

Catholic Character Review

For the Hamilton Catholic Diocese

Campion College, Gisborne

Reviewers: Brendan Schollum, Cora Kamp

May 19-21, 2008

CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

“The school is a community where the gospel values are central, where faith is nourished and where Christian celebration in the Catholic tradition is highly valued.”

Special Character Review document 2003

In the visitors’ lobby of Campion College there are two framed pictures of college historical figures – St Marcellin Champagnat, founder of the Marist Brothers, and Blessed Mary McKillop, founder of the Sisters of St Joseph, along with a statue of St Edmund Campion after whom the new college was named. Campion is a combination of the original Marist Brothers boys’ college, Edmund Campion College, and St Mary’s College for girls founded by the Sister of St Joseph.

Recommendation: These pictures/statue would be enhanced by a 2-4 sentence explanation of who they are and why they are important to Campion College.

Campion College was a Year 9-13 coeducation college in 1980. Following lengthy Diocesan consultation with the Gisborne Catholic community, Year 7 and 8 students were relocated to the College in 2005.

Campion College is clearly Catholic – in signs, symbols around the College, in documentation, and in staff and student comments.

Values and School Culture

A major policy development occurred in the College in 2002 when the principal led the Board and staff in a comprehensive review of the Special Character and Charism for Campion College. The resulting document highlights and describes the three key values of the college – commitment, compassion and community. These values have been integrated into all aspects of college life – teaching practice, relationships, student and staff aspirations, the performance management system, and school policies. There is a distinctly Catholic interpretation of each of these three values. Overall this is a powerful document and it should be widely disseminated in its present form or in an adapted form for senior students, for parents, and for new staff and students.

The DRS fosters and encourages service in the College by creating opportunities for a Young Vinnies group of thirty students. At present most of these students are junior members of the school. There is a Caritas leadership group comprising Year 12 and 13 students. The school community should consider ways in which the senior students could be encouraged into service and outreach activities.

One of the successes of the College is the loyalty to school engendered in its students. Staff members spoke of the frequent return of past pupils to the College and the links maintained by them. Many spoke with sensitivity of the manner in which the school community supported and rallied around the family of the young student who was killed on his way to school two years ago.

Leadership

The Principal is a hard-working, thoughtful, committed Catholic leader who is highly regarded in both the school and the wider community. He has spent many hours clarifying with others, the Special Character of the College. He, and all members of the Senior Management Team, is Catholic. They constantly consider Special Character issues in their meetings, and ensure that school organisation, the curriculum and pastoral systems have Special Character at their core. The Board is to be commended for the appointment over time of all five members of the Senior Management Team.

There is a mixture of Catholic and non-Catholic staff members. The staff has staff reflection each day and many of these have a catholic/faith development component. There are eight staff members currently involved in post-graduate papers in Catholic Education.

Bi-annually the full staff attends a professional development day on Special Catholic Character. Each year twelve hours of professional learning in this area is incorporated into staff meetings, often including spirituality.

The system for the performance appraisal of staff notes Special Character as the first area of the job description. This document makes it very clear that each teacher will be measured against the following

- A COMMITMENT to all undertaken
- A COMPASSIONATE approach shown to all others
- Active promotion of COMMUNITY in the development of the total person
- Adherence to the motto “In Christ we are alive”

The document goes on to give performance indicators to measure against for each of the above. Staff of the College will be left in no doubt as to what their responsibilities are in relation to Catholic Character. Additionally, as part of the expectation upon staff to model charism, since 2004 all students are surveyed annually to gauge their perceptions of how well staff members show their commitment to teaching and their compassion to students. The “satisfaction rating” has risen progressively from 72% in 2004 to 87% in 2007.

Contractual Requirements

As a result of the recent resignation of two Tagged teachers, there are currently 12 tagged teachers in the College, and the roll would expect there to be 13.6. The Board personnel committee is being proactive to lift the number of tagged teachers in the school, with the next appointments.

Board, Partnership and Evangelisation

The college has traditionally had a mixture of committed Catholic families strong in their faith practice and parish allegiance, and other parents who are keen for enrolment of their sons/daughters in the College, but who do not necessarily support faith development expectations, including parish activities. The college has supported these preference enrolments by offering positive faith development experiences and exposure to a lived Catholic Special Character. The students develop a clear appreciation of what it means to be part of a Catholic community. There has been

debate at board and parish levels about what the term “preference” means. Board members, the Parish Priest, and senior management are clear about the desirability of attracting committed Catholic families to the College. It is important that the Principal and Parish Priest in particular, continue discussing the best ways to give actual and potential families clarity regarding what are family responsibilities in attending this Catholic College. If a prospective non-baptised student is seeking enrolment, then the grandparent or relative agreeing to support the faith development of the student including parish involvement, should be clear about expectations for fulfilling this important role. Furthermore these people should be invited to and made welcome at parish events and liturgies, including Mass. The Hamilton Diocese should help in this process.

The current three Proprietors appointees are parishioners and have a real passion for Catholic education. All have served on the Campion Board (or the Board of another Catholic school) for many years and each is able to articulate what the Special Character of Campion is and how it has developed in the last five years in the strategic document mentioned earlier. The appointees are positive spokespeople for the College in the community, but feel there is some misinformation about the College in the community. They hope that this report, whatever it contains, is disseminated widely, particularly in the Catholic community. Hence a two page summary of the report is being prepared.

The Proprietor’s appointees have recently undergone professional development at Diocesan level, and one attended the most recent Catholic Convention. All three appointees are on the Special Character sub-committee of the Board of Trustees.

The full Board is conscious of the importance of Special Character, among its governance roles. This is clearly evident in Board minutes, in the Strategic Plan and in the Policies.

The Board is to be commended for its significant contribution of \$5000 towards the parish initiative for World Youth Day which will facilitate the attendance of six students at this event in Sydney in 2008. It places the College in a position to benefit from opportunities to evangelise.

Collaboration with the Parish, Spirituality and Worship

The principal and parish priest meet regularly. The two priests of the parish are to be commended for coming into the school weekly to help students prepare for class Masses. It would be helpful for this to be extended so all students have a clearer understanding of the parts and purpose of both the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of Eucharist.

Over a number of years the College has developed a successful sacramental programme in partnership with the Parish. This culminated in 24 students being confirmed in 2008.

The two priests, new in 2007, have made several key decisions regarding worship, use of the church for non-liturgical events, and the use of Preference Cards. Implications of these decisions are wide reaching for the operation of the school, and it is taking time to work through the implications, for the good of parish and school.

Recommendation: it would be helpful to have more students encouraged, trained and involved in parish ministry (e.g. as readers, Eucharistic ministers, musicians)

There is an extensive retreat programme organised for each of the year levels with the exception of Year 12. For Year 7 to 11 students these are one day retreats off site organised and run by Campion staff members under the direction of the DRS, while for Year 13 this is an overnight event conducted by the Challenge Team from Wellington.

PASTORAL CARE

“The school community nurtures, supports and cares for individuals”
Special Character Review document 2003

The Pastoral Care Policy directs the school to use the example of Christ the Good Shepherd as a model. In documentation it states that pastoral care focuses on compassion, reinforces commitment and builds a Christ-centred community. The school motto is “In Christ we are alive”

Relationships among staff and students are very positive. Staff members are good role-models for how adults should live, work and relate to each other and to the students in their care. Students value the expectations staff place on them; they believe that Campion is a tight knit community and they feel they belong. The Learning Support Centre includes 10 students with severe learning needs, and in the words of one staff member, is clear evidence for the effectiveness of the Special Character in action. A recent RE class involved the class writing to the students from the Learning Support Centre inviting them to their class, and in groups helping the students compose and say prayers, followed by a shared meal. In another class two of the junior special needs students were seen being helped to undertake the same tasks as the rest of the class, within a group setting.

The current new pastoral care initiative ensures that all students have a personalised learning plan and that each is supported by a learning mentor (a member of staff) who together with a parent meets regularly to set and review learning goals. This should go a long way to ensure that students stay focussed.

Behaviour Management

The behaviour management system has been in place for 10 years. This system is effective in getting students to reflect on their (mis)behaviour with staff in a restorative setting. The peer mediation system has been in place for several years and while senior students who were peer mediators have had one refresher session this year, there was agreement that this valuable pastoral tool needed a greater push and publicity within the college.

School documentation is very clear that discipline should promote positive change and self discipline.

Cultural Awareness

Twenty three percent of the students in the College identify as having a Maori heritage. Students are familiar with maori kawa, and waiata. Students have been able to support representatives speaking at the local Manu Korero competition. Maori students are achieving at an equivalent level to non-Maori students and above national standards.

Recommendation Form a Whanau Support Group of parents (with staff support) to meet regularly to discuss issues related to the development of Maori students and Tikanga Maori.

Stewardship and Service

Classrooms and buildings are well maintained and the campus is clean and tidy. Students are given ample opportunities to show leadership in the College. Some of this leadership relates particularly to Special Character, which falls within the three key values of commitment, compassion and community. Some of the students interviewed thought that they would benefit from having a designated head boy and head girl, but this is a management decision. There might also be room for having students from a wider range of classes on student led committees, and having staff also leading the houses.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

“The school helps to fulfil the teaching mission of the Church by living and teaching the values of Jesus Christ” Special Character Review document 2003

Leadership

Members of the Senior Management Team are very supportive of and promote the Religious Education programmes and initiatives within the College.

The Director of Religious Studies is to be commended for the sound work which she has undertaken to firmly ground Religious Education as a programme of learning and of faith development. She is an experienced and well qualified DRS with a Masters Degree in Religious Education and she has kept herself up to date with curriculum developments. The DRS has a clear picture of the direction for Religious Education in the College and has worked hard over five years to provide the underpinning structures, including very sound school and department documentation which support this. The DRS works well with and provides clear direction to the team of twelve other teachers of RE. As a member of the Senior Management Team the DRS is well placed to ensure that Catholic Character is constantly on the agenda for the school, to be the filter for all management decisions.

In recognition of the importance of Special Character, the DRS is given an extra time allowance to organise and oversee the liturgical life of the College. New staff members are given an induction by the DRS and Principal to ensure they are all clear on what it means to be a teacher in a Catholic school.

Religious Education Curriculum

The Religious Education programmes being taught in the school are those prescribed by the New Zealand Bishops' Conference i.e. "Religious Education Programme for Catholic Primary Schools in Aoteroa New Zealand" for Years 7 and 8 and the "Understanding Faith" Curriculum for Years 9-13. The hours of instruction in Religious Education meets the requirements of the NZ Bishops' Conference.

Teachers in the junior area of the school regularly meet as a group with the DRS to develop the programme of teaching and learning so that teachers gain in competence and confidence. The coverage of the curriculum in the Year 7 to 10 area of the school is excellent. Junior students use workbooks and have exercise books which record written work undertaken. In some instances they need to be marked more regularly. Many classrooms had examples of student work in RE on display.

At the Year Levels of 11-13 there are gaps in the coverage of the national curriculum. Specialisation by teachers at the senior level is made possible by scheduling all of the Year 11-13 classes at the same time, an impressive commitment which sends out a strong message about the importance of Religious Education in the school timetable. At this senior level of the school students rotate around four topics and four teachers each year. This allows for the development of topics within the teachers' areas of expertise and interest. It is apparent that this structure is working well for the school and that the students are being well served by this initiative which is now well imbedded. A further advantage of this arrangement is the attention to moderation processes for NZQA so that the curriculum delivery including assessment has credibility both internally and externally. The DRS has worked closely with each of the teachers of Years 11-13 to ensure that both the content and the learning material used is of a high standard

Recommendation: The DRS and teachers of senior RE should review the choice of topics to ensure that justice is being done to the prescribed curriculum. Specifically this will involve the covering of more strands of the senior secondary curriculum across the three years (human experience, scripture and tradition, church history, theology, sacrament and worship, social justice, personal development and social issues)

Students at Champion College have the opportunity for Religious Education to be part of the contribution to NCEA levels 1-3. Teachers report that this arrangement is working well and students appreciate the opportunity to gain a significant number of credits towards NCEA through these learning programmes, an additional benefit to the studying of RE.

A newer initiative is the opportunity being provided for some Year 13 students (four in 2008) to study by distance learning, from the University of Otago, a paper in Theology entitled "Early Christianity". The DRS provides the in-school support with this programme. Students involved spoke highly of the opportunity given to them and paid for by the school through the STAR programme.

It is pleasing to see that Religious Education classes at the senior level are small allowing for greater intimacy and involvement with topics and between students and teachers.

Over the course of the visit the reviewers observed the teaching of each staff member in the Religious Education team. It appears that each of the teachers has a good understanding of the units they are currently teaching; their lessons were theologically sound and delivered in such a manner as to facilitate faith development. We saw some excellent practice in teaching and learning across the classrooms and some variety to lesson structures. In some cases the lessons observed were very teacher focussed rather than student focussed. However, the classroom climate was positive with most students behaving in a conscientious manner, with an air of respect between teachers and students, teachers being enthusiastic for their teaching task and students willing to learn. It is helpful that each teacher is required to write the learning intention for the lesson on the whiteboard before commencing. Students were interested in and engaged in their learning

There is evidence that the Senior Management team is committed to allocating RE classes only to those teachers who display the required level of competence in teaching and student management, according this aspect of Religious Education major importance. It is reported that all lessons observed started with prayer. When observed by the reviewers the most common form of prayer was that of thanks and/or supplication or the prayer activity was teacher focussed and directed prayer. In the junior classrooms it was common to see a prayer corner and for class prayer to include a focus upon candle burning and singing. Each teacher is provided with a prayer folder which is added to progressively and there is a school hymn. It would be advantageous for teachers of RE to develop a wider range of prayer styles with their students.

There is a comprehensive system of student assessment of RE. At all levels of the school this is moderated through common tasks. Electronic storing of this data allows for analysis and synthesis of the information which is used as part of the comprehensive school-wide system of evaluation of teaching and learning programmes.

All classes are visited on a regular basis both formally and informally by the DRS as part of the Appraisal/Performance Management system for teaching staff.

Integrated Curriculum

It is apparent through staff surveys completed prior to the review that there is good “buy in” to the three C’s and other values which would be seen as Catholic, as a way for staff and adults to engage in learning and relate with one another.

Less obvious is the way in which the teachings of the Church, especially values and ethical issues, are integrated with other curriculum areas. The reviewers rely upon the written response of the Heads of Departments who report varying degrees of both understanding of this aspect of special character and contribution to it. Positive examples include:

- English Department which is careful to choose texts which are not contrary to Catholicism.
- Social Sciences Department which names various History and Social Studies topics which lend themselves to integration.
- Science Department which mentions human reproduction and bioethics among a range of topics from which teachers are expected to reflect the teachings of the Catholic Church.

The above, and the Technology Department report that their department documentation support integration across the curriculum.

A next step would be to conduct school wide professional development in the area of integration of Catholic thinking, teaching and exemplars across the curriculum, building upon good practice identified.

Of special note is the integration of Health and Religious Education. The DRS is in charge of the Health Curriculum. and ensures that other staff members involved have the appropriate understanding of and commitment to Catholic teaching. The clearly articulated programme of study ensures that all issues are presented with a perspective in keeping with the teachings of the Church. Three staff members, including the DRS, are CFLE (Christian Family Life Education) trained.

Resources

Catholic Character and the Religious Education and Health programmes are well resourced. The DRS has systematically added to teaching and learning resources for both RE and the Health programmes ensuring that the students have updated resources produced by NCRS to support their learning. Currently these resources are spread across the DRS's office and space shared with several other departments. This is a less than ideal situation affecting a number of curriculum areas.

The Librarian reports that the DRS regularly recommends books to be purchased for the school library and she reports that large numbers of students use these resources for assignments.

The College is to be commended for the importance it places upon scripture by requiring that students purchase a Bible at the commencement of their studies at Campion which they keep in their RE classroom throughout their studies and with which they graduate from the College.

Professional Development

The Board, Senior Management and staff are to be commended for their commitment to the growth and development of special character at the College as evidenced by such things as very regular and systematic input at staff meetings and the commitment for the entire staff to participate in the Understanding Sexuality Programme in 2008 which will assist staff in familiarizing themselves with a range of issues related to respect for personhood from a Catholic perspective.

For several years the Board has been funding teachers of RE and other interested staff members to the various courses from the Graduate Programme in Religious Studies.

Each programme, of 40 hours duration is presented across Thursday, Friday and Saturday, which means that the Board is providing relief teachers for two days per teacher per year. Through this education the Board can ensure that all staff members are moving forward in accreditation levels while also studying a variety of topics in depth to aid staff in the teaching of Religious Education programmes.

Participation in this manner has been very unifying for the RE Department. The DRS stays current by attending seminars for DRS's from the Hamilton and Auckland Dioceses, the Catholic Schools Convention and the National DRS Conferences.

Communication

Parents are informed about the progress of their sons and daughters in Religious Education in the same way as they are for their secular subjects. As appropriate the Principal or DRS communicates about Religious Education through the school newsletter.

It would be advantageous, once the College website is reviewed and upgraded for this to be used as an avenue to celebrate all that is Catholic about Campion College, including featuring the Religious Education Department and its activities.

STATUTORY SPECIAL CHARACTER COMPLIANCES

In relation to the terms of the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act (1975) and its Integration Agreement, the special character compliances required of Boards of Trustees of New Zealand Catholic Integrated School was attested to by the full board of Campion College and signed.

Conclusion

We thank Paul McGuinness Principal, Tracy Robinson Director of Religious Studies and all who are part of the community, the Board, staff, parents and pupils for their openness, honesty and hospitality.

We believe that there is no doubt Campion College, is indeed Catholic, in a friendly, nurturing, family environment.

Brendan Schollum, Cora Kamp... (Reviewers)