



# CATHOLIC SCHOOLS EDUCATION SERVICES

## Catholic Special Character Review and Development Report

Ahuatanga Katorika  
Kaupapa Arotake  
Me Te Ahu  
Whakamua

Report on the external review visit for

# Holy Cross School Miramar

Review conducted on 19/20/21 October, 2105 by:

**Hellen Johnston**  
External Reviewer  
CSES

**Vanessa Jensen**  
Principal



## Summary Page

Reviewers were pleased to note that since the last review, Holy Cross School has maintained its exemplary Catholic Character and has continued to grow and progress in all areas of the school. The Principal continues to be an inspiration as she authentically role models Gospel values in her interactions with everyone at the school and in the wider community. Her dedication and sound leadership has created a staff who reflect regularly on what they do, work collaboratively and go to extra lengths to meet the holistic needs of students.

The Director of Religious Studies provides enthusiastic and effective leadership in religious education. He works hard and is appreciated for the life giving liturgies he organises and for his musical talent. He is also committed to providing the support and resources necessary for teachers to deliver quality teaching in Religious Education.

The students are educated in a Christ-centred learning environment where students are encouraged to 'let their light shine' and to be better than they ever imagined. Ample opportunities are provided for the students to achieve in a caring, supportive environment where their faith is nurtured. Students enjoy being part of a community where there are *'lots of opportunities, people are nice and everyone is included.'*

The national Religious Education programme is being implemented and lessons observed by the reviewers were well planned, child-centred and students were happily engaged in relevant, interesting lessons.

The Board is ably led by a committed Chairperson who along with the Proprietor's Appointees and other Board members ensure that the Catholic Character is used as a foundation for decision-making, strategic planning and prioritising.

The school is committed to fostering links with the newly formed Parish of the Holy Trinity and many efforts are being made to grow and develop these links. The Sacramental programme is well supported by the school and opportunities for students to attend mass are sought. Parishioners are warmly welcomed to school celebrations and events.

The reviewers are confident that Holy Cross School will continue to provide an authentic Catholic education through its very sound relationships, its worship practices and its religious education programme.

## School Information

<b>Name</b>	<b>Holy Cross School</b>
<b>Address</b>	<b>Athens Street Miramar</b>
<b>School Type</b>	<b>Co-educational primary years 1-8</b>
<b>Decile</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Actual Roll</b>	<b>195</b>
<b>Maximum Roll</b>	<b>340</b>
<b>Non-preference Maximum</b>	<b>34- 10%</b>
<b>Actual non-preference</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Roll based staffing entitlement</b>	<b>10.6</b>
<b>Ethnic Composition</b>	
	<b>Middle East 18.6%</b>
	<b>Samoan 18.0%</b>
	<b>NZ European 14.9%</b>
	<b>Indian 12.9%</b>
	<b>NZ Maori 9.3%</b>
	<b>Tongan 6.7%</b>
	<b>African origins 4.1%</b>
	<b>Filipino 3.6%</b>
	<b>Chinese 3.6%</b>
	<b>Other 8.3%</b>
<b>Principal</b>	<b>Celeste Hastings</b>
<b>Director of Religious Studies</b>	<b>Nikolai Solia</b>
<b>BOT Chairperson</b>	<b>Martin Paget</b>
<b>Parish Priest</b>	<b>Father Ephren</b>

## Report Format

The External Review process is based on the requirements of the National System of Review and Development on Catholic Special Character that came into effect at the end of 2003.

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

Statutory Requirements

Catholic Community

Religious Education

Pastoral Care

The written report has an Overview, which highlights the successes of the school and indicates any Key Recommendations.

The body of the report is written under the headings of the four dimensions. Areas of Success and Opportunities for Development are highlighted.

### Recommendations from the 2011 review

***.....To further strengthen and develop Parish/School links, explore the possibility of individual or buddy classes attending weekday Masses.***

The school is committed to the building of community and great efforts have been made to strengthen and develop links with the Parish. There is now Mass at school once per month and one class at a time attends a weekly Mass in the parish room. The parishioners really enjoy the presence of the children at the weekly Masses.

***.....To further strengthen and develop the RE programme, monitor classroom delivery to assess whether it is in line with other curriculum areas.***

This recommendation is a 'work in progress' and since the last review, the Religious Education Adviser has been working with teachers on integrated planning and progress is evident. Planning is now more responsive to student needs.

***..... Consider ways of tracking achievement across levels in Religious Education***

The school has explored how to track achievement in a meaningful way and has consulted the Religious Education Adviser. As with most schools in the Diocese, a meaningful system has still not been found.

***.....Work towards RE being part of the school's Connected Curriculum.***

The school continues to focus on this and has already reviewed planning after being involved in TH101.

***.....To further strengthen and develop relationships with the Tangata Whenua explore the most effective ways of consulting on an annual basis.***

This has been very well achieved and the Principal is very pleased with the support given in this area from a number of prominent people.



### **Religious Education**

The national Religious Education programme is implemented and Religious Education is seen as a priority area and the required time allocation is met. The school has developed a strong professional community that encourages regular reflection on practice. As part of the performance appraisal at the school, teachers reflect on how their actions demonstrate commitment to the Catholic Character, the values of the school and their own spiritual journey. Needs are identified and relevant professional development provided. The religious education programme is then enriched through teachers' applying their new knowledge.

The Board of Trustees encourages professional development in Catholic Character and provides adequate funds for staff to participate.

### **Self-Review**

Self-review on aspects of Catholic Character is included in the annual plan after areas for development have been identified. Reviewers sighted the strategic objectives in Catholic Character for 2014-2018 relating to the religious education programme, Catholic Character practices, the bi-cultural/Treaty partnership, cultural celebrations and school/parish/college links. The plan is regularly updated as progress towards the objectives is made.

In addition, the Board of Trustees review Catholic Character policies and procedures regularly.

### **Board Policy and Practice**

The Board of Trustees is committed to Catholic Character in their governance of the school. This is demonstrated in a number of practical ways. For instance, when developing the school charter, Catholic Character is given precedence. Both the school's mission and vision statements reflect Catholic Character and as already mentioned, objectives are set in Catholic Character areas and progress is regularly monitored.

Catholic Character is the first section of the principal's report to the Board which reminds members of the school's purpose and sets the scene for the meeting.

Catholic Character and Gospel values are considered when decisions are being made and Board meetings begin with prayer/reflection that members take turns to lead.

Governance and Operational policies also reflect Catholic Character and include the school's motto, '*Let your light shine.*'

The Board of Trustees is committed to professional development and sections from 'The Catholic Education of School-Age Children' are presently being explored and reflected on to establish what it means for the school. Some Board members also attended a day of reflection recently entitled, '*Responding to our call to discipleship- Stewardship 2015.*'

A Proprietor's Appointee is involved in the Appointments process and a teacher's ability to uphold the Catholic Character is seriously considered.

Teacher Job Descriptions contain a Catholic Character component and teachers set an annual goal in this area through the school's performance management system.

### **Consultation with the Proprietor**

The Proprietor's Appointees are aware of their responsibilities to the Proprietor and the annual report and attestation document are completed collaboratively and forwarded to the proprietor at the appropriate time. Reviewers sighted both the 2014 attestation and report.

### **The Health Curriculum**

The school shows commitment to Catholic Character in its health curriculum and staff attend relevant courses. Since the last review, all permanent staff have completed '*Understanding Sexuality*' and their new learning was translated into a topic on '*I am Sacred and made in the image of God,*' for senior students. This made clear links between sexuality education and the Catholic faith. Reflections and evaluations of students showed a deeper awareness and understanding of this topic. Input appropriate to the junior syndicate students has been incorporated into topics.

The Myself and Others module is also used regularly.

## **Pastoral Care - Manaakitanga**

### **Areas of Success**

#### **Relationships**

*'The school is a friendly, welcoming, co-operative learning environment where the dignity of each person is respected.'*

One of the great strengths of Holy Cross School is the sound, supportive relationships that are fostered and developed with all members of the school community. The school's strategic goal to have a community that '*nurtures, the dignity, self-esteem and well-being of all*' is realized through the deep commitment of staff who genuinely care for the students and role model the school's Gospel values in their interactions.

Reviewers saw evidence of mutual respect and consideration between staff and students during classroom observations and the positive, happy atmosphere the reviewers experienced in the staffroom showed that the staff are a caring, cohesive group who readily support one another. According to one staff member, '*The school feels like a wrap-around, nurturing, and caring blanket.*'

In staff surveys, teachers said that they feel valued and have a strong sense of belonging within the school and wider community.

Parents interviewed enjoy the welcoming family atmosphere at the school and how everyone is included. They also appreciate the commitment of staff and their approachability.



Students who were interviewed showed great pride in their school and believe it to be a community where people are *'nice to each other, listen and give support where it is needed.'*

### **Organisation**

*'Pastoral care is organized in a way which is evident to all members of the school community.'*

Pastoral care procedures at the school are examples of ways faith is lived and actions are encouraged to clearly show what the school believes to be *'The Holy Cross Way.'*

Pastoral care is not seen as the responsibility of senior management but everyone is expected to respond to identified needs. All Staff quickly notice a need and provide for it in a dignified, caring manner.

Many supportive structures are in place starting with a strong, effective transition programme for new children to the school.

Also, a team of Holy Cross Angels has been developed recently and members respond to specific needs through providing breakfast, baking, clothing, lunches etc.

Outside agencies are also contacted when appropriate.

In addition, a Safe at School survey is carried out once per year and feedback from this is carried through into planning for the next year.

Students with special needs are particularly well looked after and included by both adults and students.

One parent of a girl with special needs is very thankful that the staff have worked tirelessly to provide her daughter with quality, adapted learning experiences during her five years at the school. This has led to her achieving *'more than we ever dreamt of.'*

### **Bi-Cultural Commitment**

*'The school is committed to the Treaty of Waitangi.'*

One of the school's strategic objectives is for the bicultural/Treaty partnership to be embedded in all practices and the school makes many efforts to achieve this.

All students experience powhiri at least once per term and this is a well-established practice which goes from strength to strength and reflects the school's Catholic Character by acknowledging and celebrating its rich diversity of cultures.

The reviewers were very impressed and moved with the powhiri to welcome new members to the school community. The students played their parts enthusiastically and the singing and haka were delivered passionately. An interesting aspect of the powhiri is the opportunities provided for whanau to introduce the new person who is issued with a kete which will be filled with

values demonstrated and the child's achievements during their years at the school.

The school has a very strong kapa haka/cultural group at both the senior and junior levels and this is managed by the the Director of Religious Studies. The school hopes to combine the two groups in the future to reflect the tuakana/teina model.

Consultation with the Maori Community is done regularly at whanau hui and a Maori member of staff has taken a leadership role. The school is also fortunate to have some high profile Maori people in the area and it is hoped that they can be part of future consultations.

### **Cultural awareness**

*'The school recognizes and honours cultural diversity.'*

Holy Cross School is a very diverse community, which is both well honoured and celebrated in a number of ways to foster a sense of belonging for all groups. The recent erecting of cultural pou in the playground has further enhanced the honouring of cultural diversity. These pou reflect the various cultures at the school and the first one is 'faith' to remind people of the importance of the school's Catholic Character. These were blessed by kaumatua at a special ceremony when they were completed.

As already mentioned, the powhiri at the start of each term reflects the many cultures at the school and the school's cultural group involves a fusion of Maori and Pasifika song, dance and sasa. This group presents to the community and participates in Kapa Haka festivals.

Another celebration of diversity has been a sharing of stories from families and especially from refugees. This has nurtured a sense of belonging and a sense of pride for individual cultures. Each term, parents from different cultures visit the school and either provide food or demonstrate a craft e.g. Morning tea was held for the Tongan community and incorporated the making of leis.

The Filipino community has also been invited to a morning tea and students raised money and led prayers for the people affected by Typhoon Haiyan.

The school provides Adult English Language classes run by a trained tutor and free childcare is offered.

The Principal is passionate about addressing the needs of the different cultures at the school and she was awarded a sabbatical to answer the following question, *'In what way can schools support learning and cultural identity of students from refugee backgrounds and those who have English as a second language?'* Essential practices were identified and new ideas, practices and programmes have been and will continue to be implemented over the next few years.

## **Behaviour Management/Safety**

*'Discipline processes are just, compassionate, respectful and consistent.'*

There is an expectation that the principles and values outlined in the school's curriculum document will guide actions at the school and this provides a positive foundation for discipline with consequences for appropriate behaviour.

The emphasis is on catching children 'being good' and providing positive reinforcement which could be a Principal's Hero Award or a school Gold Card.

The school has been involved in the PB4L programme and three school rules, which are linked to the school's identified values have been decided on. A Matrix is in place which outlines behavioural expectations in a variety of settings and the school endeavours to 'feed forward' to support the understanding of these.

The senior students interviewed were very aware of the behaviour management programme and feel that they are treated fairly.

## **Catholic Community – Te Iwi Whanui Katorika**

### **Areas of Success**

#### **Spirituality**

*'The individual and communal spirituality of the whole school community is promoted and nurtured'*

Holy Cross School continues to be a faith community where all members of the school and wider community play an important role.

One of the difficulties facing the school, however, is the fact that the school cannot attend Mass at Holy Cross Church due to its seismic rating. However, the school remains committed to providing opportunities for students to deepen their faith and to come to know some of the community of their local church. For this to happen, class masses take place in the side room off the parish hall and a school/parish mass is planned for early November this year.

There is no doubt that the Catholic faith is being lived and taught through a number of well-established practices which include regular liturgical celebrations e.g. Ash Wednesday, Easter, Ascension, Advent, Christmas and feast days. In addition, many celebrations occur for specific events e.g. an ANZAC liturgy, a blessing for the recently established, bike track, a liturgy for the people of Iraq and a blessing for the pou.

A year 8 retreat is held annually and it is hoped that a staff retreat can take place in 2016.

Staff participate in Monday morning prayers/reflection and during the review, a very meaningful and moving reflection on the plight of refugees was undertaken by one of the teachers.

There is also whole school prayers on Monday morning led by senior students and these are linked to values, special days etc. All year 8's organise a school prayer session.

This is a sacred time to focus on gathering and praying together. It also builds knowledge of schools values and vision.

Students pray in classrooms in the morning, before lunch and at the end of the day. Interviewed students said that prayer helps them to *'have a closer relationship with God and to focus for the day.'*

Reviewers joined classes for prayer and were impressed with the sense of reverence, the inclusion of traditional prayers and some community involvement. It was pleasing to note that in one classroom, the students used different responses to personal prayers according to whether the prayers were of intercession or thanksgiving.

### **Evangelisation**

*'The school is a faith community which endeavours to spread the Good News by word and witness'*

Holy Cross School is to be commended for the way it delivers very positive messages in its wider community and parish about its authentic Catholicity. The school's commitment to this is demonstrated in a number of ways.

Firstly, the role modelling of Gospel values by staff, the care and compassion shown to all and the commitment to religious education demonstrate that the school wishes to spread the Good News.

The school also identifies preference students who are not baptized and invites them to participate in a baptism programme. Last year, five students were baptized. Parents have also approached the school to get baptized.

The enrolment pack reinforces the fact that Holy Cross is a school where the Catholic Character is highly valued and a top priority.

School Newsletters feature the school logo and Catholic Character is first on the list of items. Upcoming liturgical celebrations are advertised and reflections on past events are given.

On the school website, the principal emphasizes many aspects of Catholic Character e.g. the founding orders, the school's values, vision, mission and motto.

Parents interviewed feel well informed about Catholic Character events and what their children are learning in religious education. One of the parents

interviewed appreciates how the school reinforces what is being taught at home.

### **Partnership**

*'Education is a collaborative responsibility.'*

From interviews and observations during the review, it is obvious that collaboration amongst board members and staff is promoted. This collaboration is based on the school's identified values which influence behaviour.

The mutually respectful working relationship which has been developed between the Principal and Board members ensures that everyone is working towards the realising of the school's vision, *'We are a Christ-centred, child focussed, living, loving learning community. Our vision is for each child to achieve more than he/she ever dreamed possible.'*

The Board appreciates the Principal's hard work, dedication and vision. He feels blessed to have someone who truly lives the Gospel values in her day-to-day management of the school.

The school is also committed to working in partnership with parents who are consulted on a regular basis and kept informed about what is happening at the school through newsletters, homework challenges, open invitations to school and parish events, interviews and reports.

A new development since the last review has been that of TIPS (Teachers Including Parents in Schoolwork). This involves parents in home learning at a deeper level and ensures that teachers are working in partnership with parents to enable the students to achieve their goals.

The Parents Support group continues to organise fundraising events, working bees and social occasions each year.

### **Values**

*'The school identifies and actively promotes gospel values.'*

At the time of the last review, the school had identified ten values from the two religious orders associated with the school. Since then the school has decided to focus on only five values which makes it easier for students to remember: *Love, Justice, Community, Courage and Faith*. The *'faith'* value was introduced at the beginning of this year and lessons were taught around what faith means and what it looks like at Holy Cross.

These values are very well promoted and referred to when identifying both positive behaviours and when students make poor choices. Gold cards are issued for the display of the values and awarded at school assemblies.

Students who were interviewed were very knowledgeable about the values and what they look like in practice.



## **School Culture**

*'Catholic Special character is visible in the relationships and the artistic expressions seen throughout the school.'*

As visitors to the school, the reviewers were very warmly welcomed by both staff and students and a strong sense of 'manaakitanga' was evident. Sound relationships were evident straightaway and people readily offered help and support.

Artefacts around the school and in classrooms also show ample evidence of Catholic Character e.g. there are murals representing the Marist and Mercy Founders of the school. These were painted by students on the substation. The faith and cultural pou take pride of place leading towards the hall and there is a mural depicting the school vision undertaken by students.

As visitors enter the foyer, a number of religious symbols can be seen and there is a display celebrating the different cultures at the school. Some school -made books for visitors to peruse on a number of Catholic Character themes are displayed on the table.

The learning environment clearly demonstrates the importance of religious education with the children's work displayed around the classroom as well as prayer spaces, icons and the school motto prominently displayed.

A new bicycle track has been developed in the playground and is very well used by students. The grounds, play areas, buildings and facilities are maintained to a high standard.

## **Leadership**

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

The reviewers acknowledge the sound commitment of the Board Chairperson and the Proprietors' Appointees to the Catholic Character of the school. During interviews, they showed a keenness to both maintain and strengthen current school practices that already show that the Catholic Character of the school is highly valued.

In interviews and surveys with both staff and Board members, a recurring theme was that of the Principal's truly authentic leadership. Her total commitment and conscientiousness along with her exemplary pastoral care of the whole community is a real blessing for the school. *'In her leadership, the Principal is an embodiment of the school's values. In her relationships with staff, students and whanau she shows through her actions and words how to be loving, just, courageous, have faith and be an active part of a community.'*

A committed leadership team that practises open communication and collaborative problem solving ably supports the principal.

As part of the school's leadership programme, opportunities are given to students to be of service both within the school and the wider community.

There is also a liturgy group which organises and takes leading roles in celebrations. A Leadership retreat was held for year 7/8 students and the school motto, *'Let your light shine'* was the theme.

### **Stewardship**

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

The school shows its responsibility for strengthening and maintaining its Catholic Character through a number of practices.

Firstly, it is deemed important to keep the school's charism alive and a goal has been set to maintain contact with the Marist Brothers and the Mercy Sisters. Students interviewed could share information about the school's founding history.

Support is provided for new staff in a number of ways, depending on needs and experience. The Director of Religious Studies may give direct support or support may be through attending RE101 presented by the Religious education Adviser.

To further assist with the induction of new staff and to serve as a reference point for all, a Catholic Character handbook for teachers will be recommended. This can include information on important aspects of the school's Catholic Character.

In the school prospectus, the first page has the school's vision then a Principal's welcome which alludes to the school's history, the school's values and Catholic Character practices.

Initially, new students/families meet with the principal before being welcomed at whole school prayer time followed by the powhiri at the start of the term.

Teacher Only days at the start of the year, always have a Catholic Character component to remind people about what the school stands for.

### **Service and Outreach**

*'Students assist people in need through service and outreach activities.'*

Students are given opportunities to assist people in need through service and outreach. Collections are made for Caritas, Catholic Social Services and the Home of Compassion.

There are further opportunities for assisting people in need through the school's leadership programme and homework activities relating to service.

There is a high level of care shown by students to those with special needs and there is also an expectation that older students are buddies to younger students, especially new entrants.

## **Collaboration with Parish**

*'The school collaborates with the parish of which it is part.'*

The school is committed to working closely with the community of the newly formed, Parish of the Holy Trinity and measures are being taken to foster this connection.

A parish Mass was held in the school hall at the beginning of term four and it was encouraging that large numbers attended. It is hoped that a parish Mass can now be held once per month in the school hall.

The parish and school work together on the Sacramental programme and both the Church and school provide venues for instruction.

Parishioners are invited to school events and to help in classrooms thus working together to support a Stewardship model.

There is also a link to the parish newsletter given in the school's newsletter.

The Director of Religious Studies has invited the priests to visit the school but as yet they have not been able to do so. Once the new parish is more established, the priests may be able to accept the invitation.

## **Religious Education – Te Whakaakoranga Whakapono**

### **Areas of Success**

#### **Leadership**

*'The principal and DRS provide leadership and sound management in Religious Education'*

The Director of Religious Studies is new to the position since the last review and according to staff surveys, he works very hard to provide effective leadership and he readily gives support to ensure that religious education is given its due status.

Staff remarked on the '*wonderful, thought provoking and reflective liturgical celebrations*' that he organizes.

He is very well supported by the Principal who acknowledges the challenges of the position and includes him in the management team. He also receives release time to fulfil his role.

#### **Religious Education Curriculum**

*'The religious education programme is soundly managed and professionally delivered.'*

Planning and classroom observations indicated that the national Religious Education programme is the basis for the teaching of Religious Education at Holy Cross School.



Since the last review, teachers have had professional development from the Religious Education Adviser in both R.E. planning and integration and Inquiry Teaching. Teachers have enthusiastically taken this development on board and are presently at the trialling stage.

In addition, the staff remarked that their involvement in TH101 has also led to their planning and teaching in a more informed way.

Staff plan units together and begin with identifying an overarching concept which is then linked to the main understandings for lessons. Learning intentions and success criteria are also developed and activities are aligned with these.

Staff identify students' needs in a number of ways e.g. through discussions to assess prior knowledge, observations and formative and summative assessment. The assessment and evaluations at the end of each strand are passed on to the Director of Religious Studies and inform future planning.

During the review, junior classes were focussing on the Church strand with supporting achievement objectives from the Jesus strand. Senior classes were involved with the Jesus Strand. Lessons were well planned using the integrated planning approach.

Reviewers observed in all eight classrooms and noted that a variety of teaching styles and strategies were used to make religious education lessons relevant and engaging for the students:

- learning intentions were discussed
- prior learning checked
- recapping on previous lessons
- cooperative learning
- the use of technology.
- Individual needs addressed

Effective questioning was also used to draw out the student's ideas and to gauge understanding. The supportive, nurturing classroom environments allowed students to participate fully and to take risks with their answers.

Reviewers were also impressed with the way teachers were able to bring the religious education curriculum into the real world in a way that students could relate to e.g. by comparing the leadership of Jesus, Pope Francis and Cardinal John Dew.

In the year 7/8 classes, it was interesting to see the effective integration of literacy with religious education. Students worked in rotational groups on different activities while one group worked with the teacher.

Their 'big question' was '*Why we do what we do?*' The expected answer being, '*Because all we do leads us into a relationship with God.*' The role modelling of Gospel values by both Pope Francis and Cardinal John Dew was discussed. Students said that they enjoy learning in this way.

Children were enthusiastic about their religious education learning and were happy to share with the reviewers.

Senior students interviewed said that they enjoyed learning about *'things in the Bible and connecting it to your real life'* and *'learning about Jesus and the miracles he did.'*

Student learning is recorded in topic books and teachers provide feedback orally as they circle the classroom and some teachers write comments in the books.

It was encouraging to note that teachers often referred to the school's values for both praise and behaviour management.

### **Integrated Curriculum**

*'The teaching of Religious Education is integrated with other curriculum areas especially those which include ethical issues, personal relationships and sexuality education.'*

As already mentioned, the teaching of religious education is now incorporated into integrated units and is part of the school's 'connected curriculum'. Themes are planned with an overarching religious education focus and key concepts and other curriculum areas that lend themselves to being integrated are included.

The school has identified a need to continue this development to ensure that the faith, knowledge and understanding of all members of the community are strengthened. This will be a recommendation.

### **Resources**

*'The Board of trustees makes financial provision for religious education and Catholic Special Character resources.'*

The religious education budget is adequate and allows the school to purchase relevant resources that are kept in classrooms or in the resource area near the staffroom. All classrooms have access to the digital resource and reviewers noted its use in some classrooms.

The Director of Religious Studies is also a valuable resource and according to staff, *'he generously shares his musical expertise and quality resources to ensure that we bring spiritual beauty to our celebrations.'*

Further support is provided by the Religious Education Adviser whose input is very much appreciated by the staff.

### **Professional Development**

*'The school provides opportunities for regular Religious Education professional development and spiritual development of staff.'*

The development of staff skills and knowledge in Religious Education is seen as essential and opportunities are given for staff to achieve at least level one certification.

This development recently has taken the form of cluster meetings, conferences, the Catholic Convention and involvement in TH101. To encourage staff to 'go deeper' in their teaching of religious education, RE 102 (Introduction to Spirituality) is timetabled for 2016.

With regard to qualifications, three staff members have Leadership level which includes the Principal and Director of Religious Studies. The Principal also holds a Master of Educational Leadership from the Australian Catholic University. Three teachers have gained Classroom level and three Foundation level.

### **Communication**

*'The school communicates with parents about religious education programmes.'*

The religious education programme is communicated to parents through meaningful homework assignments, newsletters, interviews and the school's web-site. Parents when interviewed were happy with the level of communication.

### **Recommendations for next steps as identified by the school and reviewers**

- Continue to develop the way religious education is integrated and taught to facilitate authentic contexts and links for students whilst ensuring specific Religious Education objectives are covered.
- Develop a Catholic Character Handbook that supports teachers to maintain and strengthen the school's Catholic ethos. Include Catholic Professional Standards for Teachers, ideas for prayer, traditional prayers, the R.E. programme, R.E. times, professional development, pastoral care organisation etc.
- The school is already working hard to support the establishment of the newly formed Holy Trinity Parish so it is important that the school continues to identify ways to support this growth and development.

***The organisation and preparation by the school for this review was greatly appreciated. The Reviewers would like to thank Holy Cross School for the welcome extended to them and for the opportunity to visit and experience the Special Catholic Character of its school.***

*Hellen Johnston*

**Hellen Johnston  
CSES external reviewer  
11<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

