

Roman Catholic Diocese of Dunedin

# **Catholic Special Character Review and Development Report**

**St Thomas's Aquinas  
School, Winton  
29<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> May 2017**

Bishop Colin Campbell, Proprietor

**External Review of  
Catholic Special Character and Development**

**SCHOOL: ST THOMAS AQUINAS, WINTON**

School Type	Co-educational Year 1-8 Full Primary
Visit	29 <sup>th</sup> -31 <sup>st</sup> May 2017
Principal	Mrs Teresa Jarvis
Reviewer	Ms Phil O'Connell-Cooper
Support Reviewer	Ms Trisch Inder

## **Report Summary**

St Thomas Aquinas School Community is faith focused and their mission statement *“A supportive environment where we live our faith and celebrate our learning in life”* is testament to the realities that are apparent in the day to day life of the school.

St Thomas Aquinas is a vibrant school community which is proudly Catholic. The school’s strengths include an openness to learning and growth by adults and children; relationships, hospitality, Catholicity, Religious Education, service and environment.

As a school community, St Thomas Aquinas is a welcoming place and the people within it are living the Mercy Value of hospitality. Students and adults treat each other with respect. The entrance foyer is bright and the displays all link you immediately to the Catholic Special Character of the school. All staff seem to share the responsibility of making people feel welcome.

The central foyer is a veritable celebration of St Thomas’ Catholic Special Character; its history, its Mercy links, cultural connections, aspirational ex-pupils, its school houses, its Prayer Wall.

The Board of Trustees is united and committed to the Catholic Special Character of St Thomas Aquinas. They fully support the Principal and staff and are very aware of the huge contributions made by them to ensure that, personally and professionally, the Catholic Special Character thrives. They are fully aware of the value of the Catholic Education being provided at the school and recognise the impact it is having on the lives of their children, not just at school but in the family, community and when they graduate to the local College.

The Principal, supported by a very able Director of Religious Studies, provides excellent leadership supporting and growing Catholic Special Character. The Principal and two of the teachers came to the school in 2016, all from State Schools. They have made significant efforts to embrace the Catholic Special Character and in this have full support and guidance from the DRS and Parish Priest. The Principal is a learner and leads by example. The Director of Religious Studies, who has been in the school since 2015, plays a pivotal role and is to be commended for leading, listening and responding in a positive, constructive and supportive way.

While the people in designated roles are clearly showing the desired leadership, one receives the impression that all teachers step up to leadership in a variety of ways. All staff, including those in administrative and support roles, fully contribute to the living and learning in a school committed to following Jesus within the framework of the Mercy Values.

Recognising that children did not really know the school values and that there was a lack of coherence, CHaSERS was developed to incorporate the Mercy Values in a way that appealed to the children and linked to faith and life learning. With the introduction of St Thomas' CHaSERS – Compassion, Hospitality and Service, Excellence, Respect, Social Justice – at the beginning of 2017, there has been a transformation. Children of all ages respond to the concept of being a Chaser. From the beginning of the year, using it in different contexts, linking it with prayers and choices, it is used to reinforce positive behaviour and for reflection on unacceptable behaviour. CHaSERS Home Learning has been introduced which revolves around practical activities related to the Mercy Values. A parent commented that having Home Learning like this is really bringing the faith learning home and into the community and this makes it real.

Service and Social Justice are key Mercy values practised as St Thomas Aquinas CHaSERS. Children involved as School Leaders, School Council and Young Vinnies lead the way in service and outreach. The staff of the school lead by example and in many practical ways. The CHaSERS Home Learning Programme has a Social Justice and Service component. In the words of the children, *“The mercy value of social justice is about being responsible for one another and trying our best to be fair by taking our turn and sharing. It is about trying to make sure everyone is treated fairly and justly”* and *“The mercy value of service is about helping others. You help others because it is what God wants you to do, and you don't ask for pocket money or some other reward in return.”*

Parents, Parish priest, Principal and staff are clear about the kind of help and assistance that will be provided according to the need. They are a small, tightly knit and responsive community which reflects the Mercy Values of Compassion, Service and Respect.

Members of all groups spoken to: Principal and Staff, Board of Trustees and children all agree that St Thomas Aquinas' School is very fortunate in having a Parish Priest who is very generous with his time, energy and support.

The Board of Trustees consider that the parish and school connection is growing stronger thanks to the efforts of the Parish Priest, the Principal and school staff. Parishioners, as well as parents, are always invited to be present for Catholic Special Character events and celebrations. There are a group of faithful parishioners who support the school fully, including assistance in the classrooms on a regular basis. A retired priest is part of that group.

The Principal works together with the Director of Religious Studies and teachers to ensure that the Religious Education Programme takes top priority and is responsive to the learning needs of the children, many of whom have had little or no formal Catholic Education or opportunity to practise their faith.

The Proprietor can be assured that the Catholic Special Character at St Thomas Aquinas is the inspiration and motivation for all that happens in the school. The parents, teachers and children are people of faith, following Jesus, and living their faith in their daily living and learning.



**Since the last review:**

There have been changes of Principal and all teaching staff since the last review.

**The following recommendations were made in the 2014 Report**

**Compliance Requirement was as follows:**

**1. *Attestation Report to be completed annually and this to be sent to the Proprietor***

This has been completed for 2016 and after ratification by the Board of Trustees, will be sent to the Proprietor.

**Key Recommendations for further development were as follows:**

- ***That the school continue to seek, find and evaluate ways that it can build strong ties with the parish and its Sunday liturgy.***

The school and Parish work well together to identify ways to positively connect Parishioners with students and school events. Children are being encouraged and trained to do Altar Serving and Prayers of the Faithful at Sunday Mass and school staff are providing positive role models by being actively engaged in Sunday Mass through carrying out roles such as doing Readings and Children's liturgy. Last year, a staff member completed the Sacramental programme with the students which was recognised as a great witness and celebration. The DRS runs the Sacramental programme. The children are keen to be involved at Mass, especially once they can receive Holy Communion.

- ***That the school explore opportunities for an outside Sacred Space***

The outside School Sacred Space is on hold while waiting for the promised redevelopment. The Board of Trustees consider that the Church is well used, lessening the need. However, there is a Prayer wall in the central foyer area where children, staff and parents can go to pray and where they can add special prayers or prayer requests. These are updated regularly and the wall was the initiative of the Year 7 & 8 teacher and her class.

- ***That the school continue to explore Enquiry Learning in Religious Education***

The school is continuing to explore effective ways to teach Religious Education to meet the identified needs of the students.

- ***That the Principal and Board continue to support an annual formation opportunity through the Catholic Institute for all staff***

The Principal and teachers are currently completing a Level 1 Tertiary Catholic Institute paper and the DRS is completing a Level 2 Paper, as well as repeating the Level 1 paper to support the other teachers.

- ***That the school strengthen the self-review process and include it in the Strategic Plan***

Self-Review continues to be an area of development.

- ***That when setting goals for Special Character, the school consider more aspirational opportunities for inclusion in the annual plan rather than tasks that form part of the annual cycle of work***

Strategic Planning continues to be an area of development but the current strategic plan and annual plans have clear links and are forward looking.

- ***That the Job Descriptions and Appraisal documents for teachers include the Catholic Professional Standards***

Job Descriptions are based on the Registered Teachers Criteria and the Catholic Character component is separate at this stage and continues to be an area of development.

- ***That the Preference of Enrolment cards show the separation of enrolment categories and that these are presented to the Board of Trustees from time to time to help consider evangelization opportunities***

Preference of enrolment cards are yet to show separation of enrolment categories and this is an area for development.



## **Catholic Special Character Dimensions**

### **Catholic Community - Te Iwi Whanau Katorika**

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

#### **Spirituality**

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

St Thomas Aquinas School Community is faith focused and their mission statement “A supportive environment where we live our faith and celebrate our learning in life” is testament to the realities that are apparent in the day to day life of the school.

#### **Evangelisation**

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

A feature of the school, is that it is strongly evangelical. Evangelisation occurs in a number of ways: a focus on providing Baptism Preparation Programmes every second year; catering for older children (and their families) who are new to the school – usually from State Schools – with support in learning Catholic rituals and prayers, introduction to the Mass and sacraments; a very strong whole school focus on Religious Education; children sharing their learning at home; the principal taking small groups of children to weekday Mass to become more familiar with the Mass and to connect with parishioners. A teacher aide, with teacher guidance, follows a specialised and adapted Religious Education programme for a student new to the school who also has special learning needs. In 2016, a teacher new to the school, took part in the Sacramental Programme and received the sacraments for the first time alongside the children in her class. Publications from the school are proudly Catholic. The newsletter features a profile of one child each week asking several questions of them about the school. One answer to the question “What do you like about the Catholic Faith?” indicates that evangelisation is alive and well: “I love morning prayers at school because I am a non-Catholic and I like learning things about the Trinity.”

#### **Partnership**

*Education is a collaborative responsibility*

Working together seems to be a feature of this school community. Relationships are built between all groups: Board of Trustees/Principal/Staff/Children/Parents/PTA/Parish Priest and parish/local community/local schools/ Catholic Schools/Religious Education Advisor. Verdon College students help at various events e.g. the combined Mercy Schools Day hosted by St Thomas Aquinas in 2016.

Most students go on to attend the local college and relationships are being built with key staff there, especially in relation to transitioning.

There is also a move, whilst still in the initial stages, towards forming a local community of learners. While Catholic Schools have been counselled to link up with faith schools, that is not practical in places where there are no Catholic Primary or Secondary Schools nearby. Building collaborative relationships locally has to be key. There are other initiatives already in place where local schools, including St Thomas Aquinas, are working together.

The Principal is developing links with Principals of other Catholic Schools in the Dunedin Diocese. The Director of Religious Education attends the regular DRS Meetings. Teachers all value the opportunity to network at the “Twilight” Meetings and all will be attending ‘The Gathering’ in Alexandra in September.

The school community fully support Catholic Character activities and a new CHaSERS Home Learning Initiative (based on activities related to the school’s Mercy Values) is warmly welcomed and supported by parents.

The Board communicates annually with the Proprietor and, as and when required. The annual report is prepared by the Parish Priest and shared with the Proprietors’ Appointees before submission. The Attestation Report is prepared by the Principal and ratified by the Board of Trustees before submission to the Proprietor.

## Values

### *The school identifies and actively promotes gospel values*

After reflection on the significance of the Mercy Values in the daily life of the school, the Principal and teachers realised that while progress had been made using “Mercy Makers”, the impact was still not as apparent as desired. Recognising that children did not really know the school values and things seemed to be operating in isolation, CHaSERS was developed to incorporate the Mercy Values in a way that appealed to the children and linked to faith and life learning. With the introduction of St Thomas’ CHaSERS – Compassion, Hospitality and Service, Excellence, Respect, Social Justice – at the beginning of 2017, there has been a transformation. Children of all ages respond to the concept of being a Chaser. From the beginning of the year, using it in different contexts, linking it with prayers and choices, it is used to reinforce positive behaviour and for reflection on unacceptable behaviour. Initially staff developed the concept together to create coherence. They made links to Gospel stories and in the future the children will be involved in making those links too.

The children had the opportunity to interpret the meanings and implications of being a Chaser. Everyone is speaking the same language. A behaviour matrix based on the Mercy Values has been developed with the children.

CHaSERS Home Learning has been introduced which revolves around practical activities related to the Mercy Values. One student proudly showed us her Home Learning folder with the many activities she had chosen to do. A parent commented that having Home Learning like this is really bringing the faith learning home and into the community and this makes it real.

## **School Culture**

*Catholic Special Character is visible in the relationships, and in the artistic expressions seen throughout the school*

As a school community, St Thomas Aquinas is a welcoming place and the people within it are living the Mercy Value of hospitality. Students and adults treat each other with respect. The entrance foyer is bright and the displays all link you immediately to the Catholic Special Character of the school. All staff seem to share the responsibility of making people feel welcome.

The central foyer, a shared multi-purpose space, is a veritable celebration of St Thomas' Catholic Special Character; its history, its Mercy links, cultural connections, aspirational ex-pupils, its school houses, its Prayer Wall.

The children know about and can explain their Crest and Motto.

## **Leadership**

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

The Board of Trustees is united and committed to the Catholic Special Character of St Thomas Aquinas. They fully support the Principal and staff and are very aware of the huge contributions made by them to ensure that, personally and professionally, the Catholic Special Character thrives. They are fully aware of the value of the Catholic Education being provided at the school and recognise the impact it is having on the lives of their children, not just at school but in the family, community and when they graduate to the local College.

The Principal, supported by a very able Director of Religious Studies, provides excellent leadership supporting and growing Catholic Special Character. The Principal and two of the teachers came to the school in 2016, all from State Schools. They have made significant efforts to embrace the Catholic Special Character and in this have full support and guidance from the DRS and Parish Priest. The Principal is a learner and leads by example. The DRS, who has been in the school since 2015, plays a pivotal role and is to be commended for leading, listening and responding in a positive, constructive and supportive way.

While the people in designated roles are clearly showing the desired leadership, one receives the impression that all teachers step up to leadership e.g. in liturgy, prayer, service, instigation of the Prayer Wall. All staff, including those in administrative and support roles, fully contribute to the living and learning in a school committed to the Mercy Values.

The Charter, Strategic and Annual Plans clearly incorporate Catholic Special Character. Newsletters, Enrolments Information and School Website each have a strong focus on Catholic Special Character.

## Stewardship

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

The Mercy Charism features strongly. As all but one teacher is relatively new to the school, they have been very deliberate in their own learning about the history of the school, its Mercy connections and the implications of belonging to the Mercy Family within the Catholic Church. They have ensured that the children know and understand the connections and the Mercy values are fully integrated into living and learning at St Thomas' Aquinas. St Thomas' hosted the Mercy Schools on Mercy Day in 2016.

As mentioned above, all written documents show a strong focus on Catholic Special Character which is mirrored in the day to day actions. There is still a need to develop the self-review process which currently focuses more on the policies rather than finding out how the policies are being implemented and what the impact is. It is suggested that one of the Special Character Dimensions is reviewed annually using a variety of ways to hear the voices of those affected by the policy e.g. Pastoral Care Review could include interviewing children, getting feedback from parents etc. The Catholic Special Character Review and Development Booklet provides guidance on aspects that could be looked at in a review.

School publications have been referred to earlier. They, including promotional material, Website, Facebook and Newsletter, are modern, informative and varied and the Catholic Special Character is very evident.

Documents such as Guidelines for Boards of Trustees, the DRS Manual, Certification Handbook etc are available and they are used, as appropriate for guidance and direction. The school budgets generously for all aspects of Catholic Special Character and fully supports the related professional development.

Enrolment procedures are clear and there is good communication between the Parish Priest and the Principal.

There is a strong emphasis on evangelisation which is not theoretical as the Parish Priest, Principal and DRS support families in their faith journeys in very practical ways. Preference categories need to be clarified and entered on to the Preference of Enrolment form so that the school can record these on the SMS and ensure that follow up with support for the child and the family occurs, especially in relation to the Sacramental Programme. It also enables the school to update the categories on the SMS once children have been baptised. The information regarding Preference of Enrolment Categories is needed for reporting to the Board and Proprietor.

The Board of Trustees is clear about Appointment procedures and requirements for the tagged positions. They have had experience and success in making several significant appointments in recent times.

Job Descriptions focus on the Practising Teachers Criteria. The Professional Standards for Teachers in Catholic Schools currently sits as a separate document. Models have been provided so the school can work towards an integrated job description.

The Board, Principal and staff are very committed to ongoing learning and the Principal and Director of Religious Studies are to be congratulated on their leadership and example and they and the other teachers are to be commended for their efforts in this area.

## **Worship**

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

Staff begin each week by praying together early on Monday morning. The whole school gathers in prayer to start their week. This time of prayer, reflection and learning is led by teachers and relates to the current learning in Religious Education, the St Thomas' CHaSERS Mercy Values or to some aspect of the Liturgical Year. New children and visitors are welcomed. Birthdays and significant achievements or happenings are acknowledged. It may be worth considering providing an opportunity for the students to further grow their leadership, by helping to organise and then lead the Monday morning prayer, with guidance from their teacher. While the review team did not have the opportunity to join classes for their morning prayer, the children we spoke to were able to describe what takes place and how their prayers are organised. Prayer Tables were obvious in each room.

Children attend Mass together as a whole school once a term. The reviewers were present at a school Mass celebrating Pentecost. Children were reverent and attentive and those involved in ministries were well prepared and cognisant of their various roles. The Parish Priest works well with children and staff and his relaxed manner seems to put everyone at ease. He works hard to engage the children's interest.

## **Service and Social Justice**

*Students assist people in need through service and outreach opportunities*

Service and Social Justice are key Mercy values to be practised as St Thomas Aquinas CHaSERS. Children involved as School Leaders, School Council and Young Vinnies lead the way in service and outreach. The staff of the school lead by example and in many practical ways. The CHaSERS Home Learning Programme has a Social Justice and Service component. In the words of the children, *"The mercy value of social justice is about being responsible for one another and trying our best to be fair by taking our turn and sharing. It is about trying to make sure everyone is treated fairly and justly"* and *"The mercy value of service is about helping others. You help others because it is what God wants you to do, and you don't ask for pocket money or some other reward in return."*

Activities in the Home Learning include: “complete a job for a neighbour who needs help e.g. stacking firewood”; clean up the backyard for your family”; Choose an activity that you believe shows social justice and service. You need to provide evidence and explain why”.

The Young Vinnies carry out the following acts of service: volunteer at the Hospice Shop on Saturdays or in the holidays; organise contributions to the Food Bank; create a St Thomas’ Survival Kit for children who transfer from another school to St Thomas Aquinas and present these to each child as part of the welcome to the school and raised money collecting manure. Teachers support all these activities and get involved where possible. The school supports local organisations, such as St John Ambulance, and responds with prayer and action when school or parish families are suffering hardship or tragedy. The PTA organises rosters for meals, transport etc.

Each Lent and September the school fully uses the Caritas resources and responds with appropriate actions, often instigated by the children. A father recounted how his child prayed for children in Tanzania which was a direct result of the learning taking place in the Caritas programme.

The school also supports and responds to appeals such as the Kaikoura Earthquake. Children with disabilities are included with love, care and acceptance.

### **Collaboration with the Parish**

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

The Board of Trustees consider that the parish and school connection is growing stronger thanks to the efforts of the Parish Priest, the Principal and school staff. They work hard on involving the families in the sacramental programme and encourage children to take on roles such as altar serving and prayers of the faithful, thus bring the families into greater involvement in the Sunday Mass. They are also very aware that many of the families live on farms some distance from the church and at least one or both of the parents are working on Sundays. Staff members lead children’s liturgy from time to time and encourage the children to come to Mass so they can take part. Staff members also take part in ministries in the parish. A working bee for both school and parish was organised by the Principal.

Parishioners, as well as parents, are always invited to be present for Catholic Special Character events and celebrations. There are a group of faithful parishioners who support the school fully, including assistance in the classrooms on a regular basis. A retired priest is part of that group.

The Hall space is shared with the parish and on occasions when it needs to be used by the parish during school hours e.g. after a funeral, the school and parish co-operate. There is always good communication with the Parish Priest ensuring the school knows what is happening and vice versa.

The Principal, as mentioned before, takes small groups of children to weekday Mass to become more connected with the parishioners and to be familiar with the Mass.

The Parish Priest trains altar servers - two at a time – and there is a good altar server roster. A practice is held each Friday in preparation for the Sunday Mass.

Members of all groups spoken to: Principal and Staff, Board of Trustees and children all agree that St Thomas Aquinas' School is very fortunate in having a Parish Priest who is very generous with his time, energy and support.

On the school's newsletter and website, the Mass times are published for all to see. Details about the Sacramental programme are also provided.

## **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.*

St Thomas' school community is inclusive, friendly, respectful and welcoming. The Principal and staff work hard to ensure each child and their parents are valued. They respond to the needs of the children and collaboratively problem solve to meet the learning and emotional needs of individuals. They are very aware that the school, because of its location in the centre of a large dairying area, has a significant transient population and for children who experience many changes of schools the Principal and staff are very proactive in ensuring the children are welcomed and supported. This flows through to the children who respond by looking after new people, introducing them to the school, providing a Survival Kit, showing them Catholic rituals, teaching them prayers etc. When children were asked what they like about their school, they responded...." *Everyone is so friendly and helps you out.... have friends always by your side.....we have the CHaSERS values and if you are new, anyone can be your friend – all ages.....teachers support us...last year I was having a hard time and Mr B helped me out."*

### **Safety**

*The school provides for students and staff an environment that is safe – physically, emotionally, spiritually, socially and culturally.*

St Thomas Aquinas School has very clear policy and procedures on the care and management of students at school and in out of school contexts, promoting a culture of care and protection of students and expecting a high degree of professionalism from staff.

A positive and safe learning environment is provided. A Behaviour Matrix has been developed based on the Mercy Values. Bullying behaviour is not tolerated but students know they can seek help either from buddies, school leaders or staff at any time if they are in a difficult or challenging situation.

Good guidelines are provided for staff in how to manage difficult and challenging situations, including how to stay safe themselves.

The Parish Priest is involved in Pastoral care with parents, families and individuals. Children can be referred by parents or teachers. Where counselling or professional intervention is required, children are referred on to an appropriate agency.



### ***Behaviour Management***

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

The children are encouraged to take responsibility for their own behaviour and are very confident they know how they are expected to behave at St Thomas' .... "we 'Chase' the Mercy Values" said one child, "which means we know how to treat each other.... kindly." Children feel safe at school and reeled off a list of people who might help them if they needed it. They know a consequence could be time out or making up to the person you have hurt. CHaSERS House tokens are given by any staff member to children whose positive behaviour they wish to affirm.

### ***Cultural Awareness***

***The school is open to the enrichment of diverse cultures.***

This is apparent in signage, in artworks, in the mihi whakatau by the Principal at the beginning of the school welcome and prayers, in the haka especially written for St Thomas' and of which the children are so proud, and in the Filipino song sung as part of this ceremony and the gusto and pride with which this was performed.

The children have been taught several Filipino songs by a Filipino priest in the Diocese. The children take part in the Southland Polyfest and produce Maori and Filipino items with a Catholic flavour. The parents support this fully and costumes are made by them for every single child in the school.

### ***Organisation***

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

Parents, Parish priest, Principal and staff are clear about the kind of help and assistance that will be provided according to the need. They are a small, tightly knit and responsive community which reflects the Mercy Values of Compassion, Service and Respect.

## **Religious Education - Te Whakaakoranga Whakapono**

*The school helps fulfil the teaching mission of the Church by living and teaching the values of Jesus Christ*

### ***Leadership***

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

The Principal works together with the Director of Religious Education and teachers to ensure that the Religious Education Programme takes top priority and is responsive to the learning needs of the children, many of whom have had little or no formal Catholic Education or opportunity to practise their faith. They are also very aware that three of the people teaching Religious Education are relatively new to teaching in a Catholic School. Therefore, the support provided by the DRS is crucial. The Principal and teachers commented on the contribution the DRS makes and how the training, support, role modelling, feedback is so much appreciated. The Principal teaches Religious Education in all classes at different times, providing release for teachers. Working across all levels with all children, has enabled her to be assured that the programme being delivered is following both what is required and is meeting the learning needs.

### ***Religious Education Curriculum***

*The Religious Education programme is soundly managed and professionally delivered.*

Religious Education is given very high priority – Fifty minutes three times a week for all classes. While teachers are working towards self-directed learning and developing lines of inquiry, there is a strong reliance on following the programme, building confidence, growing knowledge and meeting the needs as they have identified them. The students share their learning in Religious Education in two innovative ways: through the CHaSERS Home Learning Programme and when parents attend the Learner Conference with their child.

### ***Integrated Curriculum***

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

Where possible this occurs. Teachers comment that they find the Caritas Lenten and Social Justice resources most helpful in enabling such integration to occur. The Programme 'Myself and Others' is often integrated with the Social Sciences and with the Senior students is integrated into the Puberty Programme.

### *Resources*

***The Board of Trustees makes financial provision for Religious Education and Catholic Special Character resources.***

The Board of Trustees is generous in its allocated funds for Religious Education and Professional Development. The Parent Teacher Association also support the school with funds being provided to help with the purchase of Bibles for children entering and graduating from the school.

The staffing and time allocations are generous.

The teachers really value the support received from the Local Education Advisor and the Catholic Education Office Advisor.

As well as resources within the school, teachers use resources from [www.credo.org](http://www.credo.org) [www.faithalive.org.nz](http://www.faithalive.org.nz) the Catholic Diocese of Dunedin website [www.rcdd.sharepoint.com](http://www.rcdd.sharepoint.com)

### *Professional Development*

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

The Principal and staff, supported by the Director of Religious Studies, are to be commended for their openness to learning, their willingness to take on study papers, the way they make best advantage of the Strand Meetings provided by the DRS and the support provided by the Religious Education Advisors, “Twilight Meetings” and other courses offered e.g. teachers new to Catholic Schools. The Principal and DRS attend meetings that relate to their roles.

### *Communication*

***The school communicates with parents about Religious Education programmes.***

Useful terminology in relation to Catholic Special Character is published on the school’s very informative and easy to use website. Details regarding the learning in Religious Education are included in the school newsletter and events posted on Facebook and it may be timely to add some general information about the Religious Education Programme on to the main website.

## **PROPOSALS FOR ACTION FROM THIS REVIEW**

### **Compliance Requirements**

- Ensure that the Preference of Enrolment cards show the separation of preference of enrolment categories which can then be entered on to the Student Management System and added to the Attestation Report annually.
- Continue to monitor and work towards reducing the open-place numbers to meet the maximum quoted in the Integration Agreement, seeking advice from the Director of Catholic Education in the process.

### **Key Recommendations for further development**

- Ensure that Catholic Character Review is included in the Strategic Plan. Develop the self-review process by reviewing in depth, one Catholic Character dimension annually and including the relevant one in each year of the Triennial Plan.
- Develop Job Descriptions that include Catholic Character Dimensions and Practising Teacher Criteria in an integrated document.
- Consider the further development of the special feature of your central foyer as a celebration of all that contributes to the Catholic Special Character of St Thomas Aquinas School, encouraging it to become, at least in part, recognised as one of your school's shared sacred spaces.

*THE REVIEW TEAM WISH TO THANK THE BOARD, PRINCIPAL AND STUDENTS FOR THE SUPPORT AND ENTHUSIASM FOR THE REVIEW PROCESS AND LOOK FORWARD TO RETURNING TO CELEBRATE THE PROGRESS THEY WILL MAKE IN BUILDING THE CATHOLIC CHARACTER OF THE SCHOOL.*

**Catholic Special Character Review Team June 2017**

**Lead Reviewer: Philomena O'Connell-Cooper**