

## **SPECIAL CHARACTER REVIEW REPORT COMMUNITY SUMMARY**

St Mary's School is clearly committed to providing an education with authentic Catholic Character. The mission statement includes "To provide a quality education in a Catholic environment", and this is evident from the entrance billboard showing the Gospel values to the whole school's welcome assembly. Staff including support staff, build this Catholic environment through their care for students and their families. It is also reflected by ex pupils' traditional pride and support for the school; many continue to support St Mary's by having their children attend the school. Some families have a three generation association.

The school seeks to educate its students in a positive Catholic environment that encourages students to work to their potential. The school uses its assessment system, and the board uses its finances to ensure all students have their needs met e.g. extension and remedial.

The principal is widely acknowledged as a hard working professional. Her willingness to undertake RE professional development with staff shows she leads by example. Each week she joins classes for prayer.

The DRS has been described by staff, students and parents as a passionate witness of the Catholic faith both at school and in the wider community. She is committed and enthusiastic and leads by example. She is the link between parish and school. The sound leadership and management provided by the Principal and DRS ensures appropriate timetabling and effective delivery of Religious Education.

Traditional prayer is a strength of the school and they are practiced regularly in junior rooms. All classes pray at least four times a day. Interviewed students are familiar with the prayer routines in their classes and explained how they are able to include their personal prayers. Senior students are encouraged to reflect on things beyond their personal experiences and are developing an awareness and empathy for others.

Teachers pace lessons centered on the needs of students and use questioning and modeling techniques to ensure clear understanding of the concepts being taught. RE lessons are varied, creative and interesting, students are provided with opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and understanding in a range of learning situations. These include whole class, group and paired sharing of ideas, reading of scripture, and the dramatisation of biblical stories and their meaning in students' lives and completion of tasks that support learning of the concepts being explored.

The school and parish St Peter Chanel and the local Madonna Maria community are continually working together to build relationships and support each other. The introduction of the Pastoral Area Family Mass is developing well and will enhance future relationships with other Catholic schools.

The school is well resourced to teach RE and prayer effectively. The library has a section dedicated to faith books and each classroom has a range of prayer resources.

Religious Education is taught from the national programme as prescribed by the New Zealand Bishops' Conference and is given appropriate status in the overall teaching programme.