

St Mark's School Special Character Review 2024

Executive Summary for Parents:

This Special Character review was requested by the proprietors of St Mark's School, who recently became acutely aware of their responsibility to provide greater guidance to the school board and management regarding their expectations for the school's Special Character. Even though their engagement has been minimal, there is much to celebrate! This is a testament to the principal's leadership and key staff's motivation!

St Mark's School clearly expresses its Anglican heritage and values, which are the bedrock for an effective, warm and dedicated Christian learning community. The school has much to be grateful for and proud of, including a clear integration agreement outlining the Special Character distinctiveness of the school, a generous and open-hearted Proprietor who wants to upskill and engage with the school's Special Character in new ways, a strong engagement with the very supportive church of St Marks, a strong and engaged Board of Trustees, a principal and senior leadership team who are respected by the school community for their pastoral care and who have continuity with the school over a long period, and a skilled staff who love the students, their school and the community they work within.

St Mark's School in 2024 is poised to begin a new and exciting season of growth in expressing its Special Character. It is looking for clarity of direction and a shared understanding of what its Special Character should look like and be shaped by. It needs a written framework to articulate and further shape its ethos, pedagogy, and curriculum. The St Mark's School Proprietors, who initiated this season of review and reflection, seek to grow professionally and strategically in understanding and outworking their purpose and the vision of the school. Thus, St Marks is well poised for a new season of increased clarity, communication and support. While all stakeholders in the school highly value the strengths of this St Marks community, there is a unified desire for this guidance and growth that will trickle down to enrich the education the students receive.

The school management is ready for a clearer vision to help them shape and lead the next phase of the school's Special Character. They have effectively used the school values to express the Christian faith authentically.

The school's challenges of the past decade are behind it. With a new and engaged principal, a strong DP and chaplain, and an engaged proprietor, the school is well-placed to begin a five-year process that will enable it to clarify its vision and embed the Special Character with greater intentionality and success by 2030.

The review team from Axis Strategies has identified some key areas that, once the Proprietor, Board, and Management consider them further, will enhance the good work currently being done.

1. The Proprietor by:

- a. Becoming strategically focused on their vision for Special Character, school growth and property
- b. Collaboratively developing Special Character Guidelines for the board and staff to outwork in the life of the school based on the Five Marks of Mission.
- c. Developing ways to stay informed and celebrate their Special Character
- d. Reviewing how it resources the Special Character programme once the new Guidelines are developed

2. The Board by:

- a. Engaging with the Proprietor when developing Strategic and Annual Plans for Special Character development in the school and when reviewing them annually

3. Management by:

- a. Exploring current research on Spiritual Formation in children and how such thinking could inform Special Character practices in the school
- b. Developing clear and reviewable expectations for the pedagogy and delivery of Special Character programmes across the school

The big piece of work going forward will be the development of Special Character Guidelines by the Proprietor. Once completed, this will require the board and management to develop a Special Character development and implementation plan aligned with the board's Strategic Plan for Special Character, supported by significant Professional Development for staff regarding implementation and integration.

Axis Strategies is confident that the school will embrace this new season of Special Character development and focus once the Proprietor has done its work, as there is a collective will to further enhance what is already happening for students.

Reviewers:

Carl Becker
Helen Pearson
Axis Strategies