religious Education folder in the Google drive with resources to support the charism.

- ***That each year the teacher, in a particular room, teaches about the saint the class is named after and the children look to the saint for inspiration throughout the year.***

At the beginning of each year classes spend time looking in-depth at the saint the room is named after. A photo and notes on the saint are displayed at the door of each room. The Principal when visiting classes for prayer will often ask the students about their saint.

- ***That the Board of Trustees ensures that the Catholic Character of the school is embedded throughout all policies.***

The Board of Trustees policy review committee has had a special focus when reviewing policies to ensure the Catholic Character is contained in the policy. They have also begun adding a Maori proverb to each policy to further enrich it.

- ***To give Religious Education a higher status within the curriculum it is suggested that it be taught in all classrooms first thing in the morning after prayer.***

The Director of Religious Studies has worked on this and it happens most of the time. There are some instances where changes to timetable are necessary. The Religious Education Programme and the Special Catholic Character of the school are well considered in all teacher and school planning.

- ***That after using the new planning model for one or two years, it is suggested that it be evaluated to ensure it is meeting the planning requirements for the school.***

The concept model for planning is reviewed each year and meets the needs of the teachers and students. The Director of Religious Studies has been focussing on the 'Religious Education Bridging Document' recently and looking once again at the Religious Education programme planning. This has been a focus of the 2019 internal review.

- ***The next step for the school is to use its formation teaching and teacher inquiry approach to make changes in pedagogy to enhance the teaching and learning in Religious Education across the school.***

Teachers use an inquiry model in their teaching and learning and this has been formalised in the planning of Religious Education. Regular professional discussions are held at Religious Education staff meetings and Team planning meetings.

- ***The teachers integrate the Special Catholic Character, Marian values and a Catholic perspective into concept planning rather than try to fit the Religious Education Strands into the planning.***

Teachers are becoming much more aware of how to integrate the Special Catholic Character throughout their curriculum planning. The bridging document has made this more manageable.

Encounter with Christ – Te Tutaki ki a Te Karaiti

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

Areas of Success

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

Stella Maris has a strongly embedded Marian Charism based on Our Lady, the Star of the Sea (Stella Maris). They live by ten Marian values, based on the life of Mother Mary – Compassion, Service, Obedience, Empathy, Strength, Loyalty, Trust, Courage, Faith, Wisdom. Students are awarded certificates at assembly for being seen living these values. The school documentation also states 'Core Gospel Values' – Justice, Service, Care of the Vulnerable, Respect for Human Dignity and Compassion.

Classroom prayers are a sacred and reverent time across the school. The prayers are varied and some classes use audio visual equipment to support the theme, waiata and prayers. The school has their own school prayer which is said each day and a school song. Students lead prayer where possible and

senior students can choose any theme they want when they lead their class prayer. The whole school says the Rosary each day through the month of October. Evidence of the relationship the students are developing with Jesus was found in the reverence students showed during prayers in general. Prayer kete are distributed from each classroom to one family each night, parents spoke very positively about having the experience of family prayer led by their children. Staff gather for prayer once per week before the staff meeting.

Stella Maris school combines with St John the Evangelist Church, Orewa twice per year for Sunday Parish Masses. A school Mass is held each year at the St Patrick and St Joseph Cathedral in the city. One term per year is dedicated to having buddy Masses in the school library. A Mass or a Liturgy is held on feast days and special occasions in the school library. The school attends the church for Mass on August 15 to celebrate their feast day. Classes take turns to prepare and present a liturgy for the school held every second Thursday morning. The school endeavours to deal with the logistics and cost of transporting the students and staff to a church for Mass as often as possible.

Walking into the school, it is very obvious you are in a Catholic school. A very tall cross is erected on the roundabout in the driveway and at the base of the cross is a cross-shaped garden filled with painted stones. Each new family who starts at the school paints a stone and places it in the garden. As you walk to the administration building you are met by a large white statue of Mary surrounded by white flowering bushes and the gardens at the entry of the school are scattered with smaller white angel statues. The Marian values are written on the steps and windows at the entrance. The entrance foyer is large and all displays and signage reflect the Catholic Character.

Stella Maris School supports the Sacramental programmes of the surrounding parishes. Baptismal Classes this year have been based at the school, inviting 5.2 to 5.4 criteria students and non-preference students to attend. There are 9 students who will be Baptised at the school with the whole school and the student's families in attendance. Families receive the Sunday Gospel in each Director of Religious Studies' newsletter and are encouraged to discuss this with their children.

The new Parish Priest is a regular visitor to the school and is working with the Director of Religious Studies to set up regular class visits and more regular Masses. The Parish Priest is a member of the Board of Trustees. He enjoys being part of the everyday life of the school and is invited to all school functions and activities.

The Principal has been at Stella Maris School for 8 years. He is very visible and knows all families. He stands at the drop off/pick up zone each day to be available for parents and to chat with them and the children. He is an experienced Principal and is supported in his role by a strong Senior Leadership Team which includes the two Associate Principals, Director of Religious Studies and the Principal's Personal Assistant. All are active members in their own Parishes and are excellent positive role models who support, uphold and witness to the Special Catholic Character of the school. Many of the staff are parishioners of the various local parishes. The Board of Trustees and parents who were interviewed spoke highly of the staff and how they are the face of Christ to the school community.

Next Steps

The school community need to clarify that Marian Values are attributes of Mary taken from Gospel Values modelled by Jesus Christ. The school should look for parables or Gospel stories to link to each value, for students to relate to how Jesus modelled the value.

Growth in Knowledge – Te Whakatupu ma te Matauranga

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

Areas of Success

The Director of Religious Studies has been a teacher at the school for 12 years and was appointed Director of Religious Studies at the beginning of this year (2019). He is supported in his role by the previous Director of Religious Studies and all other teachers.

The Director of Religious Studies has been provided with one day per week release time for this year to settle into his new role. He supports beginning teachers and teachers new to Catholic school with planning and implementation. He has established a Religious Education Resource file in Google Classroom which will continue to be developed. He is an active member of the Board of Trustees' Special Catholic Character committee and reports to the Board through the sub-committee reports. He includes the Sunday Gospel to the weekly newsletter and also posts it and related resources into the Google Classroom file of resources for teachers to use in class.

Most teachers are attending the required 12 hours of professional development every year. In 2019 all teachers completed RE502 –Spirituality for Teachers. Five teachers, including the Principal, have Endorsed Leadership Certification, two have Leadership level, six have Classroom level and three are working towards Classroom level. Staff meetings led by the Director of Religious Studies have been held this year to discuss the new Religious Education Bridging document and the planning needed for change. Teachers are encouraged to attend cluster meetings and other professional development provided by the Religious Education Advisors.

The Religious Education Programme is timetabled appropriately across the school. Teachers use the "Faith Alive" resource to supplement the Religious Education Curriculum. Teachers use good formative teaching practice using clear learning intentions and success criteria. Each student has a Religious Education journal for their learning responses. These are shared with parents regularly and parents comment on the work. The senior classes are using Google Classroom to share their work.

Integration of Special Catholic Character, and where relevant, the Religious Education programme is well planned and implemented. The Catholic Social Teaching Principles and Social Justice are evident throughout the curriculum. There is a strong sense of Kaitiakitanga (culture of guardianship of God's creation) evident in the pride the school community has in their gardens and environment. The school recycles Paper4Trees and with the trees they receive they are developing a sensory garden.

The SHINE Challenge (Strength and Heart in New Endeavours) for Years 3 to 6 students is a voluntary programme that can be completed each year. There is a progressive number of challenges in each of 5 categories:

- Living the Marian Values
- Service in school and community
- PE/ Outdoors
- Academic excellence
- Excellence in the arts.

The Health curriculum is set in the context of the Catholic Church. The majority of teachers have completed the "Understanding Sexuality" course.

All classrooms were vibrant and effective learning environments and teachers have worked hard to make these exciting and a showcase for the work the children have completed. Art is a strength of the school and excellent examples of student art is displayed throughout the school. It was very obvious to the Reviewers that they were not only sound working environments, but that they were spaces that reflected the School's Catholic Special Character.

Next Steps

The next step for the Director of Religious Studies is to begin observing teaching and learning of Religious Education in each classroom providing feedback and feedforward.

Develop an assessment system for the Religious Education programme that is consistent across the school.

Be creative in planning the Religious Education programme by teaching the Achievement Objectives, across levels, and differentiating teaching based on assessment data and the needs of each individual student.

Christian Witness – Te Whakaatu Karaitiana

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

Areas of Success

The way in which the staff of Stella Maris School present the face of Christ to others is often commented on by members of the school community. Many people interviewed during the review described the school as a "family where everyone is welcome". The school community are proudly Catholic and promote living as witnesses to the life of Christ.

The strong focus on Marian values develops a spirituality of action which include the welcome, hospitality and inclusiveness, felt when you enter the school. New families are introduced to the school at an assembly where they receive a personal prayer kete. Groups of new families gather for a Pizza meal to meet and talk with the Board of Trustees, Principal, Director of Religious Studies, Team Leaders and the PTA Chairperson.

The Year 6 students consider themselves as role models. The students take their responsibilities seriously and work hard for the school throughout the year. All students are given leadership responsibility from Year 1 as monitors in their classrooms. The senior school students volunteer as librarians, PE shed monitors, car park valets, bus loading monitors, flag duty, recycling and ipad monitors.

The School recognises Māori as Tangata Whenua and they have a strong commitment to The Treaty of Waitangi and the bi-cultural foundations of New Zealand. As visitors the Review Team were welcomed to the school with a powhiri where the very strong Kapa Haka group performed. The student speakers and leaders were very confident and have strong whanau support. A teacher in the school trains the Kapa Haka group and provides support for teachers in Te Reo. The teaching staff use Te Reo for some instructions and specific vocabulary integrated into the programmes. The students pray and sing waiata in Maori and English.

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

Stella Maris School welcomes students with special needs. Resources are put in place to support these students and training and guidance from outside agencies is encouraged and valued. Many programmes are used to support divergent learners to extend their oral, written language and maths. Similarly, gifted and talented students are identified and catered for in class and through “Discovery hour” where their own passions drive their learning. Music lessons are available at a price from a specialist teacher in class time.

The school employs a number of support staff who work in administration, in classrooms and with specific individuals who need one-to-one support. They feel valued by the Principal and staff and are acknowledged often for the work they do. They receive training for the various roles they have when it is needed.

“A major strength of the school is the Tuakana/Teina relationship of older students looking after younger ones, looking after one another, showing compassion, and accepting everyone for who they are, whether it is a divergent learner, different culture or just someone needing a friend”.

(Staff questionnaire response)

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

- Caritas Challenges
- Cans4Christmas
- Muftimania
- Caring Foundation,
- St Vincent de Paul
- Parish Care and Share
- 40 hour famine
- Mission Day

A collection basket sits just inside the front door of the school and Social Justice themes are displayed in the front foyer as you enter the school. The students are aware of the needs of the disadvantaged and hurt across the world and show compassion and empathy when discussing this in class. In response the Parish subsidize the school’s swimming programme and local business donations subsidize the school camp.

Many parents spoke to the Reviewers about the kindness and generosity of the staff and school community in times of hardship. They spoke of how the Principal, staff and school community go over and above expectation when families are in need. One teacher is trained to lead the “Seasons” programme when needed. The PTFA support with meals, transport, funding support etc. Bereavement cards are sent to families in times of loss.

The PTFA aim to get families involved in the school. They keep their functions light and fun. They organise fun lunches, discos, a sport-a-thon. They run the second-hand uniform stall.

Stella Maris School is a member of the Catholic North Shore schools Kahui Ako which includes St John’s Mairangi Bay, St Mary’s Northcote, St Joseph’s Takapuna, Rosmini and Carmel Colleges. The school

contributes and shows witness to the wider community also by the Kapa Haka group and choir going out to sing and perform at the Parish, Masonic Lodge, shopping centre and at Carols on the Coast which the PTFA is organising this year with local businesses. The Leadership Team writes a monthly article about the school for the local magazine.

"The students here see themselves as disciples of Jesus and that action is valued and celebrated".
(Staff questionnaire response)

The school has a strong expectation of respect and honouring the dignity of all. The school has a calm and happy atmosphere, the children are polite and well-mannered and think about "What Jesus would do". Teachers use the Marian values to discuss behaviour management situations with children. The school has developed a Student Code of Conduct which is displayed around the school.

"Belonging to this school helps my child to be calm and confident".
(Parent interview comment)

"The Stella Stars Playgroup" meet every Friday in the school hall during term time. The school has a SKIDS after school programme and the Stella Café is held once per term for parents to gather and talk to the Principal and Senior Leadership Team over coffee.

Relationships among all stakeholders in the school community are excellent. The family atmosphere is trusting and caring. Each class has a parent who is a "Text Angel" who texts reminders to parents. The text angels met each term with the Principal. The school also celebrates Mothers, Dads and Grandparents days where the morning or afternoon is spent in class with their child.

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

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

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

The Principal reports to the Board about the school's Special Catholic Character via the Special Character Committee who hold regular monthly meetings attended by the Principal and Director of Religious Studies. The Board Chairperson has regular meetings with the Principal.

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

Stella Maris School has a comprehensive orientation programme for new families. The Principal clearly outlines to parents their responsibility as first educators of their children in the enrolment pack and interview with the family. It is made very clear that the expectation is that children are Baptised before

they enrol and that families are expected to attend regular Sunday Mass. The enrolment folder includes the Preference form, a full explanation of the preference criteria by the Bishop's Conference and a covering letter signed by the Parish Priest stating:

"In making the choice to enrol your child at a Catholic School, there is an expectation that you will support your child's faith development. This includes regular attendance at Mass, especially Hibiscus Coast Parish, school Masses and at the Parish confirmation and Eucharist celebrations. It is also expected that your child will be baptised before starting school and that during their time at school they will receive the Sacraments of Initiation, Reconciliation, Confirmation and Eucharist".

The school's strategic and annual planning, and all promotional material reflect the Special Catholic Character. Following the Board's review schedule policies are reviewed to ensure they reflect the Special Catholic Character and that the wording is current and appropriate. The Board are adding a relevant Maori proverb to the top of each policy.

All appraisals throughout the school use a Coaching model. Job descriptions contain some special character goals. Each staff members coaching documentation is held in Google files.

As well as a very informative weekly newsletter the school communicates to parents through the 'Stella Beacon' (e-mail information). The newsletter contains links to the Religious Education Whanau book and the parish website. The Board of Trustees and the PTFA also produce newsletters each term. All documentation is also recorded in the School App.

School Data

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

- Maximum roll compared to actual role.
- Number of non-preference students

Decile:	9		
Roll at time of Review:	289		
Maximum Roll:	500		
Staffing Entitlement:	Base: 13.6	Total: 15.40	
Required number of S464 Positions:	8		
Current number of S464 positions:	10		
Ancillary Staff:	Teacher Aides: 9	Admin: 2	

The discrepancy between the required number of S464 positions and the current number is due to the fall in roll numbers and the consistent retention of staff. The situation will right itself with movement of staff in the future.

As part of the Catholic Special Character Review process, a preference audit was conducted on 17 September, 2019 and updated at the time of the Review. The roll on that day was 289.

Year	5.1	5.2	5.3	5.4	5.5	Total	NP
Y1	47	1	7	2		57	2
Y2	28		3	2		33	6
Y3	36		3			39	3
Y4	47		5	1		53	6
Y5	35	1	3	4		43	4
Y6	37		3	1		41	2
	230	2	24	10		266	23

The School collects the preference forms and some Baptismal Certificates at each enrolment. Baptismal certificates of the Catholic parent are filed for 5.3 criteria students. Each student has a file, well-marked on the cover. They are stored on shelves and easy to locate.

The audit found that:

- 86% of preference students are 5.1 criteria
- 4.6% of the students on the maximum roll are non-preference.

Next Steps

Continue to develop a strong relationship between school and parish.

Begin to use the Catholic character draft elaborations in all job descriptions and appraisals.

Conclusion

Stella Maris School, Silverdale is ably led by the Principal and Senior Leadership Team to provide an excellent Catholic education and support for their students. The Board of Trustee's Mission Statement states that:

"As a Christ-centred community, inspired by Mary and our faith community, we will challenge, support and empower"

(Stella Maris Charter statement)

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

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

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