

**CATHOLIC SPECIAL CHARACTER
EXTERNAL REVIEW REPORT**

**ST FRANCIS CATHOLIC SCHOOL
PT CHEVALIER**

19-20 August 2010

School Details

Name : **St. Francis Catholic School**

Address : **2 Montrose Street
Pt. Chevalier**

School Type : **Contributing**

Principal : **Mrs Marianne Booth**

Director of Religious Studies : **M r s V e r o n i c a
Jones**

Board of Trustees Chairperson : **Mr Stephen Hill**

Parish Priest : **Fr Maurice Ford**

Reviewers : **Mr Neil Laurenson
Sr Lucille Taylor**

Report Confirmed :

The National Administration Guidelines (NAG 2) requires all schools to develop a Strategic Plan, maintain a programme of self-review and report to the community. In Catholic Schools this process must include provision for the maintenance and development of Catholic Special Character. The review and development cycle includes annual internal self-review of a key dimension of Catholic Special Character as well as an external review every four years.

The purpose of the external review is to provide assurance to the Proprietor that the school has appropriate systems in place to deliver education with a Catholic Special Character in terms of the following three Key Dimensions:

Catholic Community:
Te Iwi Whānui Kātorika

The extent to which the school is a Christian community where Gospel values are central, where faith is nourished, and where Christian celebration in the Catholic tradition is highly valued.

Pastoral Care:
Manaakitanga

The extent to which the school community nurtures, supports and cares for individuals.

Religious Education:
Te Whakaakoranga Whakapono

The extent to which the school helps to fulfil the teaching Mission of the Church.

As well as the key dimensions, the Reviewers look at the school's process for self-review and how areas for development are incorporated into the school's Development Plan. In carrying out this review, the Reviewers had access to relevant documentation, interviewed staff, Board of Trustee members, parents and students and visited all classrooms.

SELF REVIEW

The school has a process for annual Catholic Special Character self review to identify strengths and areas for development

The requirement to review a key dimension of Catholic Special Character is included in the Strategic and Annual Plan. The school has a well established process for Catholic Special Character review and development which is led by the Director of Religious Studies, with direction and input from the Principal and staff. In Term 4 staff and Board of Trustees carry out a SWOT analysis of the Focus Areas and suggested indicators of the appropriate Key Dimension in the Catholic Special Character Review and Development document to determine the planned priorities and actions for the following year. These are then put into the Action Plan for the following year with a timeframe and expected results. This action plan is revisited and evaluated throughout the year. Documentation shows that the Key Dimensions have been thoroughly examined and evaluated, with the staff and Board of Trustees involved in the process. This has included reflection, discussion and surveys for parents when appropriate. Data collected has been collated, analysed and honestly reported and practical steps taken to facilitate change. The annual reports show that actions have been implemented and outcomes achieved, or are in progress. Areas identified for development and the recommendations are challenging and show the school's purposeful commitment to ensure on-going development of Catholic Special Character.

The detail of the annual report is reflected in the Proprietor Representatives' Annual Report to the Bishop. The Board of Trustees Catholic Special Character Committee will continue to work with the Director of Religious Studies as an integral part of the annual review process.

CATHOLIC COMMUNITY **Te Iwi Whānui Kātorika**

The school is a community where gospel values are central, where faith is valued and where Christian celebration in the Catholic tradition is highly

St. Francis Pt Chevalier is a united, joyful Catholic School Community which reflects, “The values of Christ as portrayed and lived by St. Francis of Assisi.” (*Charter*) For our children it is more than going to school to learn, it nurtures the development of the whole person – it is glaringly obvious.” (*Parent*)

Leadership

Leadership effectively shapes the faith-based vision, direction, values and outcomes of the school programme

The strength of the school lies in the leadership provided by the Principal, the Director of Religious Studies, the Senior Management Team and the Board of Trustees. Under the current Principal's leadership, the school has grown and become a leading school in the Diocese of Auckland. Her leadership is inclusive and empowering. She fully understands the ingredients of what makes a school successful. She has created a climate of shared leadership so that everyone buys into the vision to provide a quality Catholic education for the children. She has a hands-on approach and really knows what is happening in every classroom through appraisal and her involvement with the curriculum and school activities. Parents acknowledged that the Principal has a ‘presence’ and ‘incredible patience.’ She spends time with the children and the children love her. As a result of this professional leadership, she has earned the respect of staff, students, Board of Trustees and the parent community. She has formed a strong Senior Management Team who are all united and recognise each other's strengths. The tight bond, the way each person plays their role, their professional expertise and the spirit of camaraderie was apparent to the Reviewers and this is reflected in the whole staff team. Parents acknowledged that staff are dedicated and enthusiastic and share the same philosophy. “For the teachers it is a vocation. They are in it boots and all. They love what they do.” (*Parent*)

This same unity, professionalism and spirit was demonstrated by the Board of Trustees, the majority of whom were present for their formal meeting with the Reviewers. The Board of Trustees are ably led by a Chairperson who has the Catholic Special Character and charism of St. Francis at heart. The Board of Trustees were well able to express how the school's Catholic Special Character impacts on their role of governance. “Our faith – it is where we start from. It is all pervasive in what we are doing.” (*Chairperson, Board of Trustees*)

The strong faith and spirit of the people in the key positions in the school impacts on their individual and collective leadership. They see their role as a ministry and are recognised and respected as leaders by the parents, Priest and Parish community.

Partnership

Education is a collaborative responsibility

“This school has a well-rounded, responsible, inclusive, loving community at its core, made up of staff, children and parents that is attributed to the Catholic Special Character because those qualities are the Vision of the school, based on St. Francis.” (*Staff*)

Staff, children and parents describe the school as an inclusive family to which they are proud to belong. Children understand what it means to be a St. Francis student. “Everyone is on the same page.” (*Parent*)

Parents appreciate that they are acknowledged as the first educators of their children and the many opportunities that the school provides to support them in their role. On the two days the Reviewers were in the school, they saw this demonstrated with the Walking Bus, the Tutor Readers, the

Perceptual Motor Programme, the Enviro Team and the Health Team who organised the Breakfast in Pyjamas event on the second day of the visit. School newsletters demonstrate the spirit of community and the strength of the partnership between the home and the school. These letters convey the breadth of the learning opportunities provided for the students and that learning is interesting and fun.

The Principal and staff are welcoming and approachable. They know the children and their families and take an interest in their personal lives and development. During the visit parents and staff gave many examples of this. Parents know that the spirit in the community is such that their children will be looked after by everyone.

The staff and Board of Trustees acknowledge that a strong sense of community encourages people to participate and empowers them to do so. The Reviewers met with a number of the members of the P.T.A. who see themselves as the parent interface in the community. They see their role as being a dual one of fundraising and community building, and their list of activities is an impressive one. The biennial gala is a major fundraising event which is well organised and supported by the school, Parish and the wider community. Other events include a quiz night, a movie night, sausage sizzles, hospitality for school events and many fundraising activities. The Reviewers have been privileged to share in many school functions. At all of these events, the practical involvement and support of scores of parents is apparent and appreciated by the staff. This active pooling of people's gifts and talents and their generosity ensure the success of these events.

School Culture

Catholic Special Character is visible in the relationships, and the artistic

"St. Francis Catholic School will reflect the values of Christ as portrayed and lived by St. Francis of Assisi." The school is very clear about how they will live this vision. This is simply expressed by five values which children, staff and parents understand and believe. The recognition of people and creation as holy and blessed has shaped the education which the school provides.

As stated in the 2006 Report, St. Francis, the school Patron, is visible in Art Works and Religious Symbols and his spirituality shapes the school's core values. These are well articulated and continually emphasised in the curriculum, in relationships and the school's environment. St. Francis' love and reverence for creation as holy and blessed is readily understood by the children and staff, as is evident in their care of the environment. The school has adopted the Prayer of St. Francis as the inspiration for their own lives. The children spoken to on the day of the visit were able to recite and speak knowledgeably about it. These children enthusiastically and sincerely demonstrated their understanding of the spirit of St. Francis and their efforts to put it into practice in their lives. As stated previously, the school should continue to reflect on the meaning of each concept contained in the prayer, and might consider taking one of these each term to emphasise and practise.

The school honours Mary MacKillop whose Congregation founded the school and the children were knowledgeable about her life and works. It is an action in the Annual Plan for 2010 to maintain an ongoing understanding of the school's charism. With the canonisation of Mary MacKillop, the school will be able to make use of the practical resources that are available to help flesh out some of her sayings and spirit. The school now needs to discern points of similarity between the spirit of St Francis and Mary MacKillop which can be woven together as the school's unique charism.

Prayer and Worship

Catholic culture of prayer, liturgy and faith-based celebration is promoted in the school

The school has a liturgy team of senior students. At the beginning of this year, children were invited to apply to be on this team and were interviewed by the Director of Religious Studies. They

meet every Friday before school and their brief is to co-ordinate the Mission and Pastoral Care activities in the school. They also plan for Liturgical events school-wide and take a leadership role in these. They are pro-active in their role and the school is to be commended for providing leadership opportunities for students in the Spiritual and Liturgical life of the school.

The whole school community celebrates Mass on the first Friday of the month. These have included the Annual Cultural Day and Grandparents' Mass, Leavers' Parents Mass and the Graduation Mass. They also support the Parish celebrations of Ash Wednesday and All Saints day.

To celebrate Universal Children's Day, the school joined with the Parish for the Sunday Eucharist followed by a family picnic. Each term children have a weekly Choice Challenge, one of which is to attend Sunday Eucharist with the family. Parents in their surveys acknowledge that through their involvement with the school, they have been encouraged to attend Mass regularly and to celebrate important Feast days. 'Since our youngest children have started school, we all go to Church every Sunday.' (Parent)

Staff are rostered to lead prayers on a weekly basis which are said at morning tea. Classes are scheduled to prepare for a prayer assembly at the end of each strand. The Reviewers joined with four classes for morning prayer. These were led by the children who were recollected and respectful for this sacred time. Parents are invited to attend morning prayer. Each class has a prayer bag which children take home for a week. Parents spoke about the children's delight at having this resource in the home and the influence that this has had in bringing the family together for prayer. "In their play, children set up classrooms and pretend to teach one another. They always start with a prayer and often sing hymns." (Parent)

Children and parents have the opportunity to attend the Second Rite of Reconciliation during Lent and Advent with the Parish community.

Collaboration with the Parish

The school collaborates with the parish of which it is part

Parishioners appreciate that the children from the school inject life into the Parish community. The physical position of the church is central to the school which is an advantage. 'The youth and energy of the children in the school contribute to the life of the ageing congregation of the Parish.' (Parishioner)

The school advertises the Parish programme for the Sacraments of Initiation and encourages parents to register their children. Members of the school community have become Catholics through the R.C.I.C. and R.C.I.A. programmes. Every year the school assists with the Senior Parishioners' Christmas function. Parents help with catering and transport and the students and staff with entertainment.

The Parish Priest trains students from Years 4, 5 and 6 as altar servers. When interviewed, the Parish Priest stated that St. Francis is the best school in New Zealand, and gave sound reasons why he thinks this. He believes that the Catholic Special Character is paramount to everything that the school does, and that the Principal and teachers are dedicated to their faith and their Ministry of teaching in the Parish school. He is much loved and respected by staff, students and parents who appreciate the time that he gives to provide support and pastoral care for everyone. The school recently celebrated his 70th birthday. The school Secretary is the Secretary of the Parish Council. This helps facilitate communication between the school and the Parish.

Stewardship

The school accepts responsibility for delivering education with a Catholic Special Character

The whole Board of Trustees take seriously their responsibility to preserve and grow the Catholic Special Character of the school. The words of the Vision Statement endorses this. The school has taken the Code of Ethics for staff and Board of Trustee members for New Zealand Catholic Schools and linked this to the school's own Charter documents. In so doing, it ensures that this code reflects the school's vision and values and has been adopted as their own.

The Charter places emphasis on the Catholic Special Character and the values of Christ as portrayed and lived by St. Francis of Assisi and the Strategic Plan has Catholic Special Character

goals that are purposeful and will bring about development. Priorities for action in the Annual Plan are directly linked to the Review cycle.

The Board of Trustees has a Catholic Special Character Committee. They meet regularly and are involved in the school's Catholic Special Character Annual Self Review process in conjunction with the Director of Religious Studies. The committee monitors the Catholic Special Character ensuring that there is a good relationship between the parent and Parish community and that Prayer and Liturgy is a central focus. The Director of Religious Studies presents a report to the Board of Trustees at the end of each term.

The Catholic Special Character policy states that all activities, procedures and policies will demonstrate in action and principle the Catholic Special Character of the school. While the Board of Trustees is deliberately ensuring that this happens, it needs to be specifically reflected in every policy and procedure. When policies or procedures come up for review, it is recommended that the text express how the Catholic Special Character applies to that particular policy or procedure. As stated in the 2006 Catholic Special Character Review Report, the Systems Information Document for staff should include expectations and procedures that pertain to the school's Catholic Special Character. While there is reference to Mission money and the daily use of the Church facilities items such as classroom prayer, school liturgies, the Code of Ethics and the school charism should be included.

The school's Enrolment Pack is well presented and contains the school's Mission Statement. It would be enhanced if it included an explanation about the school's charism, Religious education and its significance in the curriculum, and the way parents need to support this as the first educators of faith. The place of prayer in the family is an example of this.

The Appointments Policy as it stands needs to state clearly that a Proprietor's Appointee from the Board of Trustees must be involved in the appointment of all permanent teaching positions – see *Board of Trustees Handbook 4.1.8*.

The Professional Standards for all teachers include a Catholic Special Character dimension with key tasks and appropriate indicators. Professional Standards for senior staff also include standards related to the leadership of Catholic Special Character. The job descriptions for the R.T.L.B. and support staff also include a Catholic Special Character dimension. The job description for the Office Manager and Assistant should also include a Catholic Special Character dimension. The Deputy Principal and Assistant Principal's job description includes a Catholic Special Character Primary objective. This should follow through into an additional dimension to ensure that this objective is understood and carried out.

PASTORAL CARE Manaakitanga	<i>The school community nurtures, supports and cares for individuals</i>
Relationships <i>learning respected</i>	<i>The school is a friendly, welcoming, co-operative environment where the dignity of each person is</i>

Many parents in their surveys commented that the school is a kind, caring, nurturing environment which children reflect in the way they show patience, consideration, respect, generosity and courtesy to others. Parents acknowledged the caring influence and example of all staff who show love, kindness and encouragement for the children in their care. The Board of Trustees commented that the Principal and teachers' practice what they preach and their example, in turn, influences the students.

In visiting classrooms, the Reviewers observed that the children needing additional support were participating and fully included. As stated in the 2006 Catholic Special Character Report, the school is to be commended for honouring their values of compassion and respect for others. Staff and children have an empathy with these students and their families and appreciate the blessings that they bring. In successfully providing inclusive education the school is living out the spirit of St. Francis.

Behaviour Management

Discipline processes are just, compassionate, respectful and consistent

Behaviour Management is referred to in the context of Pastoral Care and is underpinned by the values of Christ as lived out by St. Francis of Assisi: being honest; respecting, self, others and the environment; acting with humility, compassion and tolerance; valuing people and creation; embracing all cultures. At the beginning of each year, teachers and students from each class formulate a Pastoral Care Plan which is based on these values. These set out clear expectations and positive strategies that are written in appropriate language for the age of the child. They endorse the Key Competencies and enterprising attributes. These plans are sent home at the beginning of the year as well as being displayed in the classroom and shared at the assembly at the beginning of the year. The plans are revisited and reviewed during the year by students and teachers. "The children all seem to have a strong sense of what is right and wrong and how they should treat one another." (*Parent*)

Students are encouraged to have a go, take risks and play an active role in what they learn and how they will go about it. The school implements Building Enterprising Students Today, a programme that empowers children to take responsibility for their actions which reinforces the gift of free choice. Through this programme the children have been given the opportunity to experience leadership in real contexts, such as the various committees which are successfully operating in the school. These include, the Liturgy Team, the Student Health Team, the Environmental Committee, Librarians and Banking Officers. Interested children are provided with a job description and are invited to apply in writing with referee statements attached. They are interviewed and told in writing whether or not they have been appointed. Those applying for the Banking positions were required to attend an interview at the local bank. These opportunities to participate in the running of the school help students to grow and develop leadership skills through taking initiative, problem solving, taking risks, facing set backs, working in a team and self motivation.

Service and Social Justice

The school promotes social justice and students assist people in need through service and outreach opportunities provided by the school

Parents commented that children know how to empathise with other people's situations and how they feel. "They show concern for people in trouble and ask how they can help." (*Parent*) Newsletters demonstrate the ongoing efforts that are made to raise children's awareness of people in need and provide opportunities for practical ways to respond. These include sponsoring a child through the Child Fund, Mufti Mania, and collecting items of food for the City Mission. This was an ongoing project for a term with specific items collected each week. The school supports Caritas each year and during Lent. Caritas personnel spoke to the senior children about their work. Gifts are collected for needy children in the Parish at Christmas time. When a Relief teacher was returning to the Philippines at the end of 2009, the children collected resources for local schools in Mindanao. Mission collections form part of the children's giving. Mission monitors have the opportunity to promote this at assembly.

At the end of 2009 teachers requested that rather than being given customary Christmas gifts by the students, that as a community, "We be Christ for others at Christmas in some practical way." They suggested donations to Caritas, the West Auckland Hospice or food for the City Mission. "We are so blessed to have so much and we as a staff at St. Francis School have enjoyed the gifts of your children and yourselves in many practical ways during the year. Now we can be gifts for others." (*Principal*)

The Principal and Staff are vigilant in their care and support when others are in need. This is done in very practical and compassionate ways such as meals, home visits, transport and showing an understanding when difficulties have been encountered.

Bicultural Commitment

The school is committed to the Treaty of Waitangi

The school acknowledged Matariki Week and the junior school visited Hoani Waititi Marae.

The school has a Te Reo Action Plan for 2010 with planned priorities and actions. This plan was carried over from 2009 as only parts of the plan had been actioned. The new Te Aho Arataki Marau mo te Ako i Te reo Māori - Kura Auraki guidelines were published in 2009 and the Principal attended a course on the implementation of this new document. Staff have begun developing a curriculum plan in preparation for consultation with the community and trialling in the 2011 year. In order to increase levels of attainment in Te Reo at each class level, it will be important for the plan to include achievement objectives and learning outcomes for each class level. At the same time the school should work at deepening teachers' understanding of the Maori Spirituality concepts in the Religious Education curriculum so that they can use them in everyday conversation and apply them to particular situations as appropriate. Staff who have not completed the Catholic Institute of Theology Introduction to Māori Spirituality and Theology could make it a professional development goal at the time of appraisal. In 2009, two staff members attended this course.

Cultural Awareness

The school recognises and honours cultural diversity

Embracing all cultures is one of the school values. An education goal is to provide a culturally inclusive environment that stimulates a love of learning so that children become confident, happy and hopeful people. The Vision Statement makes reference to a culturally inclusive environment. The school has consulted with the Pasifika community to develop a strategic plan to embed 'embracing all cultures' into the life of the school. The action plan for Health and Physical Education includes this vision statement as a specific goal, and through this plan the school aims to use Health and Physical Education as a vehicle to encourage and foster greater involvement and inclusion of Pasifika parents into the life of the community. The planned priorities are all related to Health and Physical Education. The school, as a result of the consultation process and development of a strategic plan, should identify some planned priorities and specific actions to further acknowledge and honour cultural diversity. Reference should be made to Focus 4.0 'Cultural Awareness' under Pastoral Care in the Catholic Special Character review development document when these planned priorities and actions are put in place to support this vision.

Each year the school gathers to celebrate the cultural diversity of the community. Children are encouraged to wear costumes or items of clothing that reflect their ethnicity. A whole school Mass is followed by morning tea and a concert which reflects the many cultures reflected in the school. Parents are invited to assist children to read prayers in other languages, and to teach cultural dances and songs. This should become part of the above mentioned Action Plan.

Pastoral Care Recommendations:

- 1) That the school should now develop a school-wide Te Reo Maori Curriculum Plan with Achievement Objectives and Learning Outcomes for each year level based on these guidelines.
- 2) That the school as a result of the consultation process and development of a strategic plan should identify some planned priorities and specific actions to show how the school will acknowledge and honour cultural diversity.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION **Te Whakaakoranga Whakapono**

The school helps to fulfil the teaching mission of the Church

Leadership

The Principal and the Director of Religious Studies provide leadership and sound management in Religious Education

The school is fortunate to have a Director of Religious Studies who is dedicated to her role and to her ministry in the local Church and community. She has a strong personal faith and provides a good role model of generous service in the Church. She applies her expertise and knowledge of teaching pedagogy to her professional leadership of Religious Education throughout the school. She is conscientious, well organised and has high expectations for teachers' planning, delivery and assessment of Religious Education. The Director of Religious Studies acknowledges the support of the Principal. Together they uphold school policies such as professional development for Religious Education. They provide spiritual leadership and strong direction for everything related to the Special Character of the school. The Director of Religious Studies and the Principal have developed a good working relationship with the Parish Priest who also has a big impact on the daily living out of the Catholic Special Character at St. Francis.

The Director of Religious Studies is ably supported by the Catholic Special Character Committee on the Board of Trustees and with their support she leads the Annual Catholic Special Character Review. The Committee meets each term. These meetings are a means of communicating and discussing information about all matters related to the Catholic Special Character of the school.

The Director of Religious Studies visits classrooms on a formal and informal basis to join in morning prayer, view displays and observe Religious Education lessons. In Term 1 she visited all classrooms for morning prayer and to see teachers' planning and classroom environments. In Terms 2 and 3, she carried out formal lesson observations for the Provisionally Registered teachers, Teachers new to Catholic Schools, and those wishing to obtain Certification. She provides written feedback which is professional, perceptive, affirming and helpful to the recipients. These visits are followed up with support in Term 4. The Director of Religious Studies appraises the Catholic Special Character dimension of the professional standards and reports to the Principal.

Religious Education Curriculum

The Religious Education programme is professionally delivered

The school has a comprehensive and up to date Religious Education plan. As stated in the 2006 Catholic Special Character Review Report, the plan makes use of the Curriculum Overview wall charts and sets out on a double page the details for each Strand and Module for all levels. This gives all teachers a user-friendly overview of the complete programme and puts their level in context. The plan provides guidelines for assessment and a schedule for monitoring performance expectations for the Modules and Strands.

The Reviewers were impressed with the high standards of teaching and learning throughout the school in all curriculum areas. This is reflected in the Religious Education programme being implemented in every classroom. The high standards being achieved in Religious Education is directly a result of meticulous planning. The classroom displays, the children's activity books and the love the students have for Religious Education and its practical application to their everyday lives, is a reflection of the teacher's commitment and enthusiasm for this subject. Children spoken to during the visit were knowledgeable and appreciative of the efforts teachers make on their behalf.

This year the school is trialling the digital resource in rooms that have an interactive whiteboard. This resource has been modelled for staff at syndicate meetings.

Integrated Curriculum

Catholic teaching is integrated with other curriculum areas.

Each term, students and families are given a Choice Challenge. This provides a range of activities to be completed at home. One of these is to attend Sunday Eucharist as a family. An outcome of this challenge is that it supports quality family time and enterprising attributes which involve thinking about and relating to others.

Children are encouraged to walk or cycle to school. The Walking Bus is well patronised and facilitates community spirit. Parents volunteer themselves as drivers and it is promoted to support the school's environmental thrust to reduce pollution and to help children be aware of their local environment and creation. To encourage participation and fun on the walking bus, and to integrate it into Catholic culture, the school celebrates Liturgical Feasts such as St. Patrick's Day, Easter, Pentecost and Advent by dressing appropriately. These Religious festivals identify the children and parents as Catholic and witness to the joy of living their faith. On the Feast of St. Francis the school joined with the rest of the world to help save the environment by inviting all students to join the Walking Bus.

In keeping with the spirit of St. Francis the school promotes respect for the environment and values creation as holy and blessed. An environmental committee of teachers, students and parents work together to make positive changes to the school environment. In 2008 they reviewed possible improvements they would like to see around the school. These became the basis for a three year Strategic Plan. Some of the projects that have been completed from the strategic plan so far are: planter boxes; replacement of drinking fountains; senior and junior playground shade sails; waste composting; junior court wall painted; daffodils planted; incinerator removed; concreting/paving completed. Further projects are underway that include re-developing a waste area between two classrooms into St. Francis Garden Centre complete with a gardening area, workbenches, shade houses and storage shed.

Students have been directly involved in this project. The school has developed an environmental care code which outlines environmentally friendly practises such as reducing land fill, recycling, composting, reducing wastage of natural resources and gardening. This programme engages the students in real life learning opportunities and helps them to make informed decisions and educate others to act sustainably and so care for the earth as God's creation.

Another group, the Student Health team, encourages healthy living and fitness which relates to the St. Francis value of respecting our bodies as holy and blessed. As well as organising many activities the Student Health team publishes a newsletter which suggests physical games and activities to promote healthy living. It conveys their enthusiasm, resourcefulness and commitment to this cause and to the school.

Professional Development

The school provides opportunities for regular Religious Education professional development and spiritual formation for staff

The Strategic Plan has made Professional Development in Religious Education a priority along with Literacy, Numeracy and I.C.T. The Director of Religious Studies monitors teachers' progress in working towards Certification. A professional development plan outlines individual teacher's goals and the pathways teachers are using to reach these goals. A significant number of staff have achieved Classroom Level Certification and four of these have Leadership Level. The Principal is working towards her Masters of Religious Education, and six staff are working towards the Certificate of Leadership in a Catholic School. Those who do not currently have Level 1 Certification are working towards it and should be encouraged to make it a goal to complete an appropriate Religious Education qualification such as the N.Z.Q.A. Accredited Diploma in Religious Studies – Stream Religious Education.

The majority of staff have completed the Understanding Sexuality Module and this year the school took a Teacher Only day so that all teachers and support staff could attend Fr. Elio Capra's Course, 'The Sacramentality/Spirituality of Everyday Life.' The Board of Trustees are to be commended for their commitment to fund professional development in Religious Education.

Staff meetings dedicated to Religious Education are held at least once a term. The Director of Religious Studies facilitates these which are usually based on Strand topics, the Annual Review and School Charism. In 2009, the topic of one of these was Nurturing the Spirituality of the Child. Religious Education Advisors and outside facilitators are sometimes invited to run these sessions

Communication

The school communicates with parents/caregivers about Religious Education

Parents are kept up to date with the current Religious Education Strand through updates in school newsletters and the liturgies held at the end of each strand. In 2009 parents were surveyed to determine the topic for a parent meeting to offer support and guidance in children's faith development. Consequently a meeting was held on Nurturing the Spirituality of the child. This year a meeting was held on the Church Strand using the Digital Resource. The school is to be commended for providing these workshops to assist parents to support children's growth in faith.

The school has been determined to ensure that the new format for the students' activity book will continue to be an important link between the home and the school to give parents a tool for discussion and reflection when activities are completed at home. At the beginning of the year, the Director of Religious Studies provided staff with very clear guidelines for the setting up and the use of these books. A letter for parents is included in the activity book which encourages and helps them to make the best use of this resource as the first faith educators of their children.

The school stresses the importance of parental involvement and encouragement for children's learning in Religious Education. The Reviewers observed the quality of teachers', children's and parents' thoughtful comments. Children's work books are sent home regularly and parents are reminded to follow up with discussion and support at home. Surveys show that parents appreciate the opportunity they have to participate in the children's learning in Religious Education. "Everything in the Children's Activity Book is very precious." *(Parent)* "My child is bringing home and sharing her learning about God which brings peace and happiness to our home and reminds us we have a lot to be thankful for." *(Parent)*

The tone of the children's responses to the Religious Education survey conveyed a positive and happy spirit in every aspect of their learning in Religious Education. "We realise that God is with us everyday, everywhere and with everything we do." *(Student)*

Conclusion

Children believe that their school is special because it is named after St. Francis and his spirit is living in the hearts of the children, the staff and the parents. There is congruence between what is aspired to in the school's Mission and Goals and the education that is developing in the children a love of their Catholic faith while challenging them to be socially responsible, happy and confident people with a responsibility for Creation as holy and blessed, as inspired by St. Francis of Assisi.

"The community spirit is an indication of the Catholic faith and Gospel values in action. All parties of the school work hand in hand to foster the Catholic faith of our children, the next generation." *(Parishioner)*

Neil Laursen
Manager
Catholic Education Services

24 November 2010