

**ĀHUATANGA KATORIKA KAUPAPA  
AROTAKE ME TE AHU WHAKAMUA  
CATHOLIC SPECIAL CHARACTER REVIEW  
FOR DEVELOPMENT**

Report on an external review of

**ST. BENEDICT'S SCHOOL  
KHANDALLAH**

**AUGUST 2018**

**Review conducted on: 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> August 2018**

**Review Team:**

**Zita Smith** (Lead Reviewer)

**Tracy Gundesen** (Accompanying Principal Reviewer)

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**SCHOOL DETAILS**

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<b>Name</b>	<b>St. Benedict's School</b>
<b>Address</b>	<b>50 Nicholson Road, Khandallah</b>
<b>School Type</b>	<b>Co-educational Years 1-8</b>
<b>Decile</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Ethnic Composition (actual number and % to the nearest whole)</b>	<b>Maori: 10 (3.58%) Pasifika: 9 (3.22%) Pakeha: 189 (67.74%) Asian: 57 (20.43%) LAAA: 14 (5.01%)</b>
<b>Principal</b>	<b>Michael Hinds</b>
<b>Director of Religious Studies</b>	<b>Jacqui Miranda</b>
<b>BOT Chairperson</b>	<b>Richard Uerata-Jennings</b>
<b>Parish Priest</b>	<b>Father Doug Shepherd</b>

**Date of on-site review: 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> August 2018**

**Date of this report: 5<sup>th</sup> September, 2018**

The Catholic special character review of St. Benedict's School was conducted by the Wellington Catholic Schools Education Service review team of:

**Zita Smith**  
*Reviewer*

**Tracy Gundersen**  
*Accompanying Principal Reviewer*

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## THE AIMS AND FRAMEWORK OF THE CATHOLIC SPECIAL CHARACTER REVIEW

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The New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference wishes the review to show how effective the school is in handing on the faith and forming a new generation of Catholics, and how students have grown in faith as a result of the Religious Education programme.

The External Review process is based on the requirements found in the document, "*Catholic Special Character Review for Development*", Aotearoa NZ Catholic Integrated Schools, NZ Catholic Office Ltd, 2017 (Draft).

The written report looks at Catholic Character using the four key dimensions:

- Encounter with Christ - *The Tūtaki ki ā Te Karaiti*
- Growth in Knowledge – *Te Whakatupu mā Te Matauranga*
- Christian Witness – *Te Whakaaktu Karaitiana*
- Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Character - *Te Kaitiakitanga me te Whakapakari i te Tuakiri Katorika*

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

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## REPORT SUMMARY

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St. Benedict's School in Khandallah, Wellington, is a Year 1-8 school of 279 students, founded in 1952 by the Brigidine Sisters. Its school vision is "Developing our children's minds, guiding our children's hearts." The school values are derived from the Brigidine values of empathy, perseverance, integrity and creativity and are commonly referred to as the EPIC values.

The school is part of the recently formed parish of St Francis of Assisi, Ohariu. This new parish consists of three churches and two schools. St Benedict's also belongs to a Community of Learning, currently involving 10 Catholic primary schools and 3 Catholic Colleges from the central Wellington area.

St Benedict's is described as a family by staff, students and parents. Words like caring, accepting, inclusive and non-judgmental are used to describe the culture of the school. The parent community is actively involved in the life of the school, and stakeholders are passionate and positive about the school and what it provides for the children it serves. Parents interviewed described pastoral care as a strength of the school.

Staff demonstrate unity and passion in supporting the school's Catholic Character, led effectively by the principal and the DRS. This is evident in the positive and open staff interactions, the welcoming and hospitable approach towards parents and visitors, and the natural and gentle manner of staff interactions with students. Staff are aware of and responsive to the needs of others. The students themselves are respectful, courteous, engaged and demonstrate a love for their school.

The NZ Religious Education Curriculum is being implemented and teachers use a variety of ways to engage students in their learning. The DRS is an experienced and effective leader in all aspects of the curriculum.

The principal, DRS and DP, together with the Board, demonstrate effective leadership in safeguarding and strengthening the school's Catholic Character. Together they are building on a strong legacy that gives witness to the Gospel of Jesus in the way the school educates its students.

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## **SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE PREVIOUS EXTERNAL REVIEW**

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### **Key Recommendations from the 2014 Review**

**1. *A suggested next step for the school is to offer baptism to the non-baptised preference students.***

Baptisms are offered via school and parish newsletters, and community links. As a result of parish priest, Fr Doug Shepherd's approach, there have been several baptisms of both students and parents since the last review.

**2. *In light of the Bishops' document, develop clear expectations for teachers who hold tagged positions.***

Job descriptions include references to Catholic Character and school values. Job Descriptions highlight the expectations around the roles of teachers holding tagged positions. As a result, tagged teachers are taking greater roles in supporting other teachers to uphold the Catholic Character. Tagged teachers have joined the RE team to support the DRS and several have trained as Eucharistic Ministers.

**3. *Continue updating all key Catholic Character documentation e.g.***  
***a) ensure that the Religious Education Curriculum Statement reflects current practice***  
***b) include a section for staff on 'How to support the Catholic Character of the school' in the Catholic Character and Religious Education Procedures and Handbook.'***

The new staff induction handbook includes information around the pastoral care policy and the Catholic special character policy but lacks clarity regarding 3b. Refer Recommendations 2018.

**4. *Revisit the school's current values and unpack them fully with the students. Highlight them in documentation, display them around the school, link them to behaviour management and focus on perhaps one per term and include them in the newsletters so that parents can refer to them at home.***

The EPIC values are very well-known amongst students, staff and parents in the school community. They are apparent on the approach to the school where they are displayed on pencils up the school driveway. They are a focal point of playground interactions and classroom culture including lesson content. EPIC Eddie and Edwina Values Awards, along with a staff St. Benedict's Award, are featured at weekly Assemblies. They are integral to the behavioural norms of the school.

**5. Develop opportunities for affirming and celebrating the increasing diverse cultures at the school e.g. visual connections, liturgical celebrations, through sexuality education i.e. 'made in the image of God.'**

Since the last review, a variety of opportunities have been taken up, to affirm and celebrate the diverse cultures of the school. These include:

- Principal/DP/Parent Consultations - Filipino, Maori, Indian
- A focus on language weeks - Filipino, Maori, Samoan, Chinese
- Electives option - Indian culture
- St Benedict's Day Mass - National costumes worn by those presenting prayers in their native language, followed by a cultural afternoon.

**6. Provide opportunities for students to be involved in service/social justice activities to promote a deeper understanding of what it means to give time and share talents with those in need.**

Since the last review, a range of service and social justice activities have been initiated, notably through integrated unit themes, including the use of Caritas resources. This has further heightened student awareness of the needs of others and created service and outreach opportunities.

**7. Develop a long term professional development plan towards a qualification in line with the Bishops' document e.g. Consider enrolling in TH101 in 2016.**

PD plans for teachers completing TH101 were done. The DRS keeps records to ensure that all teachers are working towards their next level of accreditation.

**8. Having successfully implemented a unit based on the concept of 'Grace', the school could now consider planning a multi curricular unit based on a religious education concept.**

As part of a schoolwide strategy, one syndicate has begun planning integrated units in Religious Education. The next step is to share this with the wider school and then support the other syndicates to plan similar cross curricular units. See Recommendations.

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**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?*

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**AREAS OF SUCCESS****Spiritual Formation**

There are many examples of spiritual formation available to students, staff and parents at St Benedict's School.

The school has an active prayer life and a variety of prayer styles are evident in both staff and student prayer. Morning prayer occurs daily in each classroom, and includes traditional and informal prayer, as well as Scripture and song. Students often lead prayer, having planned and organised it beforehand. Parents have an open invitation to be part of morning prayers in their children's class(es), and value this opportunity, with some attending on a regular basis. They see prayer as a way for each child to practise their faith in an accepting environment.

Staff pray together regularly and are rostered to lead their weekly prayer time. This is seen as a valuable opportunity for them to be still, to pray together and to build their spirituality.

Attending Mass on a regular basis is a cultural norm at the school. Two buddy classes attend a parish Mass each week on a roster system. Special occasions and Feast days may involve whole school Masses or liturgies in the parish church. Students have roles in these occasions, leading prayers, music, reading, or providing illustrations in the data presentation.

Fr Doug Shepherd participates in the life of the school, visiting classrooms on a rostered basis. Students, staff and parent community recognise and value his spiritual contribution in the school.

The EPIC values of St Benedict's School, based on the Brigidine values of Empathy, Perseverance, Integrity and Creativity, are taught, modelled and promoted throughout the school. They underpin the pastoral care and the behaviour management of the school.

Retreats are held for both staff and senior students each year. These times are seen as very beneficial to the faith life of the participants and students reported that they learnt a lot about how to express their spirituality through what they learn on retreat. Dramatising a Gospel story, planning and carrying out a liturgical dance and taking on leadership roles connected to Catholic Character are some examples of what they learnt on retreat. The school's Year 8 Catholic Character Leadership Team supports the DRS on Catholic Character initiatives.

At the time of the Review a little space for quiet reflection and prayer was in the process of being developed.

**Evangelisation**

Staff are conscious of the importance of being positive role models, and that by promoting and living the school values, they are evangelising their students. Their commitment upholds and witnesses to the Catholic Character of the school.

Parents report that being invited to Morning Prayer supports and grows their own spirituality because it helps them to put God at the centre of their lives. They see the Catholic Character being interwoven in the life of the school. The EPIC values are a powerful tool for this.

St Benedict's promotes parish programmes for the Sacraments of Initiation through the school newsletter. Fr Doug liaises with the principal or DRS when students and their families request Baptism. Several students and some parents have been baptised since the last review.

Forty students from the school have recently completed the Sacramental programme (Reconciliation, Confirmation and First Eucharist). While these programmes are run through the Parish, the school supports them by promotion through the Newsletter.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation takes place in the school twice a year in Lent and Advent.

There is a regular timetable of liturgies and Masses that are appropriate for the age and culture of participants, and students have the opportunity to develop these liturgies and to have some leadership roles in them.

School communications, including the website and other social media, promote St Benedict's as first and foremost a Catholic school.

**Faith Based Leadership**

The principal, supported by the senior leadership team, articulates and promotes a faith-based vision for the school.

The DRS ensures that opportunities are provided for teachers to deepen their faith and understanding of the teachings of the Catholic Church through ongoing professional development.

**NEXT STEPS**

Continue to explore a variety of prayer forms and encourage students to experiment in different ways to pray e.g. praying with colour, using mandelas, a meditation time in all classes, Year 8 Catholic Character team leading prayer in classes.

Develop a process that enable students and their families to begin and continue their sacramental and faith journey. See Recommendations.

Clarify school induction and orientation programmes to assist new members of the community to deepen their understanding of what it means to be part of a Catholic community.

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**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?*

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**AREAS OF SUCCESS****Leadership**

The DRS is a positive role model who supports teachers by organising PD. She also provides resources and suggestions using RE curriculum materials. Teachers plan together as a syndicate so that all have the required resources. These resources are given in a timely way, before the beginning of a unit. The DRS is respected as someone who is approachable, helpful, supportive, has practical suggestions, and who is very faithful to the Catholic character.

The new principal, appointed at the start of 2018, demonstrates a commitment to the Catholic Character. He is an energetic leader with strength in communication and pastoral care. This year he and the DP have begun consultation meetings with specific groups within the school (e.g. Filipino, Māori, Indian). He has recently completed a TCI paper in Religious Education as part of his Catholic leadership development.

**Religious Education**

The school implements the nationally mandated Religious Education curriculum, providing effective learning and teaching programmes for Religious Education. Teachers are adequately and appropriately resourced to deliver these programmes.

Prayer tables, wall displays of learning in RE, and RE resources were seen in all classrooms.

Planning was in evidence in different forms. Teachers plan cooperatively in syndicates and all report they are well resourced and supported by the DRS. The Kowhai Syndicate is planning and teaching using integrated units, and is developing effective ways to track the RE content and coverage. They share how the units are going in weekly syndicate meetings.

The RE teaching observed was well planned, creative, and engaging for students. Interactions between learners and teachers are positive, respectful and relaxed. Students are interested, motivated, and knowledgeable about the learning topics.

The integrated units (e.g. Refugees, the Soup Kitchen) are very current and have proved powerful in supporting students to integrate a personal faith with social justice. Students were able to talk about these topics from a Catholic perspective.

Teachers use appropriate assessment data and work collaboratively to understand their impact on student achievement in RE. Current assessment analysis is carried out for one strand each year. Analysis of student achievement, of the learning and teaching programme and next learning steps are carried out by each teacher, then collated and reported to the Board by the DRS.

All teachers are working towards the next level of certification appropriate to their length of service in Catholic education. They participate in regular Catholic Character professional development which is recorded for certification and appraisal purposes. The school is currently using Catholic Schools Education Services to introduce the Religious Education Bridging Document, and teachers report that this PD is of high quality and particularly helpful.

### **Catholic Curriculum**

Through the teaching of the integrated units, the school helps to raise awareness in students and their parents about the need for social justice. Teachers explicitly relate current topics to the Gospels' portrayal of Jesus' care for the poor and marginalised, which is central to the Gospel message. The themes chosen and the use of Caritas educational resources assist this. Parents are very affirming of the way the school expresses a commitment to both faith and action, helping their children to grow into adults with a strong sense of social justice and outreach, based in their Catholic faith.

The human sexuality education units reflect the teaching of the Catholic Church. Several teachers have participated in the *Understanding Sexuality* professional learning and development approved by the Bishops.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Continue to work with CSES to embed the REBD into practice. Develop a shared understanding of integration. This will then support integrated planning across all syndicates to be consistent.

Build student agency in RE by providing opportunities for students to self-reflect on and self-assess and set goals for their learning and their personal growth in faith.

Continue to work towards all teaching staff (including principal) completing the *Having Life to the Full* (formerly *Understanding Sexuality*) course, and continue TCI papers as appropriate.

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**TE WHAKAATU KARAITIANA- CHRISTIAN WITNESS**

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

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**AREAS OF SUCCESS****Catholic School Community**

The school is a warm and welcoming environment, where hospitality and courtesy are evident. There is a strong sense of community where people co-operate together and show care for one another.

Displays and symbols located in the entrance foyer, staffroom, along the corridors, provide clear witness to the Catholic identity of the school.

Staff have a clear vision about the integration of faith and action from a Catholic perspective and are bringing this to life in their classrooms. The sense of social justice and of service and outreach was clearly seen amongst staff, Board and parents interviewed.

**Partnership and Collaboration**

A school strength is its communication with the parent community. A recently initiated series of consultation meetings with parent groups of different ethnicities is continuing to build on already positive partnerships.

Parents of children with special needs have recently formed a support group, and the school works to build a partnership with this group of parents.

The school is part of the newly formed St Francis of Assisi, Ohariu Parish and is considering ways to build links with the other school and the two other parish communities.

The school is part of the Catholic Community of Learning, with 13 Wellington schools, including St Patrick's, St Catherine's and St Mary's Colleges. Developing pathways from St Benedict's to the Colleges is one of the focus areas for this CoL.

**Te Tiriti o Waitangi**

The school continues to embed Tikanga Māori into the life of the school. Waiata and Mass responses are positive actions to include te reo Māori. Consultation with Māori families held this year was profitable and as a result, a Kapa Haka tutor was employed and a group was formed. Kapa Haka is open to all students and at the time of the Review, about 35 students attended a lunchtime class.

**Pastoral Care**

Pastoral Care is a strength of the school. Support is given in a variety of ways as and when a need becomes evident.

A parent initiative, Foodie Friends, provides meals for families who are identified as having a particular need or are going through a difficult time. Parents spoke of this very positively and those who had received meals expressed deep appreciation.

Fr Doug Shepherd is seen as a caring, pastoral presence in the school.

The school is divided into buddy classes for a variety of events and activities, and this is an opportunity for the older and younger children to develop relationships of trust and for the older students to model respect and empathy to the younger students. Students reported that at their school, there is “no judgment if you are different, if you have a disability no one cares; they help you.”

Staff report that pastoral care is a strength in the school in terms of their own well-being. A positive, friendly atmosphere exists. Regular social events and birthday morning teas include all staff. Friday Fruit and Staff Awards at assembly, initiatives of the principal, are ways that staff are validated and appreciated. There is a culture of care for staff who need extra support at a particular time e.g. because of sickness, bereavement etc.

The transitioning into school or between classes of students with particular needs, has a clear and consistent process, providing communication and practical support to students and their families. Parents spoke highly of this school system and the pastoral care it demonstrates.

### **Service and Outreach**

Since the last Review, the school has worked to build service and outreach in the school. This year the Kowhai Syndicate’s integrated unit on the Soup Kitchen led them to visit the Wellington soup kitchen and resulted in a pop up soup kitchen in the school, with proceeds going to the Wellington one.

A current unit about Refugees is giving students an understanding and developing empathy about the life of a refugee, and how refugees can be welcomed and supported as they settle in Aotearoa NZ.

When classes are rostered for their Mass, they are invited to bring a can of food for the food basket.

The school participates in a variety of fundraising activities; the Mission Fair, with funds donated to Caritas, the 40 Hour famine, and a cupcake fundraiser for the SPCA.

As well as fundraising, small acts of kindness include sending cards to the residents of Malvina Major and community carol singing at Christmas time. Other events which provide opportunities for service and outreach are the very popular Grandparents’ Mass, and the Fathers’ Day Breakfast.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Continue to strengthen Tikanga Maori and build it into Catholic Character events. (Refer Recommendations)

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**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?*

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<b>Actual Roll</b>	<b>279</b>
<b>Maximum Roll</b>	<b>320</b>
<b>Non-preference Maximum</b>	<b>16 (5%)</b>
<b>Actual non preference</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Roll-based staffing entitlement</b>	<b>13.4</b>
<b>No. S464 (tagged) positions</b>	

**Student Numbers for Each Preference Criterion and Non-preference**

<b>Preference Criteria</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>% actual roll</b>
5.1	201	72.0%
5.2	5	1.79%
5.3	37	13.26%
5.4	17	6.09%
5.5	0	0%
Preference with no criteria	0	0%
<b>Total of signed preference roll</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>92.47%</b>
Non-Preference Roll	16	5.73%
International Fee Paying Students	3	1.07%

## **AREAS OF SUCCESS**

### **Stewardship**

The Chairperson demonstrates sound leadership of the Board. He and the Board are committed to being good stewards of the Catholic Character of the school, and this is reflected in the school's Charter and Strategic Plan. Board meetings begin and end with prayer, and a Catholic Character item features on the agenda.

There is a strong and committed Catholic Character Committee comprising the Proprietor's Appointees, parish priest, DRS, DP and principal who meet each term. Their focus is to address all matters concerning the Catholic Character of the school and to ensure that the DRS and staff have the support and resources they need. Together they complete the annual Catholic Character Attestation.

The Proprietor's Appointees are passionate about being effective stewards of the Catholic Character by continuing to build on the school's legacy. They have an email address and invite suggestions from the community about ways to strengthen and grow the Catholic Character of the school.

### **Legal Obligations**

The school is meeting its obligations under its Integration Agreement in terms of staffing, tagged positions and preference/non-preference students.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Include the Catholic Character internal review timetable in the Board triennial work plan, and use the *DRAFT Catholic Special Character Review for Development* guidelines as the starting point. Internal review could be a focus for the Catholic Character Committee.

As Policies are updated, ensure each reflects the school's Catholic Special Character.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

*It is expected that the Board of Trustees and staff will include these recommendations in its strategic and annual plans and address them fully before the next external review. Catholic Schools Education Services staff are available to offer professional support as required.*

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### *Encounter with Christ*

- 1. Beginning at school enrolment, develop and embed a school process, in partnership with the parish, to ensure that all students are supported to receive the appropriate sacraments for their age.**

### *Growth in Knowledge*

- 2. Continue to use authentic contexts to integrate RE with other curriculum areas across all syndicates, while retaining the integrity of the RE curriculum.**

### *Christian Witness*

- 3. Continue to grow whole school knowledge and practice in Tikanga Māori, particularly in areas that enrich the Catholic Character.**

### *Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Character*

- 4. Continue to build authentic links between school families and parish as a natural extension of children's faith development.**

The review team is confident that the St. Benedict's School leadership (Board, Principal, DRS and DP) have the willingness and ability to address the recommendations of this report. They have already begun to work on several of the recommendations with the support of the CSES team.

In concluding this report, the review team wish to thank the St. Benedict's School community for their aroha and manaakitanga during our visit and for the opportunity to observe and the privilege to experience the Catholic Character of the school.



Zita Smith  
**Lead Reviewer**