



ARCHDIOCESE OF WELLINGTON

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***He Arotake Whanaketanga mō te  
Mātauranga Ahurea Katorika-Te Ture mō  
ngā Kura Katorika***

***Catholic Special Character External  
Evaluation for Development  
Report***

**Te Kura o Hato Paea  
St Pius X School, Titahi Bay**

**March, 2024**

Evaluation conducted on 19<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> March

Confirmed Report 4<sup>th</sup> April

## **School Details**

**Name of School: St Pius X School**

**Address: Tuki Street, Titahi Bay, Porirua**

**School type: Primary State Integrated**

**Actual roll: 47**

**Maximum roll: 220**

**Non-preference maximum: 10**

**Actual non-preference number: 6**

**Roll based staffing entitlement: 3.6**

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

**Filled number of Special Character Cl 47 positions: 1**

**Principal (Acting): Philippa Matla**

**Presiding Member, School Board: Geoff Hayward**

**Parish Priest: Fr. Rico de la Torre**

## **Evaluation Team:**

**Lead Evaluator: Zita Smith**

**Accompanying Evaluator: Anna-Maria Vissers**

**Accompanying Principal: Liz Heatley, Sacred Heart School, Petone**

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

Effective evaluation processes enable the school to understand how ākonga are developing in relation to valued outcomes, how improvement actions have impacted on ākonga, what needs to be changed and what further actions are required. Therefore, the Catholic special character evaluation process produces a focused picture of the impact of Catholic schooling and the effectiveness of its goals on the lives of all tamariki and rangatahi. The process seeks to determine whether they have encountered the living God revealed in Jesus Christ, grown in knowledge of Him and His Church, and as a result are forming a deep and lasting relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church. The process also evaluates how the whole school community engages in authentic Catholic Christian witness and evangelisation.

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

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

## Introduction

St. Pius X School is sited on a large property located in the heart of Titahi Bay, north of Wellington. It was founded by the Brigidine Sisters in 1954.

It is clear that the community has a deep love for the school. Whānau surveyed or spoken to describe the school as *“compassionate and welcoming”* and *“like a family with a sense of togetherness”*, where tamariki are taught to follow in the footsteps of Jesus by living out the school’s values.

Since the last review, significant changes have impacted the school. There has been disruption to the school leadership with the resignation of two Principals. At the time of writing this evaluation report, for the second time in two years, the Board is going through an appointment process for a new Principal, during which time an Acting Principal is leading the school. The school roll has dropped from 90 to 47 and with that, the number of classrooms from four to three. The Presiding Member of the Board with experience in leadership and governance, took up his role at the start of this year, along with a Proprietor’s appointee who is very experienced in Catholic education.

Positive and respectful relationships are evident in the school and the CREW values are evident and well known to ākonga. The school honours Te Tiriti o Waitangi, with one staff member leading te reo Māori me te tikanga Māori confidently.

As a result of changes in leadership, the recommendations from the last review were not prioritised and as a consequence, not completed or partially completed. The school community is looking forward to the successful appointment of a new Principal during this year.

## **Progress with Recommendations from the 2018 Catholic Special Character Review/Evaluation for Development Report**

### **1. Develop the spiritual formation of the teachers in order to grow the prayer life of the children**

- *Complete RE 502 (Spirituality for Teachers) as a staff and implement learning*
- *Ensure a prayer focus in each classroom*

RE502 was undertaken in 2020 by 5 staff members, three of whom have since left the school. Each class has a prayer table and efforts are made to keep them current and relevant to the students. Each day starts with class prayers and karakia are said before morning tea and lunch.

### **2. Link each value to a Gospel story that shows how Jesus demonstrates that value. Consistently refer to them as the school's Gospel Values.**

- *Incorporate the Brigidine charism into the school's vision and values.*

Although there is a Scripture next to each value on a wall in the school, it is not a Gospel reference, nor is it familiar to kaiako or tamariki. There is no evidence that the Brigidine charism is incorporated into the school's values.

### **3. Consolidate the teaching of RE**

- *Continue to participate with CSES in effective pedagogy*
- *Ensure there are clear expectations for planning*
- *Ensure RE is prioritized (minimum time allocation for teaching)*
- *Carry out regular observations with feedback and next steps*
- *Include student voice in evaluating RE lessons.*

Throughout 2022 and 2023 St Pius X engaged support from CSES with Religious Education curriculum planning and assessment. Existing staff who attended, communicated that they felt very well supported and were confident to effectively teach RE lessons and lead school prayer. RE is timetabled for the start of the day and receives its prescribed time allocation for teaching. RE observations which happened across 2021 will need to be reinstated with the appointment of a new Principal.

### **4. Write an RE curriculum implementation plan with links to the Health Implementation Plan, specifically in relation to Human Sexuality Education. This is yet to developed and will carry through as a recommendation from this evaluation.**

**5. Carry out an internal evaluation of Catholic Character annually as part of a 3-year cycle. Ensure that:**

- *Reviews are based on the dimensions in the Catholic Special Character Review for Development Draft Document and are included in the Board triennial work plan.*

Internal evaluation documents have been located for 2019, 2020 but subsequently were not completed due to changes in leadership.

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

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

**Spiritual Formation**

The school is encouraging its tamariki to have personal relationship with Jesus in a variety of ways.

It is clear this is a Catholic school from the visual displays and symbols evident in and around the school. However, there is confusion about the essence of the school's particular flavour because the motto and vision are unclear. The words, *Strong and Gentle* come from the founding Brigidine Sisters 1954 and are on school documents and the letterhead. "*Aroha mai, aroha atu,*" is on the school website. WAKA (Whānau, Atua, Kura, Aroha) is found on the ceremonial waka presented to a Year 6 student at the end of each year and also on a large painting in the foyer, with the phrase, "*Together we shine*". An outside wall is painted with a large waka with the words, "*He waka eke noa.*" The CREW school values, care, respect, excellence, wisdom are painted on paddles on the same wall. These values are represented in poster form in every classroom, promoted by kaiako, and all tamariki spoken to knew them well, but were less able to describe what they look like in action in the school. This presents a wonderful opportunity for the school to clarify its core vision and values. A vision which links to the heart of the Gospel and values linked to the actions and stories of Jesus will give greater understanding to tamariki and cohesion to the school's unique Catholic flavour. This will be a recommendation of this report.

Prayer is an integral part of the daily routine of school life. This includes individual and community prayer using traditional and contemporary forms. Staff pray together regularly, as well as before all meetings. Staff have visited the Home of Compassion for spiritual formation and the previous Principal ran a teacher-only day focused on praying with children and prayer activities. Classes begin with prayer, often led by tamariki, particularly in the senior classes. There is a sacred space in each classroom and the staffroom, and

tamariki demonstrate respect and reverence during prayer time. Te reo Māori me tikanga Māori are an important part of prayer and a variety of Pasifika languages are also used routinely during prayer and liturgy.

This year during Lent, the school is meeting each morning to pray the Stations of the Cross as preparation for Holy Week. This is led by ākonga and supported by a kaiako. A Parishioner comes in during the months of May and October to teach and lead tamariki in the Rosary.

Displays and symbols, including those significant for Māori e.g. the waka scene painted on the school wall, carved waka as the end of year trophy, provide witness to the Catholic special character of the school. Icons, posters, paintings, RE learning and a Young Vinnies display area make it clear that this is a Catholic school.

### **Evangelisation**

There is a regular programme of liturgies and Masses that are appropriate for the age and culture of participants, and students have some leadership roles in them. Whole school Mass is scheduled twice a term with the Parish Mass. Tamariki will often do a reading or prayers of the faithful. Special seasons in the Church's year like Easter, Christmas and Advent are always celebrated with a liturgy, plays or Mass, to which whānau are invited.

Whānau are connected to and informed about the school's Catholic character through the weekly newsletter and Parish newsletter emailed to them. Those spoken to or surveyed feel well informed about the school's special liturgies and Masses, and can also use the school's Facebook page or talk to teachers. Each week, the school newsletter has a clear Catholic character theme.

The Sacramental programme was highlighted and commented on by both staff and whānau as being an area of concern, not only for the school but for the Titahi Bay area. Since the programme has been run from the Tawa church, very few tamariki and families from St Pius X School have participated in the Sacramental programme. Although it is advertised to school families through word of mouth and newsletters, few take up the opportunity, citing distance and timing of meetings as barriers. This has implications for the future of the Catholic church and Catholic education in the area. The 2014 and 2018 Catholic character reports describe the Sacramental programme as being run within the school, over which time many tamariki received the Sacraments of initiation (Baptism, First Reconciliation and First Eucharist) which is markedly different from the current situation. Refer *Safeguarding and Strengthening the Catholic Character* section later in this report.

### **Faith-based Leadership**

The Acting Principal actively supports and upholds the school's Catholic character with integrity, giving it high priority, and for this she is to be commended. She has led the school

with commitment and diligence in challenging times and as a result, has brought stability to the school.

### **Evidence**

The effect of an encounter with Christ in St Pius X School is evidenced in the prayer life of the school and the reverence and positive attitude of tamariki and kaiako towards praying. It is also seen in the behaviours of tamariki through a focus on the values. The following comments from tamariki who were spoken to for this evaluation, when asked about the effect of being in this school, provide further evidence of their encounter with Christ:

*"I have learnt the **actual** story of Christmas."*

*"I have learnt more about Jesus and God. There is actually a God who made the earth and who made me."*

*"I have learnt about the CREW values."*

*"I feel like I can think more about Him here (at school), than at home."*

When asked about the effect of praying on them, comments from tamariki included:

*"I can connect with Jesus; I have faith that Jesus is my friend."*

*"Jesus is my friend and no matter what, he won't leave me."*

When asked about the effect of prayer on tamariki, comments from staff and whānau included:

*"Prayer time helps tamariki settle."*

*"Parents are pleased that their tamariki are here at this school because they want them to have a deep faith in God."*

*"Starting at St Pius X invigorated my son's spiritual life. He wanted a prayer mat and crucifix to pray together with them at home."*

### **Next Steps for Development**

- Continue to talk about and advertise the Sacramental programme to tamariki and their whānau.

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

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

### **Leadership**

Each school leader since the previous review has sought school-based support from CSES with RE planning and assessment practice. Staff have not attended any courses offered by CSES, in particular the foundation day for teachers new to Catholic schools and *Having Life to the Full*. A recommendation of this report will be that the new Principal ascertains the needs of the staff and develops a PLD plan to meet those needs, ensuring that associated costs will be budgeted for.

Staff share their gifts and talents, two kaiako in particular providing specific support in the area of te reo Māori me tikanga Māori, which is infused into prayer and the teaching of RE.

While staff await the appointment of a Principal, the only Catholic kaiako has been given a management unit and some specific responsibilities to support the school with prayer and RE. She is actively taking the lead with school prayer and with the purchase of resources for classroom prayer and is enjoying being able to share her gifts and to support the staff in this way.

### **Religious Education**

The school implements the nationally mandated Religious Education curriculum. The school has been waiting for further resource development to be completed prior to implementing the new *Tō Tātou Whakapono Our Faith* curriculum but plans to begin some staff immersion in 2024. It will be advantageous for this process to be included in a PLD plan for staff.

Staff plan together and use Monday morning school prayer as a time to introduce new RE strands to the children. Staff plan this together which allows all teachers to feel involved and able to contribute their strengths.

Student work on classroom walls and corridors reveal authentic and culturally relevant RE learning. The children are attentive and interested in RE, and the relationships between kaiako and ākonga and among ākonga are respectful and inclusive. *Seesaw* is used to share learning with parents and reports to parents contain a section on religious education.

### **Catholic Curriculum**

The inclusion of a schoolwide overarching concept provides an opportunity for RE to permeate through other curricular areas. Making clear links between concepts and the school's Catholic character will strengthen the development of its Catholic Curriculum.

As noted in the section on progress since the previous review, there remains work to be done on ensuring that the teaching of health comes from a Catholic perspective.

### **Next Steps for Development**

- Ensure that overarching concepts are clearly linked to Catholic special character and result in a Catholic worldview permeating through all learning at St Pius X.

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

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

#### **Catholic School Community**

The school provides a hope-filled Christian witness which empowers its community members to integrate their faith and their life. As a result of the establishment of the Parish of Our Lady of Hope just prior to the last review, the church of St Pius X, adjacent to the school, celebrates one weekend Mass on a Saturday evening. The school is continually looking for ways to build a stronger relationship with the local Parish. The Parish Priest is part of the school's Board and will come into the school when invited.

The school works to develop an understanding of te ao Māori. New whānau and tamariki are welcomed each term with a pōwhiri, led with confidence by tamariki with their school haka. Kapa haka is strong in the school and tamariki are very proud of their ability in this area. Matariki is a special celebration each year to which the school community is invited. Māori tamariki spoken to, expressed having a sense of belonging in the school. They feel able to be themselves as Māori and appreciate the staff member who speaks te reo and leads their learning in te ao Māori.

There is evidence of an attitude of being all in it together '*he waka eke noa*' between staff, whānau and community. Whānau express gratitude that their tamariki are cared for and known so well and that the best is being done for them at school.

#### **Partnership and Collaboration**

St Pius X has a productive relationship with Bishop Viard College. College students come to the school for a variety of reasons and St Pius students are invited to the College for activities at special times. Catholic Schools Day sees tamariki from the local Catholic schools going to each other's schools for liturgies and fun activities.

The school has a relationship with the local marae and tamariki have recently stayed for an overnight *noho marae* which was very successful.

### **Pastoral Care**

The mana and tapu of each individual is acknowledged and upheld. In light of the preferential option for the poor, staff are aware of the needs of whānau, treating them with dignity, respect and aroha as they reach out to those most in need. Pastoral care for tamariki and their whānau is a strength of the school. *KidsCan*, fruit in schools and lunch in schools all contribute to physical and emotional wellbeing. The school provides breakfast each day with up to half the students using this service especially in the winter months. Second hand uniforms are provided to tamariki who need them.

Staff feel pastorally cared for by the Acting Principal who is described as approachable and generous with her time to provide support, both personally and professionally. Staff meetings have open discussions, teamwork is evident and shared morning teas and celebrations help to keep hope alive.

### **Service and Outreach**

The school provides opportunities for tamariki and kaiako to contribute actively to the life of the local community.

The school supports Caritas initiatives, using Caritas resources. Senior students participate weekly in a Young Vinnies group, run by a St Vincent de Paul member, engaging in community work. Year 5 and 6 tamariki can also gain bronze, silver and gold WAKA badges for specific acts of service and leadership in the school and community over the course of the year. At the end of the year, the prestigious WAKA is awarded to one student for demonstrating outstanding leadership and service. The school also regularly visits Kemp Retirement Home across the road from the school, to perform for, sing to and converse with residents there.

Evidence of the school being an effective Christian witness can be seen the respectful relationships and practical support for the vulnerable in the school and beyond. It can also be heard in the comments from the whānau survey:

*“Our school is so diverse. Everyone feels welcome. Everyone feels celebrated.”*

*“Unity and harmony in diversity is always at the forefront of what St Pius continually embraces.”*

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

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

##### **Stewardship**

The Board ensures that the vision and strategic direction for the school clearly and explicitly reflect the Catholic special character of the school. Every meeting begins with prayer. One of the strategic goals is based around the Catholic character with specific, targeted actions directly connected to the goal. As a result of this external evaluation, the recommendations and accompanying actions from this report need to inform the school's Catholic character goal in the next Annual Plan.

The Presiding Member took up his leadership role on the Board at the start of the year. He and the Acting Principal have a positive, professional working relationship.

Board policies and school procedures are on the *SchoolDocs* platform. As they are reviewed, all policies need to reflect the particular Catholic flavour of St Pius X School. Recent changes that have been made by *SchoolDocs* in allowing schools to greater flexibility in expressing their individuality, will support this.

Safeguarding and strengthening the Catholic character of the school is a core governance priority for all Board members. This includes ensuring that all Board members participate in training about what governance looks like in a Catholic school and ensuring the Catholic character is a standing agenda item. Catholic Schools Education Services offer monthly workshops on a variety of topics from Governance to Property. These can be face to face at a board meeting or via zoom. Catholic Schools Education Services offer monthly workshops on a variety of topics from Governance to Property. These can be face to face at a board meeting or via zoom.

It also includes initiating positive communications with the Parish council, to remove barriers and find equitable solutions for St Pius tamariki and their whānau who wish to participate in the Sacramental programme currently being run from Tawa.

## Legal Obligations

In terms of staffing and tagged positions, the school is one short of meeting its obligations under its Integration Agreement, but this will be rectified with the appointment of a permanent Principal. The Board is currently undergoing a Principal appointment process and the DP continues in the role of Acting Principal. Recently a Proprietor's appointee with years' Catholic education experience, joined the Board.

In terms of the non-preference roll, the school is currently meeting its obligations. There are three preference certificates that are awaiting signing by the Parish Priest.

Preference Criteria	Number of Students	% actual roll
5.1	18	36%
5.2	6	12%
5.3	11	23%
5.4	4	8%
5.5	2	4%
Preference with no criteria		
<b>Total of signed preference roll</b>	41	84%
Non-Preference Roll	8	16%
International Fee-Paying Students		

## Next Steps for Development

- As policies are reviewed, insert an appropriate statement or phrase into the opening paragraph that reflects the particular Catholic character of the school.

## Recommendations

1. **Review the school vision so that it links to the heart of the Gospel, and can be understood by tamariki. Underpin this with values that connect to the actions and stories of Jesus. Grow a whole school, cohesive practice around both the**

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**vision and values. Explore their meaning and significance in te āo Māori.**

- 2. Develop and implement a professional development plan that reflects the RE Curriculum and Catholic Character learning needs of the staff.**
- 3. Develop and implement a Health plan which reflects Catholic teaching, drawing upon recent documents produced by the National Centre for Religious Education on relationships and sexuality.**
- 4. Ensure that the safeguarding and strengthening the Catholic character is prioritised particularly by:**
  - Training for all Board members in governance of a Catholic school. Attending monthly Board workshops offered by CSES will support this.
  - Ensuring the Catholic character is the leading agenda item in Board meetings.
  - Working with the Parish pastoral team to find solutions that address the barriers to St Pius X tamariki and their whānau equitably accessing the Sacramental programme.

The evaluation team is confident that the St Pius X leadership and Board have the willingness and ability to address these recommendations fully before the next external evaluation. The Catholic Education Office staff are available to assist the principal, Board and staff in compiling an action plan to address these recommendations.

The evaluation team thank the community of St Pius X School for the welcome, hospitality and cooperation extended to them and for the opportunity to experience the way that they safeguard and strengthen their Catholic special character.

The Vicar for Education for ADW congratulates the Office Manager for their organisation of enrolment material including Preference Certificates. The organisation and preparation for the external evaluation by the school is greatly appreciated.



Zita Smith, Lead Evaluator



Kelly Ross, Vicar for Education