

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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***He Pūrongo Arotake Mātauranga  
Ahurea Katorika ā Waho***

***Catholic Special Character  
External Evaluation Report***

**St Peter's Catholic School  
Cambridge**

**Evaluation conducted:** 21-22 October 2025

**Confirmed Report:** 28 November 2025

## **The Aims of Catholic Special Character External Evaluation for Development**

The Catholic special character evaluation process produces a focused picture of the impact of Catholic schooling and the effectiveness of its goals on the lives of all ākonga and rangatahi<sup>1</sup>.

The process looks to determine whether they have encountered the living God revealed in Jesus Christ, grown in knowledge of Him and His Church, and as a result are forming a deep and lasting relationship with Jesus Christ and the Church<sup>2</sup>.

The process also evaluates how the whole school community engages in authentic Catholic Christian witness and evangelisation.

The evaluation also investigates how the school is acting as a kaitiaki of Catholic special character including meeting its statutory compliances.

A collaborative external evaluation process between school and the evaluators helps the school see what it is doing well and identify next steps.

### **Introduction**

St Peter's Catholic School is a state-integrated full primary school for ākonga in Years 1 to 8, with a current roll of 189. The school is in Cambridge, a rapidly growing Waikato town known for its heritage, natural beauty, and strong community connections. The school provides a supportive environment where ākonga are encouraged to achieve academically and develop as confident, engaged learners.

Founded in 1904 by Euphrasie Barbier and the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, the school continues to be guided by the founding charism Servabo Fidem – "I will keep the faith." Under the patronage of St Peter, the school's Catholic Character is central to its identity and daily life. Gospel values are clear in relationships, teaching, and learning, and the Catholic faith is integrated across all aspects of school life.

St Peter's maintains strong partnerships with parents, whānau, the parish, and the wider community. Collaboration with St Peter's Parish and the parish priest supports the faith formation of ākonga and kaiako. The curriculum reflects both the bicultural heritage of Aotearoa New Zealand and the Catholic worldview, ensuring that ākonga are nurtured spiritually, intellectually, and socially within a values-based learning environment.

Cultural make-up of the school is: **European** 56.1% **Māori** 9.6% **Pasifika** 4.2% **Indian** 13.9% **Filipino** 4.2%. **Other:** 11.7 (Asian, African, Latin American etc)

## **School Details 2025**

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<sup>1</sup> New Zealand Catholic Bishops' Conference. *The Catholic Education of School Age Children*. Wellington:2014.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

**Name of School:** St Peter's Catholic School

**Address:** 22 Anzac Street, Cambridge

**School type:** Full Primary Year 1-8

**Actual roll:** 189

**Maximum roll:** 250

**Non-preference maximum:** 25

**Actual non-preference number:** 25

**5.1:** 116

**5.2:** 4

**5.3:** 39

**5.4:** 5

**5.5 :** 0

**Roll based staffing entitlement:** 190

**Required number of Special Character CI 47 positions:** - Principal and DRS + 4

**Filled number of Special Character CI 47 positions:** 4

**Principal:** Nicole Higby

**Director of Religious Studies:** Cushla Hounsell

**Presiding member, Board:** Christine McLiesh

**Elected Members (C NC)**

**Proprietor's Reps**

1. Mariano Castellon

1. Blair Hayde

2. Georgia Casey

2. Carolina Diaz

3. Malinda Chandrasekera

3. Christine McLiesh

4. David Griffin

**Staff Rep:** Heidi Littlejohn

**Parish Priest:** Father Philip Billing

**Review Team:**

**Lead Reviewer:** Terry Consedine

**Accompanying Reviewers:** Paul Shannon and Emalene Cull

### **Progress with Recommendations from the 2022 Catholic Special Character Evaluation for Development Report**

- 1. Continue to build kaiako knowledge and confidence whilst embedding use of the Bridging Document connecting good assessment practice with gathering valid assessment data.**

**Use this to report to parents on learning in Religious Education -in preparation for the new Religious Education Curriculum To Tātou Whakapono.**

- In 2024, the school transitioned to using Tō Tātou Whakapono as the main Religious Education curriculum. Professional development, led by Dianne Porter and Jacinta O’Connell, supported kaiako familiarisation, with added input from DRS networks and diocesan workshops.
  - By 2025, kaiako confidently plan and teach Religious Education using Tō Tātou Whakapono. Ongoing professional development each term supports collaboration, reflection, and use of the Bridging Document to strengthen assessment practices and reporting to parents.
- 2. Through further workshops on Te Tiriti o Waitangi, continue to deepen kaiako’ understanding of mātauranga Māori and weave this into the R.E. curriculum delivery and prayer and liturgy.**
- The school recognises and celebrates the cultural diversity of Aotearoa New Zealand by integrating mātauranga Māori into Religious Education, prayer, liturgy, and daily practices. Ākonga and kaiako extensively use te reo Māori in prayer and waiata, supported by the Kapa Haka group and choir, who learn and perform waiata that reflect faith through a Māori lens.
  - Kaiako engage in ongoing learning with mana whenua through annual professional development at Karapiro and participation in local commemorative events such as the Rangiaowhia Liturgy. These experiences strengthen understanding of local history, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and the school’s commitment to weaving cultural and spiritual learning together.
- 3. Collaboratively work on the school vision and values statements to clearly articulate a future focused, faith-based vision of Catholic spirituality with current kaiako, ākonga and whānau.**
- The school’s values are grounded in the Fruits of the Holy Spirit, symbolised by apples, and guide the development of a faith-based vision and Year 8 graduate profile. A community survey informed this ongoing work, ensuring shared ownership and alignment with the school’s Catholic Character.
  - In 2025, the school developed a Special Character Statement, “Me Haere tahi tātou me te Ariki – We walk as one with Christ,” to articulate its charism and spiritual direction. Each term focuses on an aspect of this vision—love, faith, mission, and reflection that integrates Catholic values into daily learning and practice.
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**Dimension 1: 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?*

**1. Spiritual Formation**

The school provides a wide variety of opportunities for prayer, spiritual formation, and ongoing

development for both ākonga (ākonga) and teachers (kaiako).

- Prayer is integral to daily life at the school; ākonga begin and end each day with class prayers, say grace before meals, and take turns leading prayers. Both individual and group prayers incorporate a mix of traditional and contemporary forms, fostering confidence and shared leadership in faith.
- The school offers many personal and reflective prayer opportunities, including prayer journaling, meditation, the Rosary, and retreat experiences such as Regeneration Days and the Year Eight Retreat Day. These practices encourage ākonga to cultivate a personal relationship with Jesus and to deepen their spiritual connection in preparation for secondary school.
- Additionally, there are plans to develop an outdoor space dedicated to the school's Charism, providing a place for quiet personal reflection and prayer. Kaiako engage in prayer during their morning breaks, taking turns to lead these rich opportunities. This year, kaiako began with a retreat centred on well-being, and there are plans to expand spiritual formation opportunities in the future.
- Kaiako share prayer as part of their daily morning break each morning. These are rich experiences where different kaiako take a turn to lead. The kaiako this year began with a Retreat with a particular focus on well-being.
- There are obvious signs that the school has placed significant energy into incorporating tikanga and particularly te reo Māori into everyday operations. There are multiple examples of Māori expression of Katorikatanga in a number of aspects of Catholic special character.
- Māori symbols, language, waiata, and prayers throughout all areas of school life are clear throughout the school. This includes classrooms, gatherings, staff prayers, retreats, and liturgies.
- Classroom displays and symbols, including those significant for Māori, provide witness to the Catholic special character of the school.
- There are plans in place to involve a range of cultures in school Masses etc through offering prayer in their languages,
- There are opportunities for ākonga and whānau Māori to feel valued due to the increasing normalisation of te ao, tikanga and wairuatanga Māori into the Catholic special character of the school.

**The Effect:** The school fosters a rich environment for prayer and spiritual formation, integrating traditional and contemporary practices. Daily class prayers, age-appropriate liturgies, and community engagement enhance ākonga' connections to faith. Kaiako also take part in prayer and Retreats, emphasizing well-being and cultural inclusivity to enrich the Catholic character and charism.

## 2. Evangelisation

The school actively proclaims the Gospel and mission of Jesus Christ through its practices and communications, fostering encounters with Christ and sharing the Good News with the community.

- Every Monday, the whole school gathers for a Gospel Liturgy organised by the Young Vinnies, where kaiako and ākonga take on key leadership roles such as leading, reading, and supporting with setup and technology, with whānau warmly invited to attend.

- The fortnightly newsletter provides opportunities to deepen whānau understanding of Scripture and Catholic teaching. It features a faith section that unpacks the upcoming Gospel and relates it to everyday life.
- Whānau are encouraged to share in their children's faith journey through class newsletters, online platforms and Facebook, which help them stay connected and support faith learning at home.
- The school recognises that the website could be used more to share Catholic special character practices and events, offering another way to support the community in living and integrating faith, culture, and life.

The school promotes parish programmes for the Sacraments of Initiation. They ensure that school community is invited to attend the celebration of First Holy Communion and Confirmation.

- In 2025, Father Philip delivered the Sacramental Programme lessons with some help from a parent and a Grandparent. This year there are 23 ākonga from the school.
- Ākonga who spoke to the evaluators were enthusiastic about their involvement and were looking forward to the celebration of the Sacraments very soon.
- The following Monday at a Gospel Liturgy, all ākonga who received their First Holy Communion and Confirmation are celebrated in front of the school and presented with rosary beads, donated by the PTFA.

The school and parish work collaboratively to include ākonga and their whānau in Sunday Mass and to encourage involvement in their local parish.

- Regular liturgies and Masses, tailored to be age and culture appropriate, feature ākonga actively involved in planning and leading. Senior and junior classes partner for termly school Masses, and participation by whānau in parish Masses has been on the rise.
- The school parish Mass has had huge ākonga participation and the most recent one was very well supported. It was a great community celebration.
- There are plans to continue to strengthen bicultural expression of faith by incorporating Mīha Māori, te reo Māori prayers, and tikanga into school worship and celebrations.

The school makes a warm and welcoming effort to quickly transition new members of the community to deepen their understanding of what it means to be part of this Catholic community.

- The year begins with a mihi whakatau to welcome all new members to its community. This is well supported by the enthusiastic kapa haka group
- New ākonga are paired with a classmate to help them settle into school life.

“When I came to school on the first day a boy who I didn't know came up to me and asked me to play with him and his friends. (junior tama)

- Kaiako actively connect with new families to make them feel welcome in both the school and parish communities. The Guardian Angel programme pairs senior and junior ākonga, building supportive relationships. Each five-year-old receives a children's Mass book from the PTFA. New families are welcomed at school Masses and assemblies with a child's prayer book.

- New kaiako receive induction on school expectations and are supported through team teaching and DRS guidance. Ongoing professional learning, kaiako prayer, Retreats, and Masses help all kaiako grow in faith and confidence in teaching Religious Education. They also complete the Te Kupenga papers 'What Catholics Believe' and 'Religious Education Today'.
- The year begins with a kaiako Retreat and set expectations for liturgies, prayer timetables, Mass, and modelling the school Charism, while strengthening the relationship with the parish priest. All meetings begin with the school karakia.
- New Board members are introduced to prayer routines at their first meeting. All meetings begin and end with prayer, and staff (Kaiako and support staff) are invited to attend special Masses and take part in the faith community. The Catholic Character Goal in the strategic plan is regularly referenced, and the parish priest attends meetings whenever possible.

All kaiako are positive role models who support, uphold and witness to the Catholic special character of the school.

- Kaiako relationships at the school are strong, caring, and faith filled. Kaiako feel valued, supported, and connected, with a culture that nurtures wellbeing through encouragement, shared prayer, open communication, and genuine care for one another.

*"I feel very supported at school. There are strong, positive relationships within our kaiako - everyone looks out for and values each other. I feel genuinely cared for and appreciated, and it's a really encouraging environment to be part of."*  
(kaiako)

**The Effect:** The school is committed to fostering an environment where faith, culture, and community life are interwoven, and prepares tamariki to take on Catholic values as part of their lives.

### 3. Faith-based Leadership

Although the tumuaki has only held the position for all of the current year she articulates her Faith, has a heart for people and has confidently and calmly shown strong Catholic leadership in the school.

- A considered approach to decision-making, allowing time to understand the context before implementing significant changes.
- Models servant leadership by working collaboratively with kaiako, whanau and ākonga and provides support as needed.
- She is well regarded by kaiako and the wider community, as shown by their dedicated support and positive engagement.

'The tumuaki leads from the front. She is a doer, affirming others, knows the tamariki, if there is a problem she is there... running as required!' (support staff)

- The tumuaki encourages, empowers, and nurtures others and encourages faith-based leadership from all.

The tumuaki and DRS have been actively involved in the Board's annual internal evaluation of Catholic special character.

- This year's focus on charism has been an excellent example of self-evaluation
- There is a plan to build to further implement other aspects of Catholic character each year (see recommendation)

The tumuaki, supported by the Senior Leadership Team, articulates and promotes the newly formed faith-based vision for the school: "Me haere tahi tātou e te Ariki" (We walk as one with Christ).

- The four kaiako in Catholic special character positions, alongside the tumuaki and DRS, actively promote and fulfill their roles in Catholic character while understanding their significant contribution to the evangelization of ākonga.

**The Effect:** The tumuaki faith-based leadership strengthens the school's Catholic identity and vision. Though new, her collaborative approach and servant leadership earn respect. Engaging with the community and the Senior Leadership Team, she promotes "Me haere tahi tātou e te Ariki" (We walk as one with Christ) for evangelization and spiritual growth.

### **Next Steps for Development**

- Continue developing bicultural expression of faith by incorporating Mīha Māori, te reo Māori prayers, and tikanga into school worship and celebrations.
- Provide further opportunities for ākonga to take active roles in liturgies and Mass (e.g. readings, music, Prayers of the Faithful).

### **Dimension 2: 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?*

#### **1. Leadership**

The tumuaki and DRS provide authentic leadership in religious instruction.

- Together they ensure teacher development in Religious Education and Catholic special character.
- Religious Education kaiako feel affirmed and supported by the DRS and tumuaki.
- Kaiako express that they have effective systems in place that support teaching and learning in Religious Education.
- The tumuaki, DRS, and kaiako know, respect and work with all ākonga and their whānau, to grow the faith dimension of ākonga.

Ākonga are given the opportunity to develop faith leadership knowledge, skills.

"I have leadership opportunities including Student Councillor, Young Vinnie, House leader and we have many leadership days throughout the year." (ākonga)

- Ākonga have a range of leadership roles, including Young Vinnies, Student Council, House Leaders, peer mediators, and leading school liturgies and prayers.

- Leadership skills are developed through dedicated leadership days and ongoing opportunities to serve and support others across the school.

The principal and DRS continue to strengthen professional learning and formation in Religious Education and Catholic Character through ongoing kaiako development.

- Termly meetings focus on deepening understanding of Catholic teachings and their integration into daily practice.
- Each teacher sets an annual spiritual goal as part of their Professional Growth Cycle, with regular reflection each term.
- There are plans to provide opportunities for kaiako to increase depth of knowledge and become appropriately qualified and certificated (see recommendation)

DRS is a key member of the Senior Leadership Team and has appropriate release time.

- She is taking opportunities for her leadership capability to be developed. confidently and competently articulates her own faith and is committed to her own ongoing faith formation.
- She takes part in all discussions around the strategic plan and developing our special character with valuable input added.

Kaiako incorporate waiuatanga Māori into their teaching of Religious Education and spirituality.

- Kaiako intentionally integrate waiuatanga Māori into Religious Education through regular use of te reo Māori, prayers and karakia, waiata, and Māori values such as whanaungatanga, manaakitanga and kaitiakitanga.
- Māori history and perspectives are incorporated, helping ākonga to see important links between Catholic faith, culture, and our bicultural identity.

**The Effect:** The collaborative leadership of the tumuaki and DRS fosters a strong understanding of Jesus Christ and Catholic teachings. Their support for kaiako enhances Religious Education, enabling effective pedagogy and faith leadership opportunities for tamariki.

## 2. Religious Education

The Religious Education programme is given high status in the school, and there is clear evidence that it is soundly managed.

- The DRS provides strong and effective leadership in the delivery and ongoing development of the Religious Education curriculum Tō Tātou Whakapono
- Kaiako teaching Religious Education spoke of the great support offered by the DRS.

“St Peter's Catholic School has a very loving supportive staff. I feel fully supported with anything I need help with both by Nicole as Principal and Cushla as DRS.”  
(kaiako)

The school provides effective learning and teaching programmes for Religious Education and is adequately and appropriately resourced to deliver these programmes.

- This year the school has begun teaching the new Religious Education curriculum Tō Tātou Whakapono.
- Kaiako intentionally weave Religious Education into all areas of learning. Gospel values and the Fruits of the Holy Spirit are embedded in classroom expectations, inquiry topics, and literacy programmes.
- New kaiako in the school are given continued support to help them understand the school's Catholic values and shown how to include these values in their lessons.

- Scripture, prayer, and Catholic perspectives are used to deepen understanding across subjects, helping ākonga see faith as part of daily learning and life.
- Kaiako link the Gospel message to real-life learning through class liturgies, Gospel reflections in writing lessons, and scripture-based reading texts.
- Inquiry projects explore Catholic themes such as stewardship and care for creation, while community outreach and service activities reflect the Gospel in action.
- Regular references to the Fruits of the Holy Spirit, classroom prayer, and invitations to school liturgies further connect learning, faith, and community. Kaiako of Religious Education understand the need to become qualified in Religious Education and there is a plan in place to work towards it.
- The school makes use of diocesan Religious Education advisory services.
- Whānau are informed regularly of the content and emphasis of the Religious Education programme through the newsletter.
- Religious Education teaching is effective and engages ākonga. Kaiako are valuing the opportunities and resources provided by the curriculum.
- Ākonga progress reports inform whānau of involvement in Catholic special character and achievement in Religious Education.

The school prioritizes Religious Education, led effectively by the DRS. Kaiako ensure Gospel values are embedded into all subjects, fostering a faith-filled learning environment. Support for new kaiako ensures understanding of Catholic ethos.

### 3. Catholic Curriculum

The school teaches the core principles of Catholic Social Teaching as part of living faith, helping ākonga understand their responsibilities as global citizens and as citizens of Aotearoa New Zealand through:

- Catholic Social Teaching principles are woven into everyday learning, with ākonga engaging in service projects that support charities such as the Cancer Society, Caritas, and MissioNZ.
- Caritas resources are used to develop the concept of kaitiakitanga. Ākonga are encouraged to put faith into action by showing respect, compassion, and responsibility for people and the environment.
- Ākonga learn to care for creation through environmental projects like recycling, conservation, and keeping the school garden.
- Class discussions and activities help tamariki develop empathy and responsibility, while learning to live out key values like stewardship, respect for others, and care for creation.

*“Fundraising and awareness activities for Caritas and other outreach organisations also connect our ākonga with the wider world, helping them to see that even small actions can make a big difference.” (kaiako)*

*“Faith-based discussions are encouraged across all curriculum areas—linking creativity, curiosity, and compassion to God’s gifts. This helps ākonga see that faith is not separate from learning but part of who we are as a community of learners.” (Kaiako)*

The school educates for a deeper understanding of the bicultural history of Aotearoa New Zealand. The school has a commitment to learning and teaching local Katorika Māori and Pākehā history.

- Kaiako are embracing the New Zealand History Curriculum and incorporating culturally responsive teaching. They believe it instil understanding and respect for Te Tiriti o Waitangi, with each class tailored to their level through pepeha, stories, and Waitangi Day history.
- Through the school involvement with the Cambridge Kāhui Ako, resources have been acquired which help embed local iwi narratives and histories into curriculum planning across all learning areas.
- Ākonga' understanding of the bicultural history has deepened. Connections between mana whenua and the school charism have been strengthened.
 

“The school’s emphasis on biculturalism has encouraged me to grow in confidence, respect, and authenticity in integrating both Catholic and Māori worldviews in my teaching.” (kaiako)
- Relationships are embedded in strong pedagogies. Ākonga feel known and valued.

All aspects of the Health Curriculum, including human sexuality and personal relationships are taught from a Catholic perspective at all levels.

- All kaiako have completed the ‘Having Life to the Full’ course, participated in professional learning related to the Human Sexuality and Personal Development components of the Health Curriculum, and the revised course ‘Wonderfully Made in God’s Image’ received strong whānau support with appreciation for prior information sharing.
- Ākonga enjoy the programme’s structure and working with their year group, finding this time meaningful and a special opportunity for devotion beyond daily routines and RE lessons.
- Whānau and the Proprietor are consulted about the human relationships and sexuality programmes every two years and there is recognition that this is due to be carried out this year.
- The school is ensuring that all aspects of the Health Curriculum relating to human sexuality are taught within the context of Catholic teaching and delivered through a culturally responsive approach.

**The Effect:** The school effectively integrates Catholic Social Teaching into the curriculum, nurturing global citizenship and environmental stewardship. Through service projects and learning about local history, tamariki are developing respect, compassion, and a wonderful sense of responsibility.

### **Next Steps for Development**

- Through further development and understanding of the school Charism, embed Catholic Social Teaching more explicitly through projects focused on service, social justice, stewardship, and global citizenship.
- Take the opportunity to celebrate all the remarkable things that are happening in Catholic character on the website for the community to see.

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

*Christian witness is a response in faith and action to our encounter with Jesus Christ. After having encountered Jesus Christ and having been formed in Him, the Gospel calls us to communicate His Gospel of love, mercy and justice in both word and deed. How effectively does the school provide a hope-filled Catholic Christian witness which empowers its community members to integrate their faith and their life?*

## 1. Catholic School Community

The school has a well-established culture of promoting and supporting active Catholic witness within the school and in the parish

- Sister Anne came in to talk with the senior ākonga about the journey of Euphrasie Barbier and the Faith pilgrimage has increased understanding among senior ākonga

*“This year, we were also blessed to have Sister Anne Sklenars lead a session with ākonga about the charism of our school and the founding order, the RNDM Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions. This experience helped ākonga connect more deeply with the story and mission of our school.” (kaiako)*

- Full consultation with whanau, kaiako and ākonga on the values and charism have sown the seeds for the spiritual journey ahead.
- The school celebrates the traditions and values of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions by teaching ākonga about their legacy and incorporating their spirit into the school life.

The school, as an authentic Catholic community, demonstrates a strong commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its principles of protection, partnership, and participation, thus reflecting the commitment of the Aotearoa New Zealand Catholic Church to bi-cultural partnership.

- The school integrates mātauranga Māori and te reo through Kapa Haka, waiata, and shared learning led by Whaea Troy and Matua Joe.
- Kaiako engage with mana whenua and local history through an annual professional learning day at Karāpiro.
- A local Kaumatua Harry gave advice to the school on the mural/artwork in the back garden which links the Second Māori King - Tawhiao - with Māori spirituality and God.
- Ākonga, kaiako, and leaders attend the annual Rangiaowhia Commemoration Liturgy to honour and learn from shared local history.

The school and parish have a positive, mutual impact, working together to involve ākonga and their whānau in parish life through shared celebrations of the sacraments and the Eucharist.

- The tumuaki, DRS and kaiako in special character are active witnesses of faith in the school and in their parish and present the face of Christ to others.
- Tamariki are warmly invited to participate in the parish sacramental programme for Reconciliation, Confirmation, and First Eucharist, with kaiako assisting as needed. Those who receive the sacraments are recognised and celebrated at school Gospel assemblies.
- The parish priest takes opportunities to be part to play in the life of the school; celebrating, and leading sacramental programmes.
- The parish and school are now developing a warm, supportive, relationship, working together to nurture the spiritual growth of ākonga and families.
- Regular shared Masses, celebrations, and service opportunities connect ākonga, whānau, and parishioners as one faith community.
- Father Philip will offer Year 7 and 8 tamariki the opportunity to participate in Reconciliation through a private, informal ‘Walk and Talk’ in a quiet, reflective space at the school.
- The school shows huge empathy for the tamariki and their wellbeing.

*“We have a support dog to help with our children who have mental health or anxiety issues. He walks them to class, goes on duty during break times where needed, sits*

with ākonga when they need a break and is generally around to lift spirits.”  
(tumuaki)

**The Effect:** The integration of Catholic teachings and values in the school fosters a strong community spirit, providing opportunity to enhance tamariki spiritual growth and connection to their faith. Engaging with local history and cultural backgrounds promotes inclusivity and respect. The active partnership between school and parish enriches the faith experience for everyone.

## 2. Partnership and Collaboration

The school has shown strong commitments to connect with mana whenua, whānau, the parish and the founding religious congregation the Mission Sisters.

The school fosters a welcoming and affirming environment for whānau Māori and is committed to building strong whānau relationships.

- Māori ākonga are provided with rich opportunities to develop leadership and self-expression through art, waiata, productions, and student council, while being actively involved in key roles such as mihi whakatau, karanga, korero, and waiata.
- Māori ākonga have plentiful opportunities to engage in culturally responsive learning experiences (e.g., kapa haka, Matariki projects), and connections are being strengthened with whānau, who are delighted to see an increase in te reo Māori and cultural presence in the school. Further growth is planned through regular whānau hui.

The school collaborates with other Catholic schools to enhance the benefits for all ākonga and kaiako, implementing effective systems to support ākonga in their transition to secondary education.

- Senior ākonga participate in Technology Arts fortnightly at Sacred Heart Girls' College, fostering strong relationships between St. John's College, Sacred Heart, and the school, encouraging a smooth transition for tamariki choosing to attend these schools from Year 9.
- In Term Two, representatives from St. John's and Sacred Heart visit the school with past SPCS ākonga, providing an authentic connection and valuable insights that aid the senior tamariki in making informed decisions about their high school options.

**The Effect:** Overall, these efforts cultivate an environment that values inclusivity, cultural integrity, and strong community partnerships, ultimately benefiting all ākonga and contributing to their overall well-being.

## 3. Pastoral Care

A warm, welcoming culture underpins. Everything that takes place at the school. Positive relationships, open communication, and mutual respect abound. Hospitality, aroha, and courtesy are shown to all, creating a supportive environment where everyone feels valued and included.

- Tamariki are personally known by kaiako, cared for, and provided with compassionate support. The mana and tapu of everyone is upheld.
- The school embraces manaakitanga. Senior ākonga lead in caring for others, promoting guardianship.
- All Kaiako commented on how well they are affirmed and appreciated, and their wellbeing is supported.

*“I feel affirmed regularly through positive feedback, encouragement, and recognition from leadership, colleagues, and our school community. My well-being is nurtured*

*through a supportive staff culture, opportunities for prayer and reflection, and staff events that build connection. Having open communication with leadership and my team and feeling valued also helps me feel cared for at school.”*

Behaviour management processes are just, fair, and transparent.

- Tamariki peer mediators are active at break times to assist tamariki who are struggling to play together. Those peer mediators who spoke to the evaluation team were noticeably clear on the role in restoring relationships
- Tamariki, kaiako and whānau understand the school's pastoral care systems and ways of accessing them. They are clearly displayed around the school and tamariki who spoke to the evaluators understand the system very well
- The calm atmosphere around the school encourages tamariki to develop the skills to take responsibility for their own behaviour.

As people of the Gospel and in the light of the preferential option for the poor, kaiako and tamariki treat each person with respect and aroha and reach out to those most in need.

- The school responds to needs in a caring and practical way.
- The school has an outstanding system for working with its parish, and whānau to identify those in need. There are great support systems in the school including strong connections with St Vincent de Paul in the parish.
- The 'Friendly Faces' initiative exemplifies manaakitanga by providing meals for families in need and offering support through cards and care packages during difficult times.
- The office manager plays a key role in identifying kaiako, tamariki, or whānau in need, providing support where possible, and connecting them with further assistance.
- The school welcomes ākongā with a diversity of ability and learning needs and provides appropriate assistance and programmes to enable them to fulfil their potential.
- The school provides wonderful support for a junior student in a wheelchair, with a teacher aide helping with mobility and toileting. Parents are kept regularly informed, and kaiako share responsibilities to ensure support is constant and sustainable.

**The Effect:** The pastoral care initiatives in the school create a holistic environment that supports the emotional, social, and academic development of tamariki while fostering strong community ties and enhancing staff well-being. This outreaching approach results in a vibrant school community putting into practice Catholic Social Teaching.

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

Service and outreach opportunities based on the Gospel message are an important focus of the school fostering a Christ-centred culture of service and outreach. Multiple opportunities are available for ākongā and kaiako to contribute to the local, national, and international community.

- A wide range of service and fundraising activities occur, including supporting charities such as St Vincent de Paul, Cancer Society (Daffodil Day), Caritas, food banks, and community initiatives like toy runs and donation drives.
- Leadership and service roles within the school, such as Young Vinnies, Student Council, peer mediation, and altar service, provide ākongā with opportunities to develop responsibility, show the Fruits of the Holy Spirit, and contribute positively both to the school as well as the wider community.

*“We donate to a lot of charities and we do fundraisers for Saint Vincent de Paul and many other charities we do the hits toy run and cans for Christmas we do mission month and daffodil day and pink shirt day. And many others.” (tama)*

*“We encourage ākonga, staff, and families to participate in service projects that benefit both the school and the wider community, including our parish.” (DRS)*

**The Effect:** The service and outreach initiatives play a crucial role in shaping the ethos of the school. They foster a Christ-centred culture that promotes empathy, responsibility, and community engagement.

### **Next Steps for Development**

- Continue to strengthen partnership with the parish, diocese, and Proprietor to ensure alignment and shared mission.

### **Dimension 4: Te Kaitiakitanga me te Whakapakari I te Tuakiri Katorika-Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Special Character**

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

#### **1. Organisation:**

Recent Board elections have meant that there are a large group of new board members although new to the role are nonetheless practising Catholics. This is balanced however by a very experienced presiding member and two existing Board members who are all appointed as proprietor’s representatives. The Board members available to the evaluation team were keen to emphasise that the vision and strategic direction of the school will reflect the Catholic special character of the school.

The appointment of a new permanent DRS reporting to the board regularly will greatly assist this. School Docs are used as a source of its school policies and the board is determined to ensure that their policies are reflected through a Catholic lens.

#### **2. Employment:**

The school meets its obligations under Schedule 6 of the Education and Training Act 2020 by having a Proprietor Appointee on its appointments’ committee for all teacher appointments and is compliant with the number of Special character positions required under the Act.

The school is also compliant with its recording of preference and non preference students on the management system and a review of these records is easily available from the system.

The Board has submitted to the proprietor their 2024 Catholic Attestation Document and the proprietor has received the annual report from the proprietor’s appointees.

#### **3. Board Professional Development:**

The proprietor appointees feel that the new board would benefit from some professional development particularly in relation to the application of Catholic Social Teaching on their governance role

### **Recommendations**

- That the Board establish an annual self-review cycle for Catholic special character, similar in approach to the work done on Charism, exploring in depth an aspect of one of the three dimensions of the Catholic special character Evaluation for Development

(NZCEO), to ensure ongoing reflection on the purpose and impact of initiatives for tamariki, kaiako, and whānau. [Link to NZCEO Ex 1 Ex 2 Ex 3](#)

- Continue to build teacher confidence and capability with the new Religious Education curriculum through regular PLD, collaborative planning, and shared best practice.
- Once kaiako are confident using Tō Tātou Whakapono, plan to offer opportunities to deepen their background knowledge by completing papers through Te Kupenga.
- Continue to deepen kaiako and student understanding of the school's Charism by learning from those with knowledge of the school's history. This will strengthen connections to the school's origins, embed the Charism more fully in daily life, and share this understanding with the wider community through the school website.
- Explore the development of an outdoor space dedicated to the school's Charism to provide ākonga with a tangible connection to the school's values, strengthen community identity, and enhance the Catholic special character.

The evaluation team is confident that the tumuaki has the willingness and ability to address these recommendations fully before the next external evaluation. The Catholic Education Office staff are available to assist the tumuaki, Board and kaiako in compiling an action plan to address these recommendations.

The evaluation team thanks the community of St Peter's Cambridge Catholic School 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 external evaluation by the school is greatly appreciated.

**Terry Consedine**  
*Lead reviewer*

**Paul Shannon**  
*Assistant Reviewer*

**Emalene Cull**  
*Assistant Reviewer*

**N.B. This report will be shared with NZCEO and the Hamilton Diocesan Schools Council.**