

**Diocese of Dunedin
Catholic Education Office**

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

**REPORT ON
St Mary's Catholic School, Milton**

School Type:	Contributing Years 0-6
Visit	12-14 March 2018
Principal:	Diane Hayes
Reviewer:	Phil O'Connell-Cooper
Support Reviewer:	Teresa Jarvis



SUMMARY

St Mary's Milton is a Catholic School that embodies the cardinal virtues of faith, hope and charity.

It is a happy place which has a family atmosphere to which all are welcomed, in which all are valued and where adults and children feel safe.

The spiritual life of the children is nourished and nurtured by dedicated teachers, led effectively and strongly by the DRS and Principal.

The commitment of the staff and board to Special Catholic Character is a strong feature and impacts strongly on the children and families.

The participation in prayer and liturgy is strong and the teachers are to be commended for the way the children participate fully and enthusiastically at Mass.

The children appreciate learning about their faith and place high value on this aspect of their learning.

The school is not only a welcoming and inclusive place for those who come there, but is one which teaches, by example, outreach and care for those in need, both in the local area and further afield.

School Information

Name: St Mary's School
Address: 7 Chaucer Street, Milton

School Type: Contributing Years 0-6

Decile: 4

Staffing Roll for 2018: 80 **Actual Roll at Time of Review:** 75
Maximum Roll: 90

Non-preference Maximum: 4 **Actual Non-preference at Review:** 3
Enrolment categories according to preference 5.1 5.2 5.3 5.4 5.5

Teaching Staff:

Roll generated: 4.7

Other: 0.3

Ethnic Composition: NZ European/Pakeha
Maori
Pacifica
Filipino
Asian
Other

Board of Trustees Chairperson: Joe Herbert

Principal: Diane Hayes

Director of Religious Studies: Ellen Devaney

Parish Priest/Chaplain: Father Chris O'Neill

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

- That the Principal prepare a data base of staff formation to date and develop a strategic plan for supporting and encouraging staff to both meet the requirement_for formation and discover areas of faith they have not been formally exposed to.

A data base of staff formation is kept at the Catholic Education Office – however – we have requested records and have a data base on site. The Catholic Education Adviser has shown us how to look at the data base and ascertain where our needs are.

- That the Tag positions in Job Descriptions include the expectations of the Proprietor as explained in the Proprietor's handbook.

This is a work in progress. Principal's Job Description has been completed.

- That the appraisal system is continually refined to include the expectation of the Proprietor with regard to tagged positions.

Work continues in this area with the support of the Catholic Education Adviser.

- That the Preference data is entered in the Musac Programme and used to guide and support evangelisation.

Preference Data is placed into the Musac Programme. Data is used to guide and support evangelisation.

This year there were 15 children participating in the Sacrament of Baptism and 10 children participating in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Traditional prayers are taught within the confines of the Religious Education Programme. The children have been attending a Church Mass on a regular basis to help them with knowing the correct responses.

- That opportunities to engage and support parents in their own faith development are explored, using the new website.

The web-site has a Parish page but it is not interactive at this stage. The weekly newsletter has information about Religious Education, prayers, saints, events etc.

Parishioners are formally invited to Production. Some attend assemblies/liturgies and other activities – mainly grandparents and/or friends of grandparents.

There is a school news board in the Church. Our School newsletter is placed in the Church. Parishioners are invited to School Liturgies.

- That the Annual Plan and Charter continue to be aligned and that the Annual Plan has one aspiration goal which has the potential to enrich the Special Character beyond the good work taking place.

Aspirational Goal from the Charter: To carry out the Church's mission – providing a faith environment which enables children to develop a strong personal relationship with God – through the development of attitudes, knowledge and skills to become active and committed members of the Faith Community and to contribute positively to the world community.

Pastoral Care of others continues to be a focus at our school – with children supporting Child Cancer, The Missions, Caritas, the Local Food Bank, the Dunedin Hospice. Families and children are helped pastorally and this is included in the Principal's Board of Trustee report.

- That the values in the school continue to be refined so that a more succinct set are used and remembered by the students who can describe them in terms of behaviours.

The Values have been refined and are taught – 2 values are emphasised per term. Room 4 (seniors) are transported to Dunedin to take part in the Dominican Day Mass and all children are taught about the Charism of the school.

- That the Board investigate opportunities for a Sacred Space outside.

There is a beautiful garden in the grounds where Fr Michael has planted shrubs and there is a seat there for quiet reflection/prayers.

- That opportunities for Religious Art with a Maori dimension are used to broaden the images around the school.

Teachers have worked on Religious Art with a Maori dimension which is evident on walls in the school.

Catholic Special Character Dimensions and Focus Areas

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

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

St Mary`s aims to provide a faith environment that enables children to develop a strong personal relationship with God- through the development of attitudes, knowledge and skills to become active and committed members of the faith community and to contribute positively to the world community.

FOCUS AREAS:

1. Spiritual Formation

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

Religious Education is a prominent feature of the teaching day and is incorporated within all learning areas. It promotes interaction, cooperation, peer discussion and reflection and most of the children respond to these lessons with enthusiasm and commitment to continue the work of Jesus. The children at St Mary`s school are able to voice the values of the school and work hard throughout the day to live by them – attempting to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. The older children could name the school values and made particular reference, with examples, to acceptance and commitment. They are aware that the practice and living out of the school values is for life: “When we go to High School, the values are in your mind. You will have better rapport. They will help you meet people and accept everyone as an individual. You will always use your values.” The children are polite and “stand out” when attending outside activities due to their consideration and acceptance of others. It is evident in the children`s attitudes, values and behaviours that the students are engaged and passionate about this area.

From interviewing the children, being part of the school and class prayers, attending Mass with them and from children`s comments in a recent prayer survey, it is obvious that prayer and developing their spiritual life is understood to be important for everyone and has value in their lives. They are supported and guided in their prayerfulness. They know about and experience different ways of praying. In particular, they value and respect The Prayer Garden which was completed last year.

2. Evangelisation

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

Children at St Mary's are active in the preparation and delivery of School Masses and Liturgies and help to prepare and deliver these. There has been emphasis placed on the responses within the School Mass and it is evident that children and staff are more receptive to the importance of these and participate fully. Their participation, connection and reverence were outstanding. The staff are all effective role models and contribute as fully as possible. Weekly Masses and Liturgies are a focal point and therefore children are more aware of the importance of prayer in all areas of school and home life.

The school, with the parish, offers the Sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, Confirmation and First Communion to the children and 2017 proved to be a year where there was a great outreach to and from children and families wanting to join the Catholic faith journey with 15 children receiving the Sacrament of Baptism and seven children receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Children spoken to were very proud that this was happening and know that there are many people such as the Parish Priest, Principal, Teachers, their friends, their parents, Jesus who can help them and anyone who wants to receive the sacraments. The school encourages children to go to Mass on Sunday but the children are aware that there is no undue pressure.

When children were asked "How has the school helped you grow in faith?", the children were all keen to respond. However, these responses stand out:

"When I came here I didn't believe in God but now I do.

I know who God is.

I pray every day and have been baptised."

3. Faith-based Leadership

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

"We are a Catholic School, where each and every child will be inspired to excel and be successful today and be prepared for the rapidly changing world of tomorrow and where children learn to be true to themselves, to others and to God." St Mary's School Vision

The Principal and Director of Religious Studies are committed to their own faith development and that of other staff and children in the school. There is no doubt that the Catholic faith is central to all that happens at St Mary's. Staff responding to the question of how they encourage and support student's personal relationship with Jesus Christ and their faith journey, replied, "This is a priority. We are following in Jesus' footsteps. We encourage children to share their learning at home and parents give us feedback. We support them through the sacramental programmes, through daily prayer which gives us an insight into children's lives. We regard reflection time as important. We consider that prayer time is a safe space."

The Principal, DRS and Chaplain provide effective leadership, advice, expertise to staff, children and parents. The school has clear goals:

Annual Goals:

- To develop in each child, a knowledge, understanding and respect for our Catholic faith.*
- To preserve & enrich the Catholic Special Character of the school.*
- To effect collaboration between the School and Parish.*
- To assist people in need through service & mission outreach & to foster pastoral care amongst the children and the wider community with specific targets:*

For children to be able to unpack the values of St Mary's School and continue to incorporate them into their daily lives.

For children to be active members of our parish community and participate fully in pastoral care within the parish.

To continue to increase each child's understanding of the sacramental programme and support children with their interest in participating in this.

St Mary's is supported by the Catholic Education Office Adviser and the Principal, DRS and teachers value her support, guidance and input. With the Regional Education Advisers no longer funded to provide this service to the schools, St Mary's is grateful to have the support of the adviser, in relation to teaching and learning in the faith, professional development and strategic direction.

Teachers/support staff, children and their families are introduced to the faith community in a variety of ways including, Teachers New to Catholic Schools Programme, mentor teachers, Before School Programme, newsletters, blogs, a comprehensive staff manual, visits to the church, priest visiting classes, the Principal, DRS and teachers building relationships with families, invitations to prayer, liturgies and Masses.

The Principal, DRS and all teachers are dedicated to learning more about all aspects of the faith and have identified Scripture as a learning priority for 2018. The Parish Priest will assist with this learning, as well as more formal opportunities such as study papers. There is a very comprehensive staff professional development plan in which Religious Education and Spiritual Formation, linked to annual goals, leads the way.

There is also a goal for teachers to meet the requirement for formation and discover areas of faith they have not been exposed to. The main focus is Scripture. To meet this goal, they will attend in-school strand meetings led by the DRS, take a Catholic Institute paper - Introduction to the New Testament - led by Katrina van de Water and attend staff meeting sessions with Fr Chris O'Neill.

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

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

FOCUS AREAS:

1. Leadership

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

2. Religious Education

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

Parents, children, teachers and Board of Trustee members have been given the opportunity to take part in a survey on Religious Education at St Mary's. This has been analysed and offered to the Community and incorporates recommendations for the future. Analysis shows clearly, "that Religious Education is highly valued by all members of St Mary's school community. All participants recognised their roles and responsibilities in relation to the Religious Education of the children. The valuable effect that Religious Education has on the lives of the children remains undisputed. This is evident in the attitudes, values and behaviours. Parents are supportive and able to describe their responsibilities in supporting their children's faith learning and practice."

The school, as mentioned before, sees Religious Education taking high priority and more than ample time is scheduled for teaching and learning. As well, plenty of time is scheduled for prayer, reflection, liturgy, Mass, sacramental preparation and celebrations.

With purposeful leadership provided by the Director of Religious Studies, this strong focus on Religious Education is a team effort, supported by the Principal, Parish Priest and Board. Staff are clear that they are responsible for teaching the Religious Education programme effectively, making connections with and for the students in their everyday life, allowing and guiding students to pray

and take part in liturgy, and discussing and celebrating Religious Education at St Mary's.

They are also well aware that by their participation in school family and parish Masses, their support of sacramental programmes and presence at these celebrations, embracing the Catholic Special Character of the school, its Dominican charism and school values, their effectiveness as teachers of Religious Education is heightened.

The teaching of Religious Education was observed during the external review. Reviewers also had access to observations completed in 2017 by the Catholic Education Adviser for the purposes of certification. Teachers were well prepared, starting the learning by recapping on previous learning with some stating learning intentions clearly. Some teachers rely mainly on the RE Strand Booklet and the Director of Religious Studies and they are aware that the resources available e.g. on Faith Alive will help to bring out the visual aspect in the children's learning. The teachers are able to provide effective teaching of Religious Education and are continuing to develop relevant, meaningful and interactive learning experiences so that their teaching meets the needs of the children while reflecting the best of current teaching and learning practices.

The Parish priest, who is new to the school and parish area (which includes Balclutha and Lawrence as well as Milton,) makes himself available one morning a week and is happy to come to classrooms when invited. He is also supporting teachers in their scriptural knowledge and understanding.

The children like the different topics they learn about in RE and appreciate different types of activities e.g. abstract art on Dominic; watching videos; research. They are very excited by the learning they do in the Caritas Lenten programme.

They know they can ask more questions in normal RE lessons, but sometimes they don't. Their Te Reo teacher talks about how her faith has grown.

They really value how their teachers respect them and want them to be the best they can be. They also commented on how the teachers support their families.

3. Catholic Curriculum

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

At the beginning of each school year, teachers learn or revise aspects of The Principles of Catholic Social Teaching; this occurs in the Strand preparation meetings and incorporated into the school values.

4. Values

At St Mary's School, values are principles, fundamental convictions, ideals, standards or life stances which act as general guides to behaviour or as reference points in decision making or the evaluation of beliefs or action. They include the fruits of the Holy Spirit: To be - loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, kind, generous, faithful, gentle, self-controlled.

"God created humankind in his image". – Genesis 13:27

ACCEPTANCE *Embracing the individuality of each child - Life And Dignity of the Human Person*

Part of the Family of God

COMMITMENT *Inclusion in a warm and welcoming way – Call to Family, Community and Participation*

"I have come that you might have life and have it to the full." John 10:10

HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT *Emotional, Spiritual, Physical, Social, Academic - Rights and Responsibilities*

"Love one another, as I have loved you". – Matthew 22:37-39

RELATIONSHIPS *Relationship with God, ourselves, each other and the Earth - Option for the poor and the vulnerable/Care for God's creation*

"Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit". – Matthew 28:19

INTEGRITY- *Collaborative Professional Commitment – The dignity of work & the rights of workers*

"And remember I will be with you always until the end of the age". – Matthew 28

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT *Shared participation of School family, Priest and Parishioners - Solidarity*

The Catholic Special Character underpins all the teaching throughout the school. The Religious Education curriculum provides staff with an in-depth understanding of the Catholic perspective and these dimensions are used to enhance daily teaching in other curriculum areas.

New staff are guided and supported by existing staff, and teachers new to Catholic Schools take part in a comprehensive induction programme (provided by the Catholic Schools Adviser) while being mentored by the DRS or a tagged teacher.

DIMENSION 3: TE WHAKAATU KARAITIANA | CHRISTIAN WITNESS

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

FOCUS AREAS:

1. Catholic School Community

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

St Mary's school family is a strong community. There is support provided for all at many levels. All staff attend school family masses and sacramental celebrations. Teamwork and collaboration is encouraged and staff are affirmed and appreciated. Everyone tries to live by the school values so that all are supported to follow Jesus within a clear and easily understood framework. People within the school are approachable, welcoming, fair and kind.

The school is regarded as a friendly, welcoming learning community where the sacred dignity of each person is valued and honoured. Interactions are characterised by respect and openness. Parents feel welcomed and valued. There is a strong partnership between home and school. Children want to come to school and feel comfortable, safe, secured and valued.

Displays and symbols such as crosses, pictorial images, children's art work e.g. St Dominic, statues, prayer tables, liturgical year calendars, indicate clearly that this is a Catholic School.

The Dominican charism is celebrated with the children learning about St Dominic and the history of the Dominican sisters and their role in starting St Mary's. Displays are evident in the foyer and around the school. Senior students attend the St Dominic's Day Mass in Dunedin. The principal and DRS have attended the Dominican Conference. A representative from the Dominican sisters in Dunedin visited the school and spent time with teachers and children.

2. Partnership and Collaboration

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

The school works on building school/parish relationships. First impressions comments from the parish priest include:

“At the two whole school Masses so far, very impressive-a good atmosphere. Parishioners speak well of the staff. The Principal is well respected. The DRS is highly spoken of. Catholic Schools are doing a great job – many dedicated staff. The Principal here works really hard and the staff are pouring their hearts into the jobs. When working on greater involvement of families and the parish, a new vision is needed for parishes which responds to the needs of people today.”

The previous parish priest was very involved in helping the parents, teachers and children develop the Prayer Garden in 2017.

The process of consultation with the parent community is well established and occurs regularly as part of the cycle of review. There is also consultation for emerging issues as and when required. A comprehensive and readable booklet is produced at the conclusion of the review and circulated to all in the school community. Recommendations are acted on or incorporated for further action in the annual plan.

The relationship with St Joseph's Balclutha is very strong giving opportunities for children and staff to meet and to establish relationships that benefit both schools. At St Mary's there is a 'four-year-old' club where pre school children can join with the new entrant class for an hour and a half each week. This is an effective way of building relationships with children and their families and serves as a good introduction to school life. The Year 6 Leavers, most of whom attend Tokomairiro District High School, attend several events at the school. A teacher from the school also spends time with the students towards the end of each year. St Mary's is part of a local Community of Learning.

3. Te Tiriti o Waitangi

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

St Mary's is committed to The Treaty of Waitangi as the founding document of Aotearoa NZ and its commitment is shown in a variety of ways such as learning about the local area and relevant history, places and people. Where possible, one class per year, visits a marae (Otakou). Maori Whanau are consulted with in relation to their expectations for their children and also to hear their expectations of the school. Teachers are developing their knowledge and confidence with Te Reo, supported by a Te Reo Tutor. Elements of tikanga, Wairua, Karakia, Te Reo are included in the daily life of the school as teachers' knowledge and confidence grows. Relationships with whanau are strong and parents feel welcomed and supported by the school.

4. Pastoral Care

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

Each student is accepted and made to feel special, is valued, nurtured and of importance to the staff. Pastoral care is a strength of the school with strong leadership from the Principal.

It is based on the Gospel teachings and an ethos of care permeates. Each child is personally known and cared for by all staff. Children care for each other. Parents who seek assistance are supported in a variety of ways. Staff, other parents, Parent Teacher Association, Board of Trustees, parishioners, local community all collaborate to assist others e.g. uniforms, school, supplies, camp, attendance dues, personal disasters such as house fires, times of illness or bereavement.

St Mary's is an inclusive school – all are welcome there. Programmes for children with special learning or behavioural needs are put in place.

The behavioural processes are clear and fair and restorative practices are crucial. Children are taught to use their WITS (Walk away-I don't like that-Tell someone-Seek help). Many different agencies are used depending on need and circumstances. Examples are Oranga Tamariki, Stand Tall, Parish Priest, Community Trust, Police Education Officer, Group Special Education.

5. Service and Outreach

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

Children are enlightened in various ways about the difficulties that people face. They are encouraged to both pray for those in need and do something practical to assist. Some vehicles for this, apart from what happens locally, are Caritas, St Vincent de Paul, Missions, Child Cancer, World Vision. In the local community, as well as responding to times of crisis, the children contribute to the community in several ways e.g. singing to the elderly, taking part in Clean Up NZ, Matariki, Wairoa Health Expo, inviting Age Care, Senior Citizens, Parishioners, Early Learning Centres to events such as the Production. Through what children learn in Religious Education, they can be prompted to respond to the Gospel call by positive and practical assistance to those in need.

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

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

FOCUS AREAS:

1. Stewardship

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

Interviews with the Board of Trustees, Principal and DRS and the comprehensive documentation supplied indicated strongly that all measures possible are taken to safeguard and strengthen Catholic Character in these areas.

Legal Obligations

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

- 1. Number of S464 positions held*
- 2. Maximum roll compared with actual roll*
- 3. Number of preference students. There are a high number of student in the 5.4 category. However, thanks to the proactive DRS and Principal there are also a high number of baptisms.*
- 4. Number of non-preference students*
- 5. The Board of Trustee communicates with the Proprietor as required and would value the opportunity to meet with the Bishop at least once during their term of office.*

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

ENCOUNTER WITH CHRIST

Spiritual Formation

- Investigate prayer and professional/spiritual development opportunities that include everyone on the staff.
- Consider ways of more closely linking the Dominican Charism and the school values.
- Ensure that the koru symbol for St Mary's has meaning for staff and children.

Evangelisation

- Create a more user-friendly school website with relevant information and links to school, parish, diocesan and wider areas of Catholic life as another tool to keep people informed and spread the Good News.

GROWTH IN KNOWLEDGE

Religious Education

- Following the good practice of the Director of Religious Studies, ensure that resources such as *Faith Alive* are seen and used consistently for teaching and learning in Religious Education.
- Further investigate ways of giving children ownership of their learning in Religious Education and being open to allowing higher learning and research opportunities, not just at the senior level, for those children who show the desire to grow in their faith knowledge and journey.
- As expressed in the school's strategic plan, continue to deepen knowledge in all aspects of Religious Education and Special Catholic Character.

CHRISTIAN WITNESS

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

- Further reflect and strengthen the school's commitment to bicultural partnership by developing a strong commitment to Te Reo both in the spoken and written word.

**Catholic Special Character Review Team
March 2018**

**Phil O'Connell-Cooper
Lead Reviewer**