

**CATHOLIC SPECIAL CHARACTER  
EXTERNAL REVIEW REPORT**

**MT. CARMEL SCHOOL,  
MEADOWBANK**

**17-18 SEPTEMBER, 2014**

## **SCHOOL DETAILS**

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Mt Carmel School, Meadowbank</b>
<b>Address:</b>	<b>Mt. Carmel Place, Meadowbank, Auckland 1072</b>
<b>School Type:</b>	<b>Contributing school, Y1-6 boys and girls.</b>
<b>Principal:</b>	<b>Mrs Annette Donnelly</b>
<b>Director of Religious Studies:</b>	<b>Miss Liz Hennessy and Mrs Ronelle Clark</b>
<b>Board of Trustees Chairperson:</b>	<b>Mrs Deborah Shirley</b>
<b>Parish Priest:</b>	<b>Fr. Peter Gray</b>
<b>Reviewers:</b>	<b>Mr Neil Laurenson Mrs Colleen Gleeson</b>
<b>Accompanying Principal</b>	<b>Mr Andrew Thompson</b>
<b>Current Roll:</b>	<b>307</b>
<b>Report Confirmed:</b>	<b>November 18, 2014</b>

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

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

***Catholic Community: Te Iwi Whanui Katorika***

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

***Pastoral Care: Manaakitanga***

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

***Religious Education: Te Whakaakoranga Whakapono***

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

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

## **CATHOLIC COMMUNITY: Te Iwi Whanau Katorika**

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

Mt Carmel School, Meadowbank warmly welcomed and embraced the opportunity for review and development. The Board of Trustees, Principal, staff, students, parent and parish community welcomed the reviewers and all shared openly their thoughts and opinions.

The school is situated in a leafy cul-de-sac of central Auckland and shares the site with Our Lady of Fatima Church, presbytery and Parish Centre.

### **SPIRITUALITY**

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

The spirituality of Mt Carmel School is seen in the way students relate to each other in the classrooms and outside in the playground. The school provides encouragement and resources for individuals within the school community to develop their own faith journey.

*“The school strengthens my child’s spiritual development through collaboration with the Parish, including children in the Mass and religious activities, and learning religious values”.*

*“Jesus is made real everyday through the respect given by teachers, children and parents to each other”.*

(Parent survey responses)

### **EVANGELISATION**

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

The school proclaims the mission and Gospel of Jesus Christ. Parents spoke of how welcome they feel at the school and the strong sense of community which provides a nurturing environment for the personal spiritual growth of each individual. All members of the school community are encouraged to be examples of Catholics living in faith and service.

Non Catholics who have attended the school over the years have often been Baptised before they leave the school.

## **PARTNERSHIP**

*Education is a collaborative responsibility.*

The Principal, staff and Board of Trustees work to build strong relationships with families, the Parish and wider community.

The partnership with parents is continually being developed through effective communication and learning conversations. Noticeboards on the outside wall of one of the buildings contain the school newsletters and PTA notices relevant to the school community. The Mt Carmel PTA meet monthly and initiate events to build community and fundraising for the school. They organise a Mother's Market annually and proceeds go to a different charity each year.

## **VALUES**

*The school identifies and actively promotes Gospel values.*

Mt Carmel School, Meadowbank has identified their core values as – Strength, Kindness, Responsibility, Honesty and Integrity, Respect for self, others and God, Co-operation, Compassion, Self Esteem based on achievement and participation, Positive outlook, Striving for Excellence, Ecological sustainability, Inclusiveness and Tolerance. Values posters were evident in all classrooms, linked with the Key Competencies of the New Zealand Curriculum. The children spoke of Key Competencies and Values as one.

The school was, at the time of review, about to review and refine the Core Values. It is suggested that they adopt a smaller number of values that are connected to the Gospels and reflect the charism and particular Catholic Character of the school and to keep these separate from the Key Competencies.

A Catholic Character Cup is presented annually to one boy and one girl from Year 6. This is voted for by staff and Year 6 students for upholding the values of the school and participation in parish life. At school assemblies children are awarded certificates for reflecting the qualities of strength and kindness.

*"The value of Kindness is part of the school culture".*

(Parent interview comment)

## **SCHOOL CULTURE**

*Catholic Special Character is visible in the relationships and the artistic expression seen throughout the school.*

*"When you enter the school the atmosphere is one which reflects a sense of feeling safe and a respect and enactment of Gospel values in action".*

(Parent survey response)

Mt Carmel School reflects the charism of the Sisters of St Brigid, the founding order. The children were aware of their Brigidine charism and there is information about the Sisters of St Brigid and the history of the school on the school website. It is suggested that a Brigidine Charism programme be

written with junior, middle and senior syndicate learning objectives to ensure the children progress through the school, building on their knowledge of the charism.

The school's motto of "Kindness and Strength" was known by the children and they were able to explain the school emblem, however there were some different interpretations of the parts of the emblem.

The school Houses are named after four famous New Zealanders. The children were able to talk about each of these people and explain why they were famous. The reviewers, however, would endorse the point in the Annual Plan 2014 for a discussion to be undertaken to change these names to Saint's names relevant to the Mt Carmel charism and ethos.

The school has a strong sense of community. The Principal and teachers work to maintain strong relationships with the parent and parish communities. There is an open door policy and parents commented that they felt comfortable coming into the school. The small size of the school and the safe, caring, inclusive and understanding environment were factors in parents choosing Mt Carmel School for their children. The reviewers found the children were all articulate, friendly and very respectful.

The Mt Carmel School entrance foyer has an attractive display and Catholic symbols. The display was relevant to the current work being done in classrooms. Tile murals are on the outside of buildings around the school, some of which reflect the special Catholic Character – 'God's Living World' and 'Cultural Diversity'. A recent Community survey, part of the last internal self review, found that some parents felt the school's physical environment didn't reflect the Catholic Character of the school. It is suggested that the Mt Carmel Board of Trustees look at ways they can enhance the physical environment of the school, inside and out, to further reflect its Special Catholic Character.

Classrooms all had attractive learning environments and displays relevant to the work being covered. All classrooms had a prayer focus and a Religious Education display space, which varied in size, positioning and complexity.

*"The school is welcoming and friendly and the teams pull together with compassion to help others".*

(Parent survey response)

## **LEADERSHIP**

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

The Principal of Mt Carmel School, Meadowbank, has successfully led the school for 24 years. Her commitment for providing a quality Catholic education that is relevant to the students of Mt Carmel is evident in her words and actions. She reports to the Board of Trustees through a monthly report which includes a Special Catholic Character section. She has set strong management and communication systems in place to support the staff to maintain her vision for the school and her high standards.

The Deputy and Assistant Principal work with the Principal as a Senior Management team. They work closely with three team leaders who form a Leadership team. They are all skilled practitioners and share the Principal's vision for the school.

The Board of Trustee members, who met with the reviewers, were able to clearly express how the school's Catholic Special Character impacts on their role of governance. They have recently formed Community Communication groups for Maori, Pasifika, Filipino and Special Needs parents, to ensure that all voices in the school community are heard.

The Proprietor Appointees, including the Parish Priest, Chairperson and the Principal work in conjunction with the Directors of Religious Studies to complete the Internal Special Catholic Character self review report which then forms part of the annual report to the Proprietor. A Parish report is tabled at each Board meeting.

The Board of Trustees is representative of the school community and all members have participated in regular training through the School Trustees Association and Catholic Education Services workshops. The Board has a page on the school website identifying each member. The Board of Trustees send out a newsletter once per term with information for parents. It is suggested that they post their Board Newsletter on the website also.

The school also communicates to parents through the fortnightly Principal's newsletter. The Principal includes information relevant to the Special Catholic Character of the school and reflections in each newsletter. The newsletter is posted on the school website.

## **STEWARDSHIP**

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

The Board of Trustees recognise their responsibility to ensure that Catholic Special Character permeates the whole curriculum and the school environment. They understand that partnership with the Parish is an important aspect in developing an effective school environment.

The Charter and Strategic plan has a Catholic Special Character Strategic goal. The actual outcomes of the Special Catholic Character goals are reported monthly to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees and school community are beginning to look at refining all of their statements to more succinctly define the unique charism of Mt Carmel School.

New teachers are inducted into the Special Catholic Character and particular ethos of the school by the Principal and the Directors of Religious Studies. At the time of appointment the expectations for a staff member and teacher are made clear. The Director of Religious Studies works with each teacher to ensure they are confident teaching the Religious Education programme. The team leaders also support the new staff in their syndicate. A formal induction process is being developed by the Senior Management team.

The Principal meets with every new family and provides information about the school, the Special Catholic Character and its expectations. The Special Catholic Character of the school is explained and emphasised particularly well in the enrolment information.

In response to the 2010 External Special Catholic Character recommendations the Proprietors Representatives on the Board of Trustees take an active part in the process for the annual Internal Special Character Self Review. The process is clearly outlined and the recommendations are written into the Strategic and/or annual plan each year. The review report forms part of the annual report to the Proprietor.

All school policies, in response to the 2010 External Special Catholic Character recommendations, are headed with the statement “As a Catholic School this policy reflects our commitment to live and teach the values of Jesus Christ”. The Special Catholic Character is also mentioned in the rationale and guidelines of most policies.

The school complies with the Integration Act in regards to Preference students. The Principal keeps an up-to-date register of preference students and an up-to-date non preference waiting list. The number of non preference students stands at 4% rather than the 5% total set in the Integration Act. At the time of review, the school is one tagged position down since a teacher left during the year. This position will be filled by the next appointment.

## **PRAYER AND WORSHIP**

*A Catholic culture of prayer. Liturgy and faith-based celebration is promoted in the school.*

*“Regular prayer encourages my children to think about how their lives impact on others and to be grateful”.*

(Parent survey comment)

The reviewers joined three classes for prayers during their visit. These prayers were student led at all levels of the school and the students were reverent and respectful of this sacred time. The children were focused using items from the class prayer focus. A variety of methods to pray was used, including spontaneous prayer and reflections, singing, traditional prayer and meditation.

The reviewers were welcomed to the school at a school assembly where a representative from each class prayed an intercession.

Each classroom had a prayer focus set up in the room with a cloth depicting the season of the Liturgical year, a candle, Bible, statue or other relevant item. In some classrooms the prayer focus was not prominent and did not reflect how important a space it was. It is recommended that teachers see good models of a prayer focus and come to understand the significance of it in the life of a Catholic school.

A class prayer book has been established this year. Children take turns to write a prayer in it and take it home to share with their families.

The children spoken to by the reviewers were aware of the importance of prayer in their lives and that they can find a quiet place anywhere to pray. It is suggested that the school look into designing a space in the grounds where children, teachers and families can go to pray and have quiet time.

In response to an internal Special Catholic Character self review the staff now pray together before staff meetings and on Friday mornings before school. Each class takes a turn to lead the prayers at school assemblies. The school comes together in either May or October to say the Rosary.

School Masses are held at the beginning and end of each year and a school/Parish Mass is held once per year on a Sunday. One of the Directors of Religious Studies plans and organises all School Masses and other significant liturgies. Each of the teams attends a parish weekly Mass each term which is organised by the teachers in that syndicate. Parents are invited to attend all Masses and liturgies.

Parents are encouraged to take their children to Mass on Sundays and to participate in the Sacramental programmes.

*“Mass is where we proclaim the mystery of our faith. The purpose of Mass is to say ‘yes’ to God’s purpose for us. But if students aren’t taken to Mass by their parents, where does that leave our Church, our school and our faith? If you want your children brought up and educated in the Catholic tradition and faith, then you, the parents, have to be involved”.*

(Excerpt from the Mt Carmel School Information for Parents booklet)

All Sacramental programmes are organised and implemented by the Parish. The Principal and Directors of Religious Studies liaise with the Parish and teachers to support the programme in their classrooms. Rite II Reconciliation is organised for the senior children in Lent and Advent.

## **SOCIAL JUSTICE**

*The school promotes social justice.*

Mt Carmel School provides many opportunities for the students to develop an awareness of others, of issues in and beyond their immediate community and an empathy for those who are hurt and suffering. It contributes to raising awareness and action for justice within the school and the wider community.

The school supports several charities including Caritas appeals, the Christchurch earthquake, a Hokianga school because of flooding, the Caring Foundation, the hurricane in the Phillipines and school resources for the Solomon Islands. Food is collected for food parcels organised by the St Vincent de Paul for those less fortunate in the wider community. The school helped the Parish to raise funds to send 10 young people to the World Youth Day in Rio in 2013.

Caritas resources are used in classrooms when social justice can be integrated into the curriculum topics.

Where there is a bereavement in the family or a family in need, meals are made available, transport and prayers are offered.

## **COLLABORATION WITH THE PARISH**

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

The Board of Trustees sees having the Priest in the Parish who is interested and supportive, as very relevant to the school/parish relationship. The Parish Priest is a member of the Board of Trustees as a Proprietor Appointee. He has morning tea with the staff each week and visits classrooms when invited. He attends school liturgies and events. He supports the families of the school and the parents acknowledged his visibility in the school and involvement with the children and families as a very positive strength of the school.

The school newsletter includes any special Parish news and the Parish newsletter publishes school events. The school has use of the Church and Parish Centre when available and the parish sometimes uses the school facilities. The school supports the Parish Christmas Hamper drive by collecting goods. The Parish St Vincent de Paul Society support families in need.

The Parish runs the Sacramental programme and the school supports the programme throughout. All Sacramental programmes are advertised in the school and Parish newsletters. One of the staff has become a Catechist for the Sacramental programme.

The Directors of Religious Studies have a strong working relationship with the Parish Office. The Board of Trustees is represented on the Parish Council. The Board of Trustees acknowledged the Parish as being “*very strong and showing great kindness*”.

## AREAS FOR CATHOLIC COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- That the school community adopt a smaller number of values that are connected to the Gospels and reflect the charism and particular Catholic Character of the school and to keep these separate from the Key Competencies.
- That a progressive unit about the charism is written for Years 1 to 6 to ensure that children develop a strong understanding of the charism of the school by the time they reach Year 6.
- That the Mt Carmel Board of Trustees looks at ways they can enhance the physical environment of the school, inside and out, to further reflect its Special Catholic Character.
- That the Board of Trustees posts their Board Newsletter on the website.
- That the school look into designing a space in the grounds where children, teachers and families can go to pray and have quiet time.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CATHOLIC COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- That teachers see good models of a prayer focus and come to understand the significance of it in the life of a Catholic school.

## PASTORAL CARE: **Manaakitanga**

*The school community nurtures, supports and cares for individuals.*

### RELATIONSHIPS

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

As visitors to the school, the reviewers experienced warm and generous hospitality from all members of the school community. Parents acknowledged that teachers were professional, approachable and respectful to them and their children. All school staff had a warm, gentle and caring relationship with the children. Parents commented that the school had a strong community feeling.

The Board of Trustees, staff, parents and Parish work together with respect and co-operation to provide a nurturing environment. This teamwork and collaboration makes for a happy and cohesive learning environment.

Parents work in close partnership with the school to support in any way they can. They help with productions, cultural activities, trips and activities where extra hands are needed. New parents to the school felt welcomed and included.

Flowers, cards and prayers are given to families and staff in times of need, illness or grief. Meals and transport are provided when necessary. The staff commented on the generosity of the children and parents whenever they are asked for help.

Support staff commented, to the reviewers, on the effective communication systems within the school and that even those working only a few hours per week always know what is happening. They felt valued and included in school and staff activities.

The school has an inclusive environment where all children are acknowledged for their special talents. A number of programmes are in place to support learners, the Deputy and Associate Principals are the Special Education Network Co-ordinators (SENCOs). Specific Independent Education Plans are organised for each child depending on need. The school works closely with many outside agencies such as the Ministry of Education's GSE team and Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLB). A large number of Teacher Aides are employed to work with individuals or small groups and many programmes are available for children to support their learning, for instance Reading Recovery, Rainbow reading, Spring into Maths, STEPS to Literacy and ESOL programmes. The Teacher Aides commented that they felt supported by the teachers and are given opportunities for professional development when it is relevant to their role. It is suggested that the school develop a formal induction process for new Teacher Aides which may assist them in understanding the school ethos before they begin their role.

Gifted and Talented children are provided opportunities to work together on special projects such as the Future Problem Solving programme and the building of the seedling shed.

Alterations to school facilities have been designed to support the special needs of children and their learning. School trips and events are planned with the special needs children in mind.

The parents of Special Needs children have formed a Communications group to meet to support each other and discuss items specific to their children. The Board of Trustees recognises this group as part of their consultation process.

*"This school community not only extends friendship but a sense of acceptance and belonging".*

(Parent survey response)

Mt Carmel School has a good relationship with surrounding local schools and other Catholic schools and colleges.

## **ORGANISATION**

*The way pastoral care is organised is evident to all members of the school community.*

During the review visit, the reviewers heard of the many times care and support was given to families and individuals. The PTA, Principal and staff ensure that all families know of the support they could receive and organise help and support in times of need, hardship, grief or illness. All members of the school community make time to listen, be available and give assistance when needed.

The Principal works with specific people on the staff and PTA to ensure those in need are supported. Texts or emails are used to enlist people to provide specific help when needed.

## **BI-CULTURAL COMMITMENT**

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

Mt Carmel School recognises the importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi / The Treaty of Waitangi and the status of Maori as Tangata Whenua.

*"We acknowledge the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and the bicultural foundation of Aotearoa and we affirm all New Zealanders".*

(Strategic Goal 4 rationale)

The Kapa Haka group welcomed the reviewers with rousing haka and waiata. They are well trained by a Kaumatua who is part of the school community. The school has made concerted efforts to form links with Orakei Marae and is continuing to do so.

In response to the 2010 External Special Catholic Character Review recommendations the Board of Trustees has worked to further develop Tikanga and Te Reo Maori within the school. The new documentation being developed and the Strategic Plan takes Maori Spirituality and biculturalism into consideration. Consultation with Maori parents is implemented through the Maori Communication group who meet at least once per year.

All teachers attended the Cluster meeting on using Te Reo in the classroom and the school is revising their Maori Curriculum Development Plan for each year level. A school-wide integrated unit on Te Ao Maori is planned annually. The children learn waiata and karakia and sing the National Anthem in Maori at every assembly. Teachers are being encouraged to use Te Reo and Tikanga Maori throughout the curriculum.

## **CULTURAL AWARENESS**

*The school recognises and honours cultural diversity.*

At Mt Carmel School, teachers were very careful to honour the cultural diversity within their classrooms. Parents work with teachers to share their cultures with the school. All school consultation meetings are held with Maori, Pasifika, Filipino Special Needs groups. A Board of Trustees member is on each of these groups to support and feed back to the Board. A Student Achievement Facilitator (SAF) was used to co-ordinate these meetings initially.

## **BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT**

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

The happy, positive relationships and calm learning-focused environment of the school community removes most causes of disruptive behaviour and creates in children a willingness to co-operate and self manage. The school expects a high level of respect and dignity for all.

Mt Carmel School's behaviour management is based on the schools values and the key competencies.

*"Children are always respectful and polite on school trips. Going to Church regularly teaches them to be respectful and this transfers to visiting places outside the school. They understand that people have special places where certain ways of behaving is expected."*

(Staff questionnaire comment)

Teachers have undertaken the "Incredible Years" programme to support behaviour management. A 'Leaver's Profile has been created which outlines the attributes Mt Carmel students will leave the school with and children are encouraged to work towards these attributes.

## **SERVICE**

*The students assist people in need through service and outreach opportunities provided by the school.*

Leadership opportunities are provided throughout Mt Carmel School. All children are given the opportunity to lead prayer and act as monitors in their own classrooms. Two Year 6 children are chosen as HouseLeaders for one year. These House Leaders and the teachers choose two students from each classroom to make up the School Council for the year. The School Council meets with the Principal to plan fundraising and discuss ideas to improve the school.

Senior children also have the opportunity to be ICT monitors, lunch and wet day monitors, sports and playground equipment monitors, fitness leaders and to take turns to play with special needs children and look after junior children in the playground.

The Year 6 children attend the Marine Education and Recreation Centre (MERC) once per year to develop their leadership skills. They aspire to achieve the Sir Peter Blake Leadership Award and

junior children strive to achieve the Junior Citizenship Award, for being good role models of leadership.

Children from Year 3 to 6 have the opportunity to belong to the Ukelele group, the school choir and the Kapa Haka and Zumba groups. The school has entered the Auckland Primary Principals' Association combined choir concerts, the Ukelele Festival, Kids for Kids Concerts, and the Wearable Arts show. They sing and entertain at resthomes when invited.

Children participate in liturgical dance, prayers of the faithful and the presentation of the gifts at Masses, some are trained (by parish members) and serve as Altar servers.

## AREAS FOR PASTORAL CARE DEVELOPMENT

- That the school develop a formal induction process for new Teacher Aides which may assist them in understanding the school ethos before they begin their role.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: Te Whakaakoranga Whakapono

*The school helps to fulfil the teaching mission of the Church.*

### LEADERSHIP

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

The Director of Religious Studies role at Mt Carmel is shared between two teachers this year. Both are classroom teachers, one being a team leader who attends Leadership Committee meetings. One of them is responsible for all Masses and liturgies and Special Character events, and the other oversees the teaching and learning of Religious Education. They share the Director of Religious Studies allocated release time and use creative ways and means to have their release time at the same time so they can meet. They have written an action plan for the year setting out their goals and actions in each area of their role.

One Director of Religious Studies plans and prepares the parish/ school Masses. She supports the team leaders to plan their team Masses. They both support new teachers to the school and teachers new to Catholic schools and model lessons when required. One of them observes a Religious Education lesson once per year and looks at the children's books and the Special Catholic Character of the classroom and school environment. They both observe prayer sessions in each classroom at least once per year. The observations and feedback form part of each teacher's appraisal for their Religious Education goal.

Staff meetings are facilitated by the Directors of Religious Studies regularly to focus on the theological focus and to share ideas and work they have done, in their classrooms, with each other. They seek guidance and resources from the Religious Education Advisors.

Release is provided to both Directors of Religious Studies and one of them attends the Director of Religious Studies days, annual Conference and professional development days.

The Directors of Religious Studies distribute a newsletter each term explaining the Strands and Modules to be covered and any other news concerning the Religious Education and Special Catholic Character of the school. They also prepare a report for the Board of Trustees each year in relation to their action plan.

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CURRICULUM** *The Religious Education programme is professionally delivered.*

*“As a Catholic School, we live and teach the values of Jesus Christ in our practices, worship and doctrine”.*

(Mt Carmel Strategic Goal 5 Rationale)

Teachers plan Religious Education in their Year levels. The Associate and Deputy Principal take groups to accommodate the composite classes. All teachers have begun using the Religious Advisor’s planning sheets to ensure consistency across the school. Assessment of Learning Objectives is recorded using the Student Management System. The Directors of Religious Studies collect and check all teacher planning and evaluations. There was evidence of Te Reo being integrated into the Religious Education programme. The pedagogy of formative teaching and learning used in all other subject areas was also used in Religious Education lessons. The use of WALTs and success criteria was obvious in the children’s books.

Most teachers have begun to be more creative with the children’s responses to learning. The children record their learning in a Religious Education book. These books were well presented and the children were proud of their work and willing to discuss and reflect on what they had done and what they had learned. At the start of each Strand the Achievement Objectives outline was pasted into the book. At the end of each Strand of work an evaluation comment was made by the child and teacher and the books were taken home for the parents to share and make a comment.

The classroom learning environments were vibrant and well ordered. It is recommended that the Religious Education display wall and prayer focus, in all classrooms, be placed in an area that is prominent and within easy access for children to use as a focus throughout the day and that teachers reflect on what they can do to enhance these areas.

**INTEGRATED CURRICULUM** *Catholic teaching is integrated with other curriculum areas.*

At Mt Carmel School, formative teaching was used in all classrooms across all curriculum areas, including Religious Education. It is recommended that, at planning meetings, there is a deliberate discussion on how to integrate the Special Character into themes and subject areas by weaving a

Catholic point of view into the total curriculum so that children are naturally making links and seeing that God is present in everything.

Mt Carmel School has adopted the “Crackerjacks” programme for health and physical education. The programme covers physical education, movement, relationships with others and healthy communities and environments. It is suggested that the ‘Myself and Others’ module is integrated with the programme to ensure a Catholic perspective is presented. A pubertal change programme is run by an outside agency each year and parents are informed of the programme well in advance. Parents are consulted on the Health curriculum bi-annually.

The school is a WasteWise school. Teachers and children keep the school rubbish free and recycle plastics, paper and food scraps. Banana skins and apple cores are fed into the Worm Farm and other suitable waste is composted or recycled. The Worm Tea and compost is used on the vegetable gardens and fruit trees that are planted in the school grounds. The Worm Tea is also sold to parents. Year 5 children tend the gardens with weeding and watering. There are signs around the school reminding children to care for the environment. Each year the school has a “Nude Food Day” where lunches are not allowed to be wrapped to reduce waste. Year 5 children annually weigh the rubbish found on one particular day and a historic record is kept and analysed. Children have participated in events such as cleaning up the local beach.

Two children from each class are given the opportunity to be ELFs (Environmental Leaders of the Future) each term. These children meet weekly and lead the school in caring for the environment.

## **RESOURCES**

*The school makes financial provision for Religious Education and Catholic Special Character resources.*

The school is well resourced and the Directors of Religious Studies ensure that all classrooms have the necessary resources to deliver the Religious Education programme and provide an environment that reflects the Special Catholic Character. All teacher reference books and Religious Education charts, pictures and music are stored centrally in the Director of Religious Studies office and audited annually by the Director of Religious Studies. All class teachers use the digital resource and all classrooms use Interactive whiteboards and are beginning to use varied forms of technology effectively.

The Religious Education Advisors are used by the school to support the Directors of Religious Studies, beginning teachers and teachers new to Catholic schools and to run staff meetings when requested.

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

In response to the 2010 External Special Catholic Character review recommendations the Directors of Religious Studies ensure that Religious Education professional development is delivered through staff meetings at the beginning of each Strand on the theological focus. Staff are encouraged to

complete “a minimum of 12 hours of religious education professional development and spiritual formation annually” (Strategic Goal 5, 2014) and this expectation forms part of the appraisal process.

The staff attend cluster meetings provided by the Catholic Schools Office. The staff attended a call-back day in 2013 to attend an ‘Enrichment day’ run by the Religious Education Advisors. One of the Directors of Religious Studies attends all DRS days and the annual DRS conference.

The Principal has Endorsed Leadership certification and one of the Directors of Religious Education has Leadership level. One teacher has Classroom Level and all other teachers are working towards Classroom Level. It is recommended that the school provide more opportunities for teachers to further their Certification level and to engage in NZQA qualifications for Religious Education. This could begin with the Understanding Sexuality Course as school-wide professional development for all teachers.

## COMMUNICATION

*The school communicates with parents/caregivers about Religious Education.*

The Directors of Religious Education inform parents of the current Strand topic and provide information on the liturgical season and feast days through a DRS newsletter each term.

The children’s Religious Education books are sent home at the end of each Strand for parents to discuss with their children. Teachers, children and parents all write comments at the end of each Strand which affirm the learning. Prayer books are also sent home from some rooms for families to share with their children. Parents commented that these were excellent ways of discussing the Religious Education programme with their children. The school website includes information parents may need to support their children’s learning at school.

Parents and families are invited to school liturgies, assemblies and Masses. Teachers send home a class newsletter each term with information on the Religious Education strand content and make themselves available to support parents and to discuss the Religious Education programme with them.

Parents of new entrant children attend an orientation meeting where the Principal talks about the Religious Education programme and the Special Character of the school. Each family is encouraged to purchase a Family/Whanau book to support the Religious Education programme.

## AREAS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

- That the ‘Myself and Others’ module is integrated with the Crackerjack programme to ensure a Catholic perspective is presented.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

- That the Religious Education display wall and prayer focus, in all classrooms, be placed in an area that is prominent and within easy access for children to use as a focus throughout the day and that teachers reflect on what they can do to enhance these areas.
- That, at planning meetings, there is a deliberate discussion on how to integrate the Special Character into themes and subject areas by weaving a Catholic point of view into the total curriculum so that children are naturally making links and seeing that God is present in everything.
- That the school provide more opportunities for teachers to further their Certification level and to engage in NZQA qualifications for Religious Education.

## CONCLUSION

Mt Carmel School, Meadowbank provides a nurturing learning environment that focuses on the achievement of excellence. The leadership of the Principal and the Board of Trustees, a dedicated staff, enthusiastic and positive parents and the close links with the Our Lady of Fatima Parish, together combine to form an effective Catholic community

The senior children interviewed by the reviewers are living testament that the school is achieving what the community aspires to in their Vision:

*“We aim to develop our students towards becoming confident, creative and resilient young people with strong Catholic values and the knowledge, competencies, skills and motivation to enrich their own lives and to contribute to the Catholic and wider community.”*

(Mt Carmel School Charter)

The children are confident, happy and engaged in their learning. Along with their families they are proud to be members of Mt Carmel School.

*“Mt Carmel School is a strong stable school. It produces happy, well-balanced children that when they leave they have great respect for their teachers and friends.”*

*“We love the way this school encourages our children to apply values to their everyday lives... to understand what they are saying; to think about their role as a part of the Catholic community and wider world; to recognise ‘God moments’ in their actions and in the actions of others; to be grateful, joyous, respectful and compassionate.”*

*“A sense of community and family is evident and reflected with strong partnership between the school and an ever increasing diverse community”*

(Parent survey comments)

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Date 18 November, 2014