

***He Arotake Whanaketanga mō te Mātauranga  
Ahurea Katorika – Te Ture Tāuke mō ngā Kura  
Katorika***

***Catholic Special Character  
External Evaluation for  
Development Report***

***St Joseph's Catholic Primary School  
Pukekohe Auckland***

Evaluation conducted. 11th-12<sup>th</sup> November

Confirmed Report 10<sup>th</sup> December 2025

### **School Details**

#### **School: St Joseph's Pukekohe Catholic Primary School**

Address: 94 Seddon Rd Pukekohe 2120

School type: Contributing 1-6

Actual roll: 359

Maximum roll: 435

Non-preference : 5%

Actual non-preference number: 16

Roll based staffing entitlement: 17.3

Required number of Special Character: 9

Filled number of Special Character: 9

Director of Religious Studies: Flerinda Valondo, Jennifer Logan

School Principal: Mrs Ursula Hall

Parish Priest: Father Robert Steele

Evaluation Team: Christine Smith and Viki Trainor

Accompanying Evaluator: Vincenza Golding

### **Ngā Whāinga O Te Arotake-Aims of External Evaluation**

The New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference wishes the external evaluation to show how effective the school is in handing on the faith and forming a new generation of Catholics; this includes evaluating the efficacy of Religious Education and how the whole school community engages in authentic Catholic Christian witness and evangelising. This is the evangelizing mission of the Church, in which the school participates.

The external review process is based upon the *He Arotake Whanaketanga mō te Mātauranga Ahurea Katorika – Te Ture Tāuke mō ngā Kura Katorika – Catholic Special Character Evaluation for Development (January 2022)*. In the evaluation, schools are asked to consider and demonstrate the ways in which they have provided for their students:

- Te tūtaki ki a Te Karaiti – an encounter with Christ,
- Mā te Mātauranga ka tipu – growth in knowledge,
- Te whakaatu Karaitiana – Christian witness.

And how the school is:

- Te kaitiakitanga me te whakapakari I te tuakiri- Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Special Character.

The evaluation is designed to look at the work the school has done, in its internal evaluation and development, to grow Catholic Character. It affirms what the school has done and the opportunities for further development the school has discerned. It challenges the school to be more transformational. Evaluators encourage and commend good practice, and work with the school to analyse opportunities to further strengthen and develop the Catholic culture.

St Joseph's Catholic School Pukekohe. Catholic Special Character Evaluation,2025.

## Progress With Recommendations from the 2021 Catholic Special Character Evaluation

- It is now time to make certain that there is evidence of good adaptive teaching and learning reflecting that all teachers know their learners well and that Religious Education is taught to the same high standard as all other curricula.

### Progress: Continuing to develop and ongoing

- School administrators must refine and clarify systems for recording systems recording preference enrolment to ensure it is accurate including copies of baptismal forms and to ensure accuracy when aligned with the SMS systems as there is no easy way of assuring certainty of many children's enrolment status. **Progress: Achieved**

## Dimension 1: Te Tūtaki Ki A Te Karaiti-Encounter with Christ

How effectively does the school encourage and facilitate the development of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ who reveals the transforming love and truth of the living God?

### FOCUS AREAS:

There is evidence that the school, very effectively provides ongoing Catholic spiritual formation assisting tamariki to enrich and deepen their personal relationship with Christ. The impact of this is a joyful Christ-centred kura.

*"I need a clean heart to stay connected to Jesus.... I've learned that praying helps me" (Tamariki)*

The wairuatanga of St Josephs' is woven throughout the spiritual fabric of the kura. It is felt in the environment and the way in which the school community embraces their Charism and upholds their Tātou Moemoeā Vision.

Tamariki and the community wholeheartedly and deeply understand the school's vision and values and so they are authentic in actioning them, ensuring they are highly visible in ordinary and everyday actions throughout the school. This familiarity encourages encounter with Christ and the development of an understanding of the person of Christ. The daily impact of these understandings was communicated clearly by tamariki and whānau, to the Evaluation Team.

*"I can see my child's relationship with Jesus is becoming more personal and real....they're begining to connect those lessons to everyday life, like being kind, grateful and forgiving" (Whānau)*

*"There is a growing sense of empathy and awareness that faith isn't just about learning about Jesus, it's being the person of Jesus to each other" (Whānau)*

At St Joseph's there is a shared understanding amongst the community of Catholic spirituality, and who they are as Catholics. The effect of this is that the kura that has a robust and authentic Catholic identity shaped in the image of Jesus. Tamariki identify keenly with the Charism of the RNDM, Mission Sisters, and tamariki have knowledge and insight into the characteristics of Saint Joseph and Euphrasie Barbier.

Kaiako ensure Tamariki have a thorough understanding of the Church and liturgical literacy, an example being the practice of 'sacred silence' a behavior of reverence adopted by the kura and enacted with devotion by tamariki. Spirituality at St Joseph's is reflecting tūturu Katorika authentically Catholic and tūturu Māori, authentically Māori, keenly aware that Aotearoa New Zealand Catholic Church is a bi-cultural Church (Bishops Synod 1989). This is a commendable strength of this Kura.

**Evidence and Effect:** The school provides highly effective Catholic spiritual formation, enabling tamariki to develop a deep, personal relationship with Christ. Te Wairuatanga of St Joseph's is evident in the environment and vision of the kura, and faith is authentically lived through daily actions and practices such as sacred silence. The result is a joyful, Christ-centred kura with a strong Catholic identity, integrated with Māori spirituality.

**2:Evangelisation: How does the School through it's practices and communication, facilitate an encounter with Christ and spread the Good News to the Community?**

Evangelisation thrives in the kura, where inclusive liturgies and Masses promote relationship with Christ and strengthen kotahitanga. The Mass unites church and kura in Christ's mission, with evaluators learning of many encounters and their positive impact on tamariki, kaiako, and whānau; four staff have been received into the Church over the past four years and several participate in parish-based evangelization programmes, for example Alpha.

The parish priest leads weekly Mass, visits classrooms, and encourages whānau participation. Tamariki serve as altar servers, readers, St Patrick's Children's choir, and offertory bearers. Outreach, food bank donations, extend the impact of the Gospel message, beyond school. Tamariki show a deep belonging and ownership of the church. Leadership and staff are an exemplary model of the RNDM Mission Charism, and tamariki seek to emulate their modelling of faith through prayer, service, and leadership.

*“The relationship with the parish is really strong. Father knows all their (tamariki) names.” (Kaiako)*

*“As a newcomer to the school and area, the charism of the Mission sisters is very strong.” (Whānau)*

Māori symbols and Miha Māori affirm cultural identity and Catholic Special Character. The kura is Christ -centric and this evangelising message is shared effectively through all communications, including newsletters, website and social media, integrating faith, culture, and life effectively so communication has the ears and eyes of the community. Every liturgy and gathering becomes an opportunity to evangelise hearts and minds. This inclusive approach strengthens kotahitanga, nurtures relationship with God, and transforms lives.

**3:Faith-based Leadership:**

**How does Faith-based leadership effectively and authentically shape the vision and direction of the kura, ensuring a genuine and ongoing encounter with Christ.**

St Joseph's Christ-centric leadership anchor's the kura. The Tumuaki safeguards the RNDM sisters' legacy, inspiring a culture where faith is taught and actioned. Her visible, authentic leadership ensures spiritual formation and liturgical practices create opportunities for encounter with the person of Christ. Under her guidance, Catholic Special Character is evident in daily prayer, weekly liturgies, and ongoing spiritual development, weaving faith into learning.

Evaluators noted the confident authentic and open approach of Tamariki when they shared their faith and spiritual experiences with the Evaluation Team as it was a credit to the effectiveness of opportunity for encounter with Christ and the insightfulness of spiritual understanding of Tamariki who were interviewed during the Special Character Evaluation. The Tumuaki, leadership team and many Kaiako model Gospel values through active parish involvement and servant leadership.

*“The Principal has done a fantastic job!” (Priest)*

Walking in the footsteps of the RNDM sisters and Euphrasie Barbier, they inspire faith, empower others, and uphold the mission of Catholic education in Aotearoa – Tūturu Katorika, Tūturu Māori.

## THE EVIDENCE AND EFFECT OF ENCOUNTER WITH CHRIST AT ST JOSEPH'S KURA

*Evangelisation is enabled through inclusive liturgies, weekly Mass, and positive parish, kura engagement. Tamariki serve actively and lead outreach, fostering deep belonging. Māori symbols affirm identity, and communication integrates faith and culture. The impact is clear, faith is lived, kotahitanga strengthened, and lives transformed.*

### Dimension 2: Te Whakatupu Mā Te Mātauranga: Growth in Knowledge

**How effectively does the school assist its community to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Jesus Christ, his teachings, and the Catholic Church?**

#### FOCUS AREAS:

##### 1. Leadership

Faith-filled leadership shapes the vision and direction of the kura with authenticity and purpose. The Tumuaki enables growth in knowledge of Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church, modelling how faith and culture, and faith and life, are lived daily. She is proactive, visible, and seen to live 'The Word,' creating opportunities for others to be authentically Catholic in both faith and culture.

Rapid roll growth and significant staff changes in 2024–2025 prompted decisive leadership from the Tumuaki and SLT. Their refreshed approach has ensured the Charism, Vision and Mission have been sustained, safeguarding and strengthening CSC as the kura enters its next growth stage.

Leadership maintains strong kanohi ki te kanohi engagement with the community, exemplifying servant leadership and being regarded as Tūturu Katorika. These faith-filled encounters deepen understanding of living an authentic Catholic faith. Despite challenges of rapid growth and limited release time, collegiality and support within the leadership team remain a defining strength. As roll growth continues, reviewing support for the Director of Religious Studies (DRS) role would be beneficial.

##### 2. Religious Education

The Religious Education programme is central to kura life and professionally delivered by committed, qualified kaiako. Leadership oversight ensures quality teaching, supported by collaborative planning and access to Religious Education Advisors. In 2025, a shared DRS role was developed. This collaboration has provided complementary expertise within this role. Tamariki demonstrate strong liturgical literacy and understanding of Church traditions, while kaiako enthusiastically implement Tō Tātou Whakapono following robust professional development.

The Deputy Principal's leadership in curriculum design has driven significant progress, fostering inclusive practice and professional growth. Initiatives such as learning sprints, development of St Joseph's Expectations of Pedagogy and Practice model, and Catholic Special Character PD have built a strong, collaborative learning culture benefiting both kaiako and tamariki. This is evidenced by the responsiveness of the kura. Relevant and insightful internal evaluation is submitted to the CSO annually and External (MoE) Evaluation (ERO) as reflected in the 2025-2026 Strategic Planning, demonstrates strong school leadership, that aligns with school and Catholic School's Office direction to support and lift all curriculum, specifically Religious Education. The Evaluator's commend leadership for their evaluative lens on improvement. Religious Education planning is collaborative and reflected in classroom practice ensuring Tamariki demonstrate strong liturgical literacy and show understanding of the rituals and traditions of the Church. Using a team approach, that includes learning support teachers, kaiako work to ensure the individual needs of tamariki are met. There is a clear commitment from leadership to provide tamariki with high-quality experiences across the Religious Education curriculum and Kaiako

have undertaken professional development for the new curriculum, *Tō Tātou Whakapono*, and they are enthusiastically and effectively implementing it in their classrooms.

**THE EVIDENCE AND EFFECT OF How effectively does the school assist its community to grow in the knowledge and understanding of Jesus Christ, his teachings, and the Catholic Church?**

*Leadership ensures a purposeful Catholic curriculum guided by *Tō Tātou Whakapono*, integrating Gospel values and Māori perspectives. Religious Education nurtures Catholic Character, faith formation, and cultural respect across all learning areas. Vanguard curriculum design and leadership is ensuring external and internal review is very effectively used for school improvement.*

**3. Catholic Curriculum**

School leadership ensures the curriculum is implemented with clear intent. Regular classroom walk-throughs confirm that a strong Catholic lens is woven throughout learning, guided by *Tō Tātou Whakapono* - Our Faith from Year 0–6. Liturgical literacy is highly evident, and kaiako are well-resourced to deliver the curriculum. The Catholic curriculum and worldview are effectively integrated into daily practices and across wider curriculum areas.

The kura embeds a Catholic perspective across all learning areas. Gospel values Aroha, Ako, Arahi are gently interwoven into teaching, helping tamariki understand how these values can guide their everyday lives. Classrooms reflect authentic engagement, with tamariki expressing their experiences of *Tō Tātou Whakapono* through writing and creative artwork.

St Joseph's has been on a learning journey with local iwi, deepening knowledge and understanding that reflect the local curriculum and the Aotearoa New Zealand Histories curriculum. School leadership is commended for fostering these relationships. The kura continues to liaise with Ngāti Te Ata Waiohua and Ngāti Tamaoho, refining alignment with the bicultural nature of the Catholic Church tūturu Katorika, tūturu Māori. There is good evidence of spoken and written te reo throughout the kura. Whānau and tamariki value this and have expressed enthusiasm for even greater consistency across classrooms. Continued implementation of St Joseph's Māori Education Plan will further support Kaiako to strengthen this positive commitment, for example, Te Kamaka, Whānau Māori conveyed to Evaluators that they are greatly supported by the leadership shown by the Tuamuaki and SLT and heartened by the opportunities provided for the kapa haka rōpū and miha Māori.

The Catholic curriculum at St Joseph's is intentionally designed and integrated, enabling tamariki to connect Religious Education across subjects. It reflects Catholic values and Māori perspectives, using overarching themes for coherence and engagement. Religious Education is taught distinctly and integrated where appropriate, nurturing Catholic Character, faith formation, and understanding of its place in the world.

**THE EVIDENCE AND EFFECT OF CATHOLIC CURRICULUM**

*School leadership ensures a purposeful Catholic curriculum guided by *Tō Tātou Whakapono*. Liturgical literacy and Gospel values are evident across learning, supported by strong iwi partnerships and Māori perspectives. Religious Education is distinct yet integrated, nurturing Catholic Character, faith formation, and cultural respect, empowering tamariki to live Gospel values daily.*

### **Dimension 3: Te Whakaatu Karaitiana-Christian Witness**

**How effectively does the school provide a hope-filled Christian witness which empowers its community members to integrate their faith and their life?**

#### **1. Catholic Kura Community**

Whānau and Tamariki recounted the effectiveness and authenticity generated from within the St Joseph kura community, relating how it promotes active Catholic Christian witness and practice. The kura is open and welcoming, and everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

*“Compassion is always shown to our families; we provide generously” for families who need support.” (Whānau)*

#### **2. Partnership and Collaboration**

Recognising that education is a collaborative responsibility, the kura very effectively builds strong connections with the many groups they relate to, including, whānau, parish, and Diocese. Tamariki are enabled to develop an understanding of, and respect for, Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the cultural diversity of St Joseph is the lived experience of Aotearoa New Zealand.

*“I see it every day, in prayer, in commands, the respect given for the original people of this land” (Priest)*

*“I love the Māori Mass, it is special”. (Whānau)*

*“The kura has termly hui with whānau” (Whānau)*

St Joseph provides clear information and opportunities for whānau to understand kura systems and practices in general and in relation to Catholic Special Character. Community consultation is undertaken informally. Whānau appreciate the opportunity to be heard. Tamariki, Kaiako, and Whānau celebrate their cultural identity and respect the cultural diversity of others in the community. They believe their ideas are listened to, heard, and incorporated into the life of the kura and feel affirmed and acknowledged.

#### **3. Pastoral Care**

The kura effectively ensures that education occurs in a safe, nurturing environment supported by a strong pastoral care network in which each member of the community is known, respected, cared for, and aware that they are loved unconditionally by God.

*“Our pastoral care encompasses our whole community, our restorative process, Jesus forgave so we will forgive” (whānau Māori)*

A restorative justice process is understood by all tamariki as a reflection of Gospel Values and aligned with the Charism of the Mission Sisters and Values of the kura. There is a highly effective pastoral network in place to enable support as needed. This makes a positive difference in the lives of tamariki and whānau at kura and home.

*“By including others even if they are not your friend” (Tamariki)*

#### **4. Service and Outreach**

St Joseph embodies a mission-led culture, defined by service, justice, and community outreach. Grounded in Catholic values, the kura actively lives out the Gospel through meaningful action. Tamariki regularly visit a nearby retirement village to build relationships and share music with residents, fostering intergenerational connection. Tamariki articulated to Evaluators a clear understanding of climate action as a moral and spiritual responsibility, rooted in Gospel values. Kaiako and tamariki lead both grassroots and global outreach and service initiatives, inspired by the Gospel message. They actively

support others within the kura through social action initiatives, supporting organisations like Caritas and the Missions.

Tamariki are encouraged to critically examine events using a Catholic lens with strong links made to Catholic Social teaching, the Gospels, and Religious Education curriculum. Social justice is intentionally taught and woven into the curriculum, offering tamariki rich, authentic learning experiences that deepen their understanding of diverse realities locally, nationally, and globally. These experiences cultivate empathy, compassion, and a strong sense of moral responsibility. Evaluators observed tamariki engaging in thoughtful, mature discussions, demonstrating an exceptional awareness of others' experiences and a genuine care for social equity well beyond their years.

*“We use our leadership to influence others in a positive way.” (Tamariki)*

*“We help people in need because as Christians, we have a responsibility to do this.” (Tamariki)*

*“Jesus welcomes everyone- not just one group of people.” (Tamariki)*

#### **Effectiveness of Te Whakaatu Karaitiana-Christian Witness**

*There is ongoing collaboration between Māori and the kura. Tamariki lead Gospel-inspired service and outreach, expressing, Jesus welcomes everyone not just one group of people and social Justice matters. These practices reflect a living faith that is inclusive, compassionate, and deeply embedded in the life of the kura.*

#### **Dimension 4: Te Kaitiakitanga Me To Whakapakari I Te Tuakiri Katorika-Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Character**

**How effectively does the school, in its stewardship, and its compliance with legal obligations, safeguard and strengthen its Catholic identity? FOCUS AREAS: 1:Stewardship**

From the Board's perspective, Catholic Special Character is seminal to the life of the kura. They can see the connections between their life and their faith, and their faith and culture; and they bring this understanding to governance, guided by the teachings of Jesus.

Governance and management are cohesive, ensuring Catholic Special Character is embedded across all operational areas, organisation, employment, professional development, formation, and enrolment. The Board of the kura provides unwavering support to the Tumuaki and leadership team, ensuring the vision and strategic direction are firmly centred in the Gospel and reflected in Catholic Special Character. Their commitment to continuous improvement is evident in their reflective practices and clear examples of how Te Tiriti o Waitangi and Te Ao Māori shape their governance. As the Board, they are Christ-centric stewards. They steadfastly govern for the wellbeing of the kura.

The Board demonstrates an authentic commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, actively upholding the principles of Protection, Partnership, and Participation. They are resolute in their goal for tamariki Māori to thrive in both education and faith as Māori. Policies and procedures reflect an integration of Te Ao, Tikanga, and Mātauranga Māori, and their strategic plan clearly prioritises the holistic development of all tamariki and kaiako.

Internal evaluation processes support high-quality practice and leadership. The Annual Internal Report, including the Catholic Special Character Evaluation, was thoroughly carried out over two years, professionally insightful and relevant. Strategic directions are implemented by the Board, kura leaders, and kaiako, with clear, positive outcomes across the Kura. The Charter is strategic and forward-thinking, and annual planning shapes kaiako practice and tamariki achievement. Leadership, in collaboration with the Evaluation team, has identified focused next steps for growth in Catholic Special Character and Religious Education, supported by a clear pedagogical framework.

#### ***Effectiveness of Te Kaitiakitanga Me To Whakapakari I Te Tuakiri Katorika-Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Character***

*The Board demonstrates effectiveness through strategic leadership, unwavering commitment to Catholic Special Character, and integration of Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles. Their governance drives improvement, supports strong leadership, and ensures the holistic success of tamariki and kaiako across spiritual, cultural, and educational dimensions.*

#### **Catholic Special Character Evaluation Report Summary**

St Joseph's Kura provides strong Catholic spiritual formation, with tamariki confidently engaging in prayer, reflection, and faith expression. Te Wairuatanga is evident in daily practices such as sacred silence and Katorika ritual, creating a community deeply centred in Catholic identity and authentically interwoven with tūturu Katorika and tūturu Māori. Evangelisation is very evident, through inclusive liturgies, weekly Mass, and strong parish-kura collaboration. Tamariki lead service and outreach, while Māori symbolism and reo are intentional and evident, affirming identity and fostering kotahitanga. The result is a culture where faith is lived and shared, shaping compassion, belonging, and mutual support.

Leadership advances the Catholic curriculum by embedding Tō Tātou Whakapono across learning areas with cultural responsiveness. Liturgical literacy and Religious Education are alive, empowering tamariki to live Gospel values in everyday contexts. Partnerships with iwi are developing and will further enrich the curriculum. Christian witness and pastoral care are visible through acts of service, with whānau affirming the welcoming and respectful environment of the kura. Governance is robust, with the Board recognising Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles as integral to Catholic Special Character, ensuring spiritual, cultural, and educational dimensions remain resilient, innovative, and responsive to community needs. This commitment ensures that spiritual, cultural, and educational dimensions are aligned, safeguarding Catholic identity while supporting innovation and resilience across the kura.

#### **Recommendations**

1: Develop and implement a whole-school approach to Curriculum delivery. This is to ensure consistency and quality of pedagogy across all classrooms, particularly supporting new teachers in aligning with school-wide teaching practices.

2: Strengthen, define and refine the role of the Director of Religious Studies in the Kura.

3: Prioritise sustaining both the charism and school history to ensure it is alive and known to future generations.

St Joseph's Catholic School Pukekohe. Catholic Special Character Evaluation, 2025.

The Evaluation Team is confident that the Principal, DRS, leadership team, and the Board, have the willingness and ability to address these recommendations fully before the next external evaluation. The Catholic Education Office staff are available to assist the Principal, School Board and staff in compiling an action plan to address these recommendations.

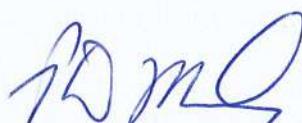
The team thanks the community for the welcome, hospitality and cooperation extended to them and for the opportunity to experience the way that they safeguard and strengthen their Catholic special character. The organisation and preparation for the evaluation by the school are greatly appreciated.



Christine Smith, Lead Evaluator



Viki Trainor, Evaluator



Philip Mahoney, Manager Catholic Schools Office