

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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CATHOLIC SCHOOLS EDUCATION SERVICES

**Āhuatanga Katorika Kaupapa Arotake
Me Te Ahu Whakamua**

Catholic Special Character Review for Development Report

Report on the external review visit for

Aquinas College, Tauranga

Review conducted on: 25 and 26 September 2018

Lead Reviewer: Mrs Mary Cook

Assistant Reviewer: Mr Terry Consedine

Date of Confirmed Report: 14 October 2018

School Information

Name	Aquinas College
Address	183 Pyes Pa Road, RD3, Tauranga 3173
School Type	Co-educational, Years 7-13
Actual Roll	740
Maximum Roll	750
Non-preference Maximum	5% (37)
Actual non-preference	5.9% (44)
Roll based staffing entitlement	47
Principal	Mr Matt Dalton
Director of Religious Studies	Mrs Susan Van Zyl
BOT Chairperson	Mr Scott Kahle
Parish Priests	Fr Mark Field (St Thomas Aquinas)

The Aims and Framework of the external Catholic Special Character Review for Development

The NZCBC wishes the review to show how effective the school is in handing on the faith and forming a new generation of Catholics; this includes evaluating the efficacy of Religious Education and how the whole school community engages in authentic Catholic Christian witness and evangelisation.

In the review, schools are asked to consider the ways in which they provide for their students:

1 Encounter with Christ - Te Tutaki Ki A Te Karaiti

2 Growth in Knowledge - Te Whakatupu Ma Te Matauranga

3 Christian Witness - Te Whakaaktu Karaitiana

The review also investigates stewardship of the relationship with the Church and the State

Reviewers encourage and commend best practice, and, working with the school, provide indications of opportunities to further strengthen and develop Catholic culture.

The report also includes information about the school, a brief summary and a report on achievement of recommendations from the last external review

Recommendations from the 2014 review

Statutory Special Character Compliances

According to information provided by the College to the Review Team, Aquinas College is required to have 20 tagged teaching positions in the College. This is set at 40% of the College staffing entitlement and is exclusive of the positions of Principal and Director of Religious Studies. At the time of the review the College identified only 10 such positions. It is therefore short of the requirement by 10 teachers. This has the potential to have a significant impact on aspects of Catholicity in the College and can also place added burden on existing tagged teacher positions. The Review Team, in discussion with members of the Leadership Team, identified staff currently in the College who may be eligible to hold some of these tagged positions if they were willing to do so. The Board's attention is also drawn to the requirement that all future teaching positions must be advertised as being tagged until the statutory requirement is achieved.

Response: *Currently there are 17 teachers, apart from the Principal and Director of Special Character, who hold S464 positions. There are several other teachers in the College who would fit the criteria to hold an S464 position. This is currently being followed up by the new Principal and*

Board. In discussion it was clear that the need to advertise positions with S464 is understood to ensure that the correct number of S464 positions are maintained.

1 That the Board of Trustees reviews the fees/donations requested from parents so that they meet Ministry of Education requirements, Catholic Social Teaching Principles and the recommendations of the New Zealand Bishops' Conference.

Response: *The donation requested from parents meets with the Ministry of Education requirements. It has been set at the same level for many years and has not been increased in spite of inflation. Currently a review is taking place to ensure that the donation is in line with Catholic Social Teaching principles and recommendation from the NZ Bishops' Conference.*

2 It is acknowledged that the Board of Trustees currently provides support for the professional development of the staff in the area of faith development and curriculum delivery but some focus on encouraging staff to undertake formal education programmes through TCI could assist staff to achieve a nationally recognized qualification in RE or Special Character.

Response: *Evidence was provided to show that staff are encouraged to undertake formal education programmes through TCI. Discussion took place concerning the workload involved for many staff to work extramurally and instead looking at the possibility of having a TCI paper, or other, made available for all staff at the beginning of the academic year and delivered at the College.*

Review Report

Encounter with Christ- The Tūtaki Ki A Te Karaiti

NB: The current Principal and Director of Special Character were each appointed this year. The Principal took up his appointment at the beginning of the academic year and the Director of Special Character at the beginning of Term 2.

Areas of Success

Spiritual Formation

Prayer is an integral part of life at Aquinas College. The College has its own prayer which is said frequently. Staff meetings and briefings begin with a prayer focus and every Friday all staff gather in the Chapel for a staff liturgy before school begins. Tutor groups begin with a prayer and all Religious Education classes include prayer. College newsletters include a spiritual focus. Meetings begin with a relevant prayer or reflection.

College assemblies are held weekly in the gymnasium. The assembly begins with a prayer, reading or reflection led by the Principal and followed with a hymn.

Mass is celebrated each Wednesday in the College Chapel by one of the parish priests. It is attended by two tutor groups and staff. Students can also invite their whanau to attend. Readings and commentary are delivered by the students

Retreats have been held at each year level in Years 9, 11,12 and 13. Year 9 retreat theme was being a Child of God, Year 11 were led by Real Talk, Year 12 led by CDC from Auckland and 13 were teacher led. An important part of the Year 13 retreat was having former students speak about their take on life. Finding a suitable venue to hold a retreat has been challenging. This year the College was without a Youth Chaplain. For 2019 they are investigating exploring the services of CSYMA from Canberra. This would provide youth chaplaincy services as well as leaders for school retreats.

Evangelisation

In its enrolment processes the College clearly defines its Catholic Special Character. During enrolment interviews with students and whanau he emphasises that the Catholic Special Character underpins everything at the College and expectations associated with this.

A sacramental programme is available. Currently this is offered after school each Friday in the College Chapel. Fifteen students have participated this year. Four have recently been confirmed. It is planned that enrolment data will be analysed to follow up with students who have not completed the Sacraments of Initiation. This will also include opportunity for whanau to be included.

Aquinas College has two parishes which it draws its community from. When College Mass is offered in the respective parish on a Sunday the Senior Leadership Team attend and strongly encourage all students from the parish to attend in uniform. This provides an opportunity for parish and school to work together by enabling students to serve in the various ministries associated with Sunday Eucharist. Parishioners and whanau are able to share in the experience of participating in a youth led Eucharist which can lead to further evangelisation opportunities.

The College has several whole school masses during the year eg Mass for the Assumption . At each of these masses students have the opportunity to participate in the various ministries. Te Reo is prominent throughout, for example the second reading being read by a student in Te Reo and whole school singing, led by the Music department is being encouraged. On a more personal scale Mass is celebrated each week in the College Chapel. Two tutor groups attend on a roster basis. This enables all students to have at least two opportunities during the year to have leadership roles, help with preparation and participate. It was obvious from the Mass which we were able to attend that students were used to participating in Mass at the College.

Faith-Based Leadership

The Principal and Director of Special Character (DSC) confidently articulate their own faith. This was witnessed in assembly, in meetings, in feedback from staff and Board as well as in the recent College newsletter. They are both new to their roles but lead with purpose and vision for the Special Catholic Character of Aquinas College.

The Principal, supported by the Board, arranged for all Leaders of Learning to accompany him and the DSC to the Catholic Schools Convention in Wellington. This was an inspired move as it enabled every Leader of Learning to be able to experience a clearer understanding of Special Catholic Character and its relevance to every learning area, not just Religious Education. The immediate outcome has been the formation of a Special Character Group made up of leaders across faculties who have volunteered to support the DSC with Special Character. The journey to and from the Convention developed a camaraderie and better understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities within a Catholic College.

In the annual plan for the College the Principal identified a need and so included the objective for Catholic Character - *“To further embed the Special Character within Aquinas College”*. Included in the actions were a self-review of school-wide practices relating to the inclusion and reflection of Special Character, consultation from local Parishes and the Diocese and review of the inclusion and reflection of Special Character across the curriculum. The review process has resulted in a Catholic Character Report being produced by the DSC which will be used by the Principal and Board in future planning.

The Leader of Learning for RE and teachers of RE are open about their faith and provide good role modelling.

Growth in Knowledge – Te Whakatupu Mā Te Mātauranga

Areas of Success

Leadership

The Principal and DSC supported by the Leader of Learning of RE are active and effective leaders in Catholic Special Character, its observances and instruction. The Principal leads by example. He has a strong faith base which he willingly shares with staff and students as witnessed in assembly and in the staffroom. His leadership in seeking Board support to send all Leaders of Learning with the DSC and himself to the Catholic Schools Convention in Wellington also demonstrates this.

The DSC holds a Diploma in Religious Studies and Graduate Level Certification. She is a member of the senior leadership team, actively supports the Principal in leading Special Character but continues to have a heavy teaching load. The Principal and Board are aware of this and are looking at ways to resolve the situation from the beginning of 2019.

Next Steps:

1. That the workload of the Director of Special Character be reviewed and brought in line with other members of the senior leadership team

Religious Education

Religious Education is given high status in the College. It meets the nationally mandated RE curriculum and required hours. The very experienced Leader of Learning for RE works closely with the RE teachers to ensure that the programmes are well prepared, relevant to the lives of students and Gospel based. Teachers of Religious Education are well qualified, enthusiastic and committed to quality delivery. These teachers lead by example and willingly share their faith with others. In Years 9-13 they work as a team and are not afraid to tackle hard topics eg ethical material which enables challenging and constructive discussion in the classroom. Planning, assessment and reporting procedures are high quality and professional in line with all other subjects.

Religious Education in Years 7 and 8 is taught by their Home Room Teachers. The REMB (Year 7-10 RE Curriculum Re-Alignment) has been approved to be introduced across Years 7-10 in 2019. This will enable the DSC and Leader of Learning for RE to ensure that the RE programme across these year levels is consistent across the year groups.

Opportunities are provided for staff professional development in RE and in Catholic Special Character. School based professional development in Special Character has taken place during formal staff sessions. Several new staff members are enrolled in the course for Teachers New to Catholic Schools.

Catholic Curriculum

All learning areas are expected to teach from a Catholic viewpoint. Examples were shown where Catholic teaching is incorporated into subject teaching areas. These included the integration of Health and RE, using BYOD Technology as part of assessment design. Using Catholic social teaching as a reference point in Social Studies students are encouraged to critique society in light of the Gospels eg through Caritas material.

The Catholic Curriculum Review which has recently been completed will enable the Principal and Board to be better informed of how the Catholic curriculum is currently incorporated across learning areas.

Next Steps

2. To ensure that the Catholic Curriculum Review document and its recommendations is used by the Board in reviewing the strategic plan and developing the annual plan for 2019.

The Human Sexuality and Personal Development sections of the Health Curriculum are taught within the RE classes. Students commented that open discussion was encouraged and that the classes were relevant to them. The programmes that we saw were well researched, relevant to the age group and followed Catholic teaching. Parents commented that they were kept well informed by the College.

Christian Witness – Te Whakaaktu Karaitiana

Areas of Success

Catholic School Community

The Aquinas College Touchstones – Truth, Joy, Family, Service, Prayer and Scholarship along with the school motto “*Hold Fast to Truth*” set the tone for College to operate from. Each group of students were able to give examples of the Touchstones in their daily life. Students also commented on the support and camaraderie which exists in the College, this was supported by comments from parents.

The College has developed an elaboration of the touchstones to provide a clear Gospel link to each one. Currently the College is working to develop, after consultation, a *Graduate Profile of the Aquinas College Student* which will be aspirational and based around the Touchstones. The focus is to be around holistic education with students being the best version of themselves so that they can be active and vibrant members of society – an education based on Head, Heart and Hands following the Gospel virtues.

Religious symbols were in evidence in the classrooms and corridors. There were a number of colourful and attractive murals on the outside of the classroom buildings which had been made by students. However there was a distinct absence of murals related to Special Character apart from three at the end of one building which were partly obscured by plants.

Next Steps

3. It is recommended that Special Character themed murals be developed which will provide witness to the Catholic identity of Aquinas College.

Partnership and Collaboration

A Dove fellowship group meets in the College Chapel on a regular basis and offers prayers for the College community.

Whanau are welcome to attend the weekly College mass in the Chapel. This particularly provides an opportunity for grandparents to be present.

The College is part of the Kahui Ako which includes the Catholic secondary and primary schools. Being part of this community enables greater partnership and collaboration between the Catholic schools as well as opportunities to strengthen Special Character through communication and working together.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

The College actively demonstrates a commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in many ways. There is a College Marae which is in a central position on the campus and is in daily use as part of Tikanga Māori for students and whanau. Visitors are welcomed with a pōwhiri. The strong Kapa Haka group is open to all students and provides a strong focus and sense of pride, especially for Māori students.

All students who identify as Māori are tracked and monitored on the student management system. The teacher responsible for Māori achievement works with students, staff and whanau to ensure that these young people have their needs met and are achieving at the highest level.

Greetings in Māori are encouraged. The use of Waiata and prayers in Māori during Mass and liturgies are being actively encouraged.

Pastoral Care

There are very clear systems in place, based on restorative practices and Gospel virtues which are clearly understood by the College community. This results in potential discipline issues being resolved quickly before they potentially escalate.

Peer Support by trained Year 11 students is in place for Year 7 students at the beginning of the academic year. In discussion the Year 7 students commented on how useful that Peer Support was and that their Year 11 leaders still acknowledged them and met with them from time to time. Year 9 and 10 students made similar comments. Both groups of students commented on how they felt supported by older students.

Guidance Counsellors use Peer Mentors to work with students who need some continued support after their immediate counselling needs have been met. These senior students are carefully selected and trained.

The Director of Pastoral Care leads a team of Deans and two Guidance Counsellors. The College is also able to use the services of a nurse and a doctor on a casual basis as well as a physiotherapist. Having an on-site physiotherapist enables students to receive their treatment without having to take time off school to travel across the city.

The International Dean and her team have responsibility for international students. They work closely with staff and families to ensure that these students are able to succeed and integrate into the community.

There are several students who have specific learning needs. They are well supported and integrated into the College.

During the school assembly it was very pleasing to see the supportive reception from the student body when different groups were introduced either to report back or to be presented with certificates of achievement. These included four international students who each spoke about an aspect of being an international student and a group of six students who were presented with certificates awarded from the Special Olympics which they had participated in.

An advantage, pointed out by students and parents, of the smaller size of the College is that people know each other and respond when a need arises. Staff know the students so that any student having a problem can quickly be identified and a solution sought. The College is open to all students who have a preference certificate irrespective of financial means. A welfare fund provides financial support when required, this ensures that no student is excluded from any school-based activity. Parents operate a used uniform shop at the College.

The Principal has instituted the opportunity for students who through their actions embody the Touchstones alongside those who have achieved notable recognition receive an invitation to have morning tea with him.

Service and Outreach

Service and outreach at Aquinas College takes place without fanfare. It is an expectation that as a Catholic College these are part of life. Students were enthusiastic in sharing the work that they do and were quick to point out that they participate in these activities because they want to and not because they have to.

Students in Years 7 and 8 keep a Service Journal in which they are expected to record acts of service with a photographic record. Service Day is an annual event in which all students from Year 9-13 spend the day working for free in the service of others in the community. This has included a wide variety of actions from beach clean-ups to gardening and other jobs for the elderly. In discussion with students across these year levels they were able to relate how Service Day related to Gospel values.

The Aquinas College (AC) Army was begun a few years ago by some senior students to respond to identified needs in the community. The AC Army continues to be student led and is currently working with Young Vinnies on a Christmas Shoe Box appeal to provide Christmas packages for needy children in the Bay of Plenty region.

Twenty senior students, accompanied by staff, spent two weeks in Fiji during the mid year holidays. It has become an annual working visit where students help in the village of Vanuakuta

and is very popular as there are always more students volunteering than can participate on the visit. This year students were involved in painting as well as constructing four outside shower cubicles. The students fundraised to pay for the materials needed. Students who had participated commented that it had been a very humbling experience and made them re-evaluate their lives.

Every Tuesday students work with St Vincent de Paul at The Loaves and Fishes preparing breakfasts for people in need. Another group of students work with the Full Stop Van a couple of evenings each week serving hot drinks at night.

The recent Tauranga Service in Action Community Awards recognising Service and Spirit of Volunteers in Tauranga recognised two students from Aquinas College. One senior student was awarded the Youth Community Spirit Award and a second student was a finalist. The students were re-presented with their awards at a full school assembly.

Next Steps

4. Social Justice actions provide the difference in a Catholic school and as such are equal to, if not more important than, academic success. Immediate public profiles are the College website and annual magazine neither of which contain much information on the wealth of social justice participation which students and staff are involved in. This should be rectified firstly by including and regularly updating a section on the College website and secondly by incorporating at least four to five pages in the annual College magazine on Special Character activities and RE

Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Character- Te Kaitiakitanga Me To Whakapakari Te Tuakiri Ka Katorika

Areas of Success

Stewardship

Since both the Principal and DSC are new to the College this year it was decided to review all of the dimensions of Catholic Character. An evidence based self-review took place, led by the DSC. The findings have resulted in the Catholic Character Curriculum Review document. This document is extremely comprehensive and will be invaluable to both Board and management.

Meeting with the Board Chairperson and Proprietor's representatives to the Board of Trustees provided assurance that the Special Catholic Character of the College is taken seriously. They are eager to use the Catholic Character Curriculum Review document and to work alongside the leadership of the College to inform future direction of Aquinas College.

Board governance policies reflected Catholic Character and the Principal includes Special Character updates to the Board in his report.

The Catholic School Elaboration Standards are included in teacher job descriptions and are part of teacher appraisal documents.

Employment

Procedures for advertising and making teacher appointments follow requirements as identified in the *Handbook for Boards of Trustees of Catholic Schools*

Staff appointment application packs contain information on, and the expectations if appointed, of the Catholic Special Character of the College. The Principal clarifies this during the interview process and an induction programme is provided. Proprietors' representatives participate in the appointment process. The staff handbook also includes the requirements of teachers working in Catholic schools.

Next Steps: 5. To ensure that the staff induction process includes all aspects of Catholic Special Character, the DSC should be included in the induction team

Professional Development

The Board have demonstrated their commitment to Principal, DSC and staff professional development in Special Character by funding the recent participation at the Catholic schools Convention.

Legal Obligations

The College endeavours to be compliant with all aspect of the Integration Agreement.

Preference roll as at the date of the review

Preference Criterion	Number of Students	% of Current Total Number of Students
5.1	607	82
5.2	7	1
5.3	62	8
5.4	20	3
5.5	0	0
Non-Preference	44	6
Total	740	100%

Next Steps - as identified by the school and reviewers

- 1. That the workload of the Director of Special Character be reviewed and brought in line with other members of the senior leadership team.*
- 2. To ensure that the Catholic Curriculum Review document is used by the Board in reviewing the strategic plan and developing the annual plan for 2019.*
- 3. It is recommended that Special Character themed murals be developed which will provide witness to the Catholic identity of Aquinas College.*
- 4. Social Justice actions provide the difference in a Catholic school and as such are equal to, if not more important than, academic success. Immediate public profiles are the College website and annual magazine neither of which contain much information on the wealth of social justice participation which students and staff are involved in. This should be rectified firstly by including and regularly updating a section on the College website and secondly by incorporating at least four to five pages in the annual College magazine on Special Character activities and RE*
- 5. To ensure that the staff induction process includes all aspects of Catholic Special Character, the DSC should be included in the induction team.*

The organisation and preparation by the College for this review was greatly appreciated. The Reviewers would like to thank the Aquinas College Community for the welcome and hospitality extended to them and for the opportunity to visit and experience the Special Catholic Character of its College.

**Mary Cook
Lead Reviewer**