



St Joseph's Orakei
Catholic Primary School

DRS Report for 2015



Together in Partnership

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This year at St Joseph's School, Orakei we continued to be guided by Bishop Pat's request for schools and parishes to become "Fit for Mission - *Takatū Ki Te Mau I Te Rongo Pa.*" For 2015 we took the meaning of 'mission' to include reaching out to others, building relationships/partnerships with our local community and making the Gospel alive and relevant in our school.

This building of new partnerships began at the teacher only days in January when we welcomed Catherine Hamilton (Yr 4 & 5) and Sarah Peterson (New Entrants) to the staff. We enjoyed getting to know one another during a light hearted mystery trail around the eastern suburbs.

We also welcomed Monsignor Pat Ward as our new priest to St Joseph's. We feel so blessed to be able to have a resident priest as the students and their families get to see him around the school and know where to find him, if need be. He has become so special to us and the staff love sharing time with him during prayers on a Tuesday morning and they all enjoy his homilies at mass.

At the end of Term 2, Mr Gerard Evans left our school to move to Australia and we welcomed Mrs Mersini Rigopoulou to the Yr 2/3 class. Mersini has settled in really well to the 'St Joseph way.'

Religious Education Review

This year our self review has focused on Religious Education. The Proprietor's Reps (including the Principal and DRS) met a couple of times this year to discuss the direction and foci this year's Religious Education Self Review would follow. We were aware that we needed to include the 'areas for development' from the 2014 review too. Below are some examples of the how we have met these:

One important issue that we wanted to focus on was further integration of Religious Education across all curriculum areas. At the NZCEO Conference held in Wellington in June 2015 (which was attended by the Principal, Director of Religious Studies, Deputy Principal and BOT Chairman) one of the Seminars focused on integrating the RE curriculum with the NZ curriculum. Teachers from St Thomas More School in Mt Maunganui shared their connected curriculum plan and how they put Christ at the heart of the curriculum (inner circle) and all other curriculum areas radiate from this. This enables Gospel values to infiltrate every area of student learning. There is a focus on COLLABORATION, CONTEXT, CREATIVITY and CATHOLICITY and as a staff we seem to be very good at these skills.

At the end of Term 2, we decided to 'give it a go' and used their outline for our planning for Terms 3 and 4. We searched for ways of introducing a Catholic slant to everything we teach. The shift in thinking with emphasis being placed on Christ at the centre of all

we do has, had a profound roll on effect on the delivery of the curriculum in the latter half of this year. Evidence of this is the visible links in classrooms and foyer displays which reflect the NZ curriculum with clear references to Jesus and Catholic values. BOT members and Bishop reps were invited to walk through the school to see if these links to Catholic values were obvious and they were very pleased with the results. Feedback was openly received by the Principal and all teachers. We are still at the foundation stage but it has been very rewarding and we will continue this into 2016.

Another area of development from last year's review was to embed a deeper understanding of our motto, "Strength with gentleness." We wanted to make links between the new school emblem, motto and how having strength of mind with gentleness of heart is the "St Joseph way" of doing things. The connection of shared characteristics between St Joseph and St Brigid were examples of what our motto looks 'like, feels like and sounds like.' We try to link our charism with our four school values - Faith, Tika, Pono and Aroha.

For example in Term 1 the value was *Faith* and students did inquiry based learning on different aspects of our charism, bearing in mind how Brigid and the sisters who followed her showed their faith in God by allowing them to display strength of mind and gentleness of heart. In Term 3 the value unpacked was *Tika* and this was explored through the theme of tackling Bullying. Whilst this is not a widespread problem at our school it was another point that needed addressing from last year's review. We found that through dialogue and intensive use of different scenarios the students didn't really understand what the term meant. We were able however to link the feelings of being, say 'left out' of a game with our slogan "Does this behaviour show 'strength with gentleness' and if it doesn't what can we do to rectify the situation?" Often the students were asked to put themselves in another's shoes and on the whole we had very good learning and results. They were experiencing Catholic caring while at the same time learning that "strength" is not necessarily only physical force but also being able to think deeply and not act impulsively. Being an advocate for someone else who was not being treated with dignity was also made obvious and tied in well with our Caritas Social Justice programme at the end of Term 3.

The communication from the Principal and DRS to the local community has been great and this is evidenced by the community getting involved in Class masses (during the week) and Feast Day celebrations. The four school houses have taken it in turns to attend and lead the liturgy at one Sunday parish mass each term this year.

Trying to develop a closer relationship with the parish and community to fulfil Bishop Pat's 'Fit for mission' initiative and our area of growth we wanted to see happening, has taken shape in various ways. Children's Liturgy has recommenced during Sunday morning Mass with thanks to a few dedicated parents and mass attendance has increased on the

whole, with school students encouraging their parents to bring them to Mass so they can go to children's liturgy.

Another example of how we serve Christ and others is through Rooms 1 and 6 who are on the parish roster for cleaning the church. This builds responsibility whilst also learning to contribute to our community. It also builds the students' respect and pride in the Church and Parish.

Weekly class masses require that students bring non-perishable food items for donating to the local food bank. Teachers have explained who will receive the goods and how they will make a difference in other peoples' lives.

The school has continued to build relationships with other schools in the area and the local marae. They have participated in activities such things as Kainga Ora gardening at Orakei Marae, Waicare, Okahu Bay Kaimoana Monitoring Day and planting of trees and shrubs along the Pourewa stream. These activities have assisted in their understanding of looking after the environment, and sustainability which are both linked to God's creation and being stewards of His planet and all they lives on it.

There is a plan to start holding exchange days, or celebrations with other Catholic and religious schools in our region. It is an ambitious goal to coordinate such an event but it has been done before and teachers are positive that it can be done again. In Term 4 we were invited to attend a cultural show at Holy Cross School in Henderson and the children enjoyed sharing time and making links with other Catholic students of their own ages. The BOT have supported the Ann McKeown's plan to create a Community of Schools of Eastern Bay Catholic Schools next year.

We are still in discussions with the local Iwi to see if they are interested in installing a Pou at our school. The intention is to continue building our relationship with Ngati Whatua o Orakei and linking our Catholic beliefs to Maori spirituality.

2015 Religious Education Survey

A survey has been sent out to all parents of the school to gauge their knowledge and understanding of RE at our school. This was based on the Review and Development Dimensions - Leadership, Religious Education Curriculum, Resources, Professional Development and Communication. All students, staff members and the parent community have completed surveys.

Some of the strengths of the survey are as follows:

Teachers: It was felt that there was strong Leadership of the school by the Principal and the school leadership team. All staff felt that there was a positive atmosphere in which Catholic values are practiced. At the end of last year we had two teachers leave

our school which meant two new teachers were introduced to the St Joseph way of doing things. Another teacher left at the end of Term 2, which then made us realise how important it is to have an induction booklet to share with new staff members. The small everyday routines that we take for granted are not obvious to new comers and they need to be shared and explained. This will be underway at the beginning of 2016.

Students: Middle and senior school students clearly understood what Religious Education (RE) was and why it was taught in the school. Most children understood the school motto and knew how this was the school's basis for living like Catholics. The Junior students were a little confused with the words 'motto' and 'emblem' and even though they knew 'strength with gentleness' they had not connected one with the other. These words will be specifically used in 2016.

Students also said they 'sometimes' share their learning with their families. After asking the teachers and looking through student work books many students did have comments made in their books. The only conclusion the staff could come to was that parents were looking at their child's book when they were asleep at night and there was little interaction going on.

Parents: The parents were very positive and saw the importance of a Catholic education for their children. They felt encouraged to attend Sunday Masses with children and felt informed on Catholic education initiatives or strands. It was obvious to parents upon entering the school that St Joseph's School is Catholic and that this is a core of our education practices.

Areas for growth/development which came out of the Religious education Review in 2015

Areas for growth/development	How we could go about this?	What evidence do we now have that growth/development has taken place?
† Continuing to unpack and embed our 'motto' and 'emblem' so that they become the 'St Joseph way'	† Brigidine Charism introduced in T1 and then revisited each term † Explicit teaching of the concepts of 'motto' and 'emblem' using these words † Inquiry into what 'Strength with gentleness' looks like, sounds like and feels like † Connections made with school values/ Joseph/ Brigid each term † Ongoing discussions about	

	'pou' with local iwi † Proposal to BOT and then complete building of Brigidine prayer garden	
† Learning Intentions visible/shared for all RE lessons	† LI's written out for each strand of learning and referred to at beginning and end of each lesson	
† Continue developing integration of RE across all curriculum areas focusing on Christ at the centre	† Continued use of Connected Curriculum Planning with Christ at the centre † Visible RE connections in classroom and foyer displays	
† Active participation of sharing of RE learning with families	† Home learning where comments and strand learning read aloud and shared together † Introduction sessions for new parents (outline RE programme)	
† Increased prayer and singing in Te Reo and other languages	† Teachers to follow Te Reo programme compiled by R. Langstone and make RE connections † Sign of the cross in Maori and other languages † Source more Pacifica songs	
† Encourage exchange days and share celebrations with other Catholic schools	† Exchange with Mt Carmel in 2016 † Community of Schools of Eastern Bay Catholic Schools	
† Induction booklet	† To introduce new staff members to different aspects of RE, planning, preparation of masses etc	

Religious Education Programme

I have done many 'walk throughs' of classrooms during RE time as well as formal observations of Prayer sessions and RE lessons. The teachers always put 100% into their RE lessons and their planning and marking of student books is relevant and

meaningful. We will continue to endeavour to integrate RE across all curriculum areas and making these connections obvious to the students.

The pre and post tests are being used in most classes and the teachers are finding them helpful in finding out what the students actually know before the new strand begins. They also give clear evidence of what the students have learned. In the senior class the pre test is administered in one colour and then at the end of the strand the children complete the same test in another colour. This shows the new learning quite clearly.

Student work books go home at the end of each strand to be shared with parents. The student, teacher and parents make a comment about the child's learning. As noted in data from this year's RE survey, even though the students and teachers are writing their comments and taking their books home there doesn't seem to always be the interaction/sharing between parent and child. Parents comment too but the child doesn't necessarily get to see what they have written.

Prayer ketes continue to be taken home each week by different children in each class. A reflection by the family is shared in a special class log. We feel this is a wonderful way for prayer to be shared in the homes - the children know how to organise them and the feedback has been positive and uplifting.

Room 1 took part in their annual retreat at Mary MacKillop Centre in February, which has become a highlight of the class' year.

Room 6 students have played their ukuleles and giving a short concert during a recent Catholic Women's League luncheon which was very well received.

'Cans for Christmas' was an initiative introduced by a teacher at St Peter's College during Social Justice Week. We were able to provide hundreds of cans of food for this very worthwhile cause. The two senior classes also enjoyed a 'fun' visit from Gemma Sinnott (Caritas) where they played a game showing the 'haves' and 'have nots.'

Professional Development

All teachers have attended and gained the required amount of professional development for the year. Sarah Peterson and Catherine Hamilton attended RE101 at the beginning of the year and Mersini Rigopoulo at the beginning of Term 3. The feedback on this course was that it gave them the confidence and knowledge to teach the RE programme. Rita Langstone has attended Part A of the Understanding Sexuality course this term and will complete Part B in 2016. I have attended both DRS meetings this year.

Each term we have had Strand meetings for the next strand. We feel these are important as we can share our knowledge and important questions can be answered. We

have been able to help one another with preparation and resources. We brainstorm the ways we can make connections with other curriculum areas. We have attended cluster meetings too where we have the opportunity to interact with teachers at other Catholic schools and receive new insights and strategies to use when teaching RE.

Catholic Convention

In June this year, Ann McKeown, Sue Bennett, Chris Southern (BOT Chairman) and I attended the 'Horizons of Hope' Convention in Wellington. It was a truly inspiring few days mixing and mingling with so many Catholics and having the opportunity to listen to such learned keynote speakers. It became very clear how important it is that Catholic Educators model being witnesses of the Gospel. I am very grateful for having had the opportunity to attend such a great conference.

Charism and Values

As was evident in our areas for development from the 2014 review, we put a lot of energy into linking our charism with our motto and emblem. Having gone through the process of establishing a new school crest, motto and emblem for our new school uniforms, school stationery etc, we knew 2015 was the year to start embedding a deeper understanding of the Brigidine charism.

This was achieved in various degrees of success. As mentioned before we unpacked "Strength with gentleness" really well but it seems the concept of 'motto' and 'emblem' were not made explicit enough. This connection will continue to be worked on next year. The linking of the 'St Joseph way' with our 'strength with gentleness' statement worked extremely well during our third term 'anti-bullying' theme. The students learned new strategies to cope with and recognise what 'bullying' actually meant.

We continue to focus on one of our four school values of Aroha, Faith, Tika and Pono each term. We are still trying to entwine these values with key Brigidine/Joseph values to make them authentic and pertinent to our place:

Be faithful to our Catholic heritage (Faith)

Welcome all people, especially the most vulnerable (Aroha)

Celebrate all that is good with joy and gratitude (Pono)

Engender a love of learning, hope and a sense of purpose (Education)

Image and practise justice and service (Tika)

Once again the Year 5 students will make Brigidine crosses from local flax for the Year 6 Leavers' Ketes. This has become a tradition, showing love in the gift that is made. The Friends of St Joseph's are once again paying for each school leaver to receive a Bible.

On 22 July three of our students were selected to attend the Catholic Caring Foundation's "Caring Awards". These were for students who consistently displayed love and care for others and these students were grateful recipients.

The GaTe group has been working on the design and requirements for our proposed Brigidine Prayer garden. The final proposal will be ready to be shared with the Board of Trustees at the beginning of next year. The students have enjoyed integrating maths, literacy and creative skills and their final drawings will be completed this year.

Masses

Mons Pat has been very flexible with our masses this year and for that we are most grateful. Sometimes two classes have joined up and led the liturgy together. He has offered assistance and his expertise freely and patiently. Students invite their families to these masses and on the whole these have been well attended. The students have also been very generous in their donations of non perishable food stuffs to the local Christian Care Network which distributes food to local families in need.

Our school year began with our Commissioning Mass where we welcomed the new teachers, Mons Pat and all new students and their families. The school leaders were presented with their badges and the head girl and head boy announced.

As part of our ongoing commitment to Bishop Pat's 'Fit for Mission' we have tried different ways of encouraging students and their parents to attend weekend masses. Teachers remind the students about coming to mass from time to time and students who have been through the sacramental programme are encouraged to become altar servers. This has seen an increase in mass attendance. Children's Liturgy on a Sunday has also contributed to an increase in school students attending mass (even if it's not weekly).

Feast Days have been celebrated during the year especially if they have occurred during the week. This year we decided that with the increase in students at the school we would have one 'House Mass' each term on a Sunday. This has worked to a certain extent. It has been good for the house leaders to have input into the mass and display their leadership skills, but attendance has not been very good.

We will be having a blessing of our new innovative learning environment on Tuesday 8 December to coincide with the commencement of Pope Francis' "Year of Mercy."

Assemblies

Special Character awards continue to be the highlight of class assemblies. These take place once a fortnight and the special character wards are highly prized and

anticipated. Students are able to recognise the special character of others by the descriptions given by the teachers. Each class takes turns in leading assembly and there are always prayers, readings, songs and reference to RE learning. It is a time to show leadership and develop public speaking skills and all children are involved in some way.

Newsletters

Communication is an area we are very keen on continuing by being able to inform parents of upcoming events and special celebrations well in advance. There is a Special Character section to every newsletter and during each strand a focus of learning is shared with all families.

At various time of the Church's year I include information for parents to read. This is a way of providing knowledge about our faith. I have feedback from parents who share that they learn a lot about Catholic teaching from the newsletters.

Sacramental Programme

This year one student has been Baptised and then gone on to join the Sacramental Programme. Also on of our teachers, a parent and student were received into the church.

Overall twenty students from both our school and other schools in the area took part in the sacramental Programme. These parish celebrations are always joyous occasions where we as a school community really feel part of the parish and we enjoy witnessing the children become full members of the Church.

Once they had completed the programme they were invited to become altar servers. Many students have been trained by Mons Pat and Deborah Mariner and this has been another example of how we have encouraged our students and their parents to "encounter Christ."

We offer Reconciliation to all students who have received this special Sacrament twice per year - during Lent and again in Advent.

Staff Prayers

Staff prayers continue to be an important part of our week as they bring us all together for a time of shared reflection and quiet time. We all take turns to prepare a prayer session and relievers to the school have often commented on the reverence and peaceful atmosphere that is created and felt during prayers. We welcome our time with Mons Pat and any visitors to the school.

New Innovative Learning Environment

We have been waiting with anticipation for the last six months for our new innovative learning area to be completed. The original administration block was converted into this new space and the children cannot wait to get the chance to go inside. We will have the blessing of the Block (including my new office!!!) and new playground on 8 December to coincide with Pope Francis 'Year of Mercy' and the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady.

Conclusion:

Education Review Office

Between 8th and 10th September this year we welcomed ERO to our school. This is what they reported on as far as our special character is concerned:

"The special character of the school permeates the learning and social culture. The positive and caring school tone is founded on the school's values. Respectful and supportive relationships are evident across all groups. The Friends of St Joseph's group works in the best interests of the school.

Students at St Joseph's School (Orakei) achieve well. The school's values provide a good foundation for its caring and inclusive culture. Students achieve well and experience positive relationships with teachers and each other. A capable board and senior team provide good quality governance and leadership."

We are so proud of our students, teachers, whanau and St Joseph's community - and may Christ continue to permeate through everything we do.