

Frequently asked questions regarding our Charter (draft version as at 18 March 2011)

1. What is the Charter?

- 1.1. The Education Act 1989 requires every school to have a Charter. A Charter:
 - outlines a school's vision and values and the important education goals and student outcomes our school is striving to meet or improve
 - is a tool to assist the Board to make decisions aimed at raising student achievement
 - is a document that contains our school's main targets for raising student achievement and the measures that will be taken to achieve these targets
 - is essentially the agreement which manages the commitment of the Board of Trustees to govern the school on behalf of the Ministry of Education.
- 1.2. The Board (which includes the Principal) prepares and maintains the school Charter.
- 1.3. A Charter must contain:
 - a strategic section that sets out, for the next three to five years, the Board's aims, objectives, directions, and priorities for raising student achievement (including any objectives that designate the school's special character)
 - an annually updated section that sets out for the relevant year the Board's aims, directions, objectives and priorities relating to raising student achievement, and sets targets for the key activities and achievement of objectives for the year.

2. What steps have we taken to develop our Charter?

- 2.1. The Board started the process of updating our Charter in mid-2010. The Board underwent training on the process and requirements, and the Principal, Kathryn Hira researched examples from other schools to inform our work.
- 2.2. The Board quickly endorsed our existing Mission and Motto, and our Vision was developed and endorsed after a number of joint Board/Staff workshops.
- 2.3. The children last year were asked to identify important values in their family life, and they reported these back to their teachers. The Staff considered this information, and from it distilled the four values which were recommended to the Board, and which appear in the draft Charter.
- 2.4. From community consultation sessions in September/October last year, the Board sifted the feedback and developed the five strategic goals which have been presented. We have developed a mapping of the feedback from those sessions to the Strategic Goals – this is attached for your information.
- 2.5. The Board is very pleased with the consultation undertaken, the opportunities to contribute, and the leadership Kathryn Hira has shown in bringing this process to a conclusion at a time when implementing a new curriculum and National Standards is taking so much time.

3. What are our school values?

- 3.1. We have identified Faith, Aroha, Pono and Tika as our four key values.
- 3.2. Faith of course underscores that we are first and foremost a Catholic School. This links strongly with our Vision and our School Motto.
- 3.3. Aroha translates as love, compassion and respect. Pono translates as honesty, integrity, and sincerity. Tika translates as justice, fairness and doing what is right.

- 3.4. The values are displayed in every classroom, and in the front entrance, with the English translations. Over time these will become very well understood by the children and the wider community – but right now they are new and understanding must be developed. This is something which will be worked on through the year; for example, this Term the focus for the children will be on Aroha.

4. What is our Brigidine Charism?

- 4.1. St Joseph's Orakei was founded in February 1958 by the Brigidine Sisters who travelled daily to Orakei from their convent at Meadowbank to teach the students. In December 1971 the school was handed over to the Sisters of St Joseph from the Josephite Provincial House at Mission Bay.
- 4.2. We have adapted our Charism from our founders, whose motto is “Strength and Kindness”. You may notice in the entrance foyer the woven cross of St Brigid.

5. Why do we have these five strategic goals?

- 5.1. The Board must operate within Ministry policy and directives, and the tenets of the New Zealand Catholic Education System, and our strategic goals must align with these. Further, education at St Joseph’s must be aligned with and support the achievement of our Mission and Vision.
- 5.2. Within that context, we have prioritised the five strategic objectives in the draft Charter. The first four goals largely speak for themselves, whereas the fifth goal is an area which the Board feels is of vital importance to the success of our children in the 21st century, and accordingly we have chosen to give it strategic prominence.

6. What about other educational priorities?

- 6.1. We will still be achieving many objectives not specifically in the Strategic Plan. Every year the Board receives, reviews, approves and monitors an Annual Plan, which operates at a much lower level of detail. For example, items such as music, GaTe (Gifted and Talented Education), reading recovery, physical education, general student health and wellbeing etc will all receive coverage in the Annual Plan.
- 6.2. The Strategic Plan does not constrain what we do each year, but it does point to areas of priority. The full draft Charter is being considered by the Board next week, and, when released, will show the priorities and breadth of objectives for the next few years.

7. Why is there a focus on Maori and Pasifika achievement – what about the rest of the school?

- 7.1. While many Maori and Pasifika students achieve well, it is an unfortunate fact that they are over-represented in the bottom quartile of national student achievement statistics. Successive New Zealand governments have recognised that addressing Maori and Pasifika student underachievement at the earliest opportunity in the educational journey of these children is a key factor in reducing the risk that they do not fully achieve their potential as New Zealand citizens.
- 7.2. This is reflected in the National Education Goals, the principles underpinning *The New Zealand Curriculum*, the rationale for National Standards, and policies such as the Pacific Education Plan and *Ka Hikitia*.

- 7.3. There is also of course the need to give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. Importantly, the Catholic Church embraces the principle of bi-culturalism, and therefore the Treaty as a vital part of New Zealand Catholic education.
- 7.4. The Board is not at liberty to deviate from or ignore the requirements of the New Zealand educational framework, nor that determined by the Catholic Schools' Office.
- 7.5. Accordingly, given the strategic importance of Maori and Pasifika achievement within the national education framework, the Board decided that the fourth strategic goal needed to be part of the overall strategic plan for the school, not part of a subordinate Maori/Pasifika-only strategy.

8. How do National Standards fit into this?

- 8.1. One of the requirements for the Board is that the 2011 Charter must incorporate National Standards; at a strategic level this can be seen in the second goal.
- 8.2. At a more detailed level, throughout the whole National Standards debate it has been a particular concern of the Board that we do not solely focus on so-called "under-achievers", and that we do not lose sight of those students who are performing well, but who could be performing better.
- 8.3. As our Principal, Kathryn Hira has mentioned in the February newsletter, after considering the student achievement data last year, the Board has approved the following key achievement targets for 2011:
 - For a targeted group of Year 4 students to make more than one year's progress in the strategy area of addition and subtraction i.e. move from BELOW to AT expectation, by the end of the year, in relation to the Mathematics National Standards.
 - For a targeted group of Year 5 and 6 students to make more than one year's progress in writing i.e. move from AT to ABOVE expectation, by the end of the year, in relation to the Writing National Standards.
- 8.4. The focus is based solely on the assessment of school-wide data from 2010.

9. Will the Charter be effective in supporting the education, progression and achievement of my children?

- 9.1. The Board is accountable for ensuring that all students are progressing and achieving, and we seek and receive regular reports to provide us with that assurance. The Board would be equally concerned if our number of high achievers suddenly fell versus the number of low achievers increasing, regardless of any demographic issues.
- 9.2. The achievement targets outlined above are based on student achievement data from last year, and were selected on the basis that those were the areas which most needed attention. We will have other areas of focus with other groups of students – the two areas identified are simply those which we have selected as a priority for the mandatory Ministry reporting.
- 9.3. Our mission remains to develop all students to their full potential in a Catholic environment, and the Board is confident that the Charter and Strategic Goals are aligned with that, within the framework of the NZ educational environment.

10. What now?

- 10.1. The Board will consider all feedback prior to finalising the Charter, and it is possible that a number of adjustments may be made.