



CATHOLIC
EDUCATION
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*He Pūrongo Arotake Mātauranga
Ahurea Katorika ā Waho.*

*Catholic Special Character
External Evaluation Report*

Sacred Heart Girls' College
Manawa Tapu
New Plymouth

Evaluation dates: 24th July and 13th November 2025

Confirmed Report: 12th March 2026



School Details

Name of School: Sacred Heart Girls' College Manawa Tapu

Address: 9 Pukaka Street, Strandon, New Plymouth

School type: Single sex girls college year 7 – year 13

Actual roll: 735

Maximum roll: 735

Non-preference maximum: 36 students

Actual non-preference number: 16

Roll based staffing entitlement: 47

Required number of Special Character Cl 47 positions: 19

Filled number of Special Character Cl 47 positions including Principal and DRS: 14

Principal: Barbara Costelloe

Director of Religious Studies: Wendy Mulligan

Religious Studies Leader of Learning: Pauline Koorey

Presiding Member, School Board: Catherine Grogan

Presiding Member Mission College Trust Board: Mark Butterworth

Parish Priest: Fr Simon Story

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 tamariki and rangatahi¹. The process seeks 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 Church². 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 kaitiaki of Catholic special character, including meeting its statutory compliances.

A collaborative, external evaluation process between school and the evaluators, helps the school to focus on and celebrate what it is doing well and identify next steps.

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

² Ibid.

2025 Catholic Special Character Evaluation for Development

Diocese of Palmerston North

In 2025 Catholic Special Character Evaluation for Development is part of a strategic initiative by the PNCEO to strengthen both external and internal evaluation capability. This two-year model, involving five schools (four primary and one secondary), is grounded in the principle of evaluation partnership, ensuring collaborative and authentic engagement between schools and the PNCEO through the diocesan Evaluation for Development Advisor.

Catholic special character evaluation (external and internal) intentionally focused on the following dimensions and focus areas;

Year One 2025

1. Dimension 1: Te Tūtaki ki a Te Karaiti-Encounter with Christ
 - Focus Area 1 Spiritual Formation – school directed
 - Focus Area 3 Faith Based Leadership

2. Dimension 2: Mā te Mātauranga ka Tipu: Growth in Knowledge
 - Focus Area 1 Leadership – collaboration and alignment between REA workstream and Evaluation for Development Advisor
 - Focus Area 3 Catholic Curriculum

3. Dimension 4: Te Kaitiakitanga me te Whakapakari I te Tuakiri Katorika-Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Special Character
 - Focus Area 1 Stewardship (Governance)
 - Focus Area 2 Legal Obligations
 - Statement of progress on each recommendation from the school's previous review/evaluation

Year Two 2026

1. Dimension 3: Te Whakaatu Karaitiana-Christian Witness

With support from the Evaluation for Development Advisor the school will take a narrowed focus or question from Dimension 3 to evaluate. Findings, next steps and/or recommendations will form part of the confirmed report document.

Introduction to Sacred Heart Girls' College Manawa Tapu

New Plymouth

The Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions started a convent school with a boarding hostel in 1884. The school was for primary and secondary students, boys and girls, next to where St Joseph's Church is now in New Plymouth. In 1960, the school shifted to its present site on Pukaka Street and was renamed Sacred Heart Girls' College.

The boarders remained at the hostel in town until 1970, when Sacred Heart Hostel was opened. The name of the hostel was changed to Elizabeth House in 2000 to commemorate the last principal who was a Sister of Our Lady of the Missions, Sister Mary Elizabeth Molloy. The hostel caters for up to 84 boarders.

The College became an integrated secondary school with an attached intermediate in 1982.

The college is under the Proprietorship of the Mission College Trust Board New Plymouth.

Motto Age Quod Agis whatever you do, do to the best of your ability.

2026 – 2028 Strategic vision

Living by Gospel values, we strive for personal excellence

He Aho Tapu, he aho mātauranga, ka rangahia hei korowai mā tātou

A sacred thread, a thread of knowledge, woven into a cloak for us all.

Gospel Values

Ako we take every opportunity to learn

"Whatever you do, work at it with all of your heart" Colossians 3:23

Manaakitanga we respect and love one another

"As I have loved you, so you must love one another" John 13:34

Wāhine Toa we respect and love ourselves

"Every person is made in the image of God" Genesis 1:27

**Progress with Recommendations from the 2021
Catholic Special Character Review for Development Report**

Dimension 2: Mā te Mātauranga ka Tipu: Growth in Knowledge

Through their own review processes the College has identified the need for a cohesive Year 7-13 sexuality education programme which is underpinned by the teaching of the Catholic Church. Planning for this programme is underway. This will involve collaboration between the Head of PE/Health and the DRS. Consultation about the programme with whānau and the College's proprietor is a Ministry of Education requirement. It is recommended that the College supports those kaiako who have not attended Having Life to the Full (grounded in John 10:10) to do so, when the course is next offered in Taranaki.

The College is making excellent progress towards fulfilling this recommendation through intentional leadership and the development of a collaborative mindset. A detailed overview of progress will sit as an appendix to this report.

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?

Sacred Heart Girls' College ākonga were asked to identify the ways the College is helping them to develop a relationship with Jesus and what difference this is making to their life. Across Years 7–13 ākonga consistently identify daily prayer, Religious Studies classes, school and class Masses, and liturgies as significant ways the College supports their relationship with Jesus. Many ākonga describe feeling more connected to their faith, making better choices, and growing in kindness, gratitude, and compassion. They appreciate learning about Jesus' life and teachings, and some have begun praying at home, attending youth groups, or participating in sacramental programmes.

As ākonga progress through the year levels, responses become more varied. While many senior students continue to find meaning in faith-based activities, others express feelings of pressure, disconnection, or frustration particularly when faith practices feel compulsory or tied to behavioural expectations. Some students highlight the importance of personal choice, inclusive approaches, and passionate teachers in making faith formation meaningful. Student led initiatives such as the Special Character Council and access to the chapel are valued by those who engage with them.

Overall, the voice of ākonga reflects that Sacred Heart Girls' College is providing a strong foundation for spiritual development by offering a diverse range of culturally attentive, invitational, and inclusive spiritual formation opportunities that reflect their place in Aotearoa New Zealand and their RNDM charism.

As part of the external Catholic special character evaluation, the College was asked to prioritise one example of spiritual formation the Evaluation for Development Advisor would inquire into, so in partnership effectiveness would be determined. Mission was identified for the evaluation focus and using the methodology of critical reflection, data was gathered under the What? So What? Now What? framework and next steps identified.

Spiritual Formation | Evangelisation

'Mission' is an essential dimension of the Sacred Heart Girls' College Catholic ethos.

"The desire to strengthen Mission is rooted in a genuine aspiration to honour the charism of the RNDM foundress, Euphrasie Barbier, who modelled a life of active service and Gospel witness. Her vision for faith in action continues to inspire the College. It is through Mission that ākonga are invited to live out the Gospel in real and meaningful ways, particularly through the lens of Catholic Social Teaching. The hope is to embed a culture of service, justice, and outreach that is visible, intentional, and transformative."

Significant data was gathered during the evaluation process and key themes that emerged affirmed the strength of current 'Mission' practice and understanding while highlighting opportunities of growth in others. For staff and ākonga 'Mission' is a Christ-centred calling lived through service, faith, and purposeful action. Staff voice emphasised, "serving others

with love and humility,” and “continuing the legacy of the Mission Sisters.” The voice of ākongā emphasised, “helping others” and “putting Jesus’ teachings into action.” Both staff and ākongā view ‘Mission’ as a journey that must be actively lived.

Next steps

- Under the 2026 – 2028 Strategic Goal 1 He aho Katorika, intentionally strengthen the depth of understanding and connection between, ‘Mission’ the RNDM charism and the person of Jesus Christ, so there is a shared understanding within the Sacred Heart Girls’ College community.
- Be explicit in the naming of Gospel values by exploring where in the Gospel Ako, Manaakitanga and Wāhine Toa can be intentionally referenced and aligned to ‘Mission’.

Faith-based Leadership

Faith leadership at Sacred Heart Girls’ College is intentional, deeply grounded in Catholic tradition and the charism of Euphrasie Barbier. Teachers holding special character positions are recognised for guiding; liturgies, Friday reflections, and prayer, noting that leadership is *“intentionally and unapologetically Catholic”* and *“at the forefront of decisions at the school.”* Faith-based leadership is expressed through servant leadership, humility, and everyday witness by modelling Christlike values in a *“positive and humble way.”* The faith-based leadership of the Principal and DRS foster a community where faith is visible and lived.

Kaiako holding CI 47 special character positions increasingly contribute to and actively live out the faith-based vision of the school. Creating opportunities to encounter Christ through witness is evident in their interactions with students, colleagues, whānau, and parishioners. As a team there is intentionality in supporting the Principal and DRS - working together, sharing ideas and actively supporting the College’s lived out expression of Catholic special character. The Principal and DRS were aptly described, *“... as two wings on the same bird... there is an agreed flight path and we get there in the end.”*

Dimension 2: Mā te Mātauranga ka Tipu: 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?

Leadership and Religious Education

The nationally mandated Religious Education curriculum, *To Tātou Whakapono Our Faith* (TTWOF), is prioritised with full and consistent time allocation, staffing, and resourcing to ensure high-quality teaching and learning.

The Religious Studies Leader of Learning, a new position in the College since the 2019 Catholic special character review, is a highly respected curriculum leader within the College and by the PNCEO Religious Education Advisor. As a fully engaged participant in Diocesan Religious Education workshops and regional DRS/HOD meetings, she willingly contributes to the ongoing support and guidance of regional colleagues. This is a well established culture within the secondary DRS/HOD space.

With the implementation of *To Tātou Whakapono Our Faith* there has been a very intentional focus on building faculty cohesion, capacity and capability. Alongside this was the understanding of Religious Studies as it merged into NZQA Social Sciences domain. This required a dynamic shift in thinking and on-going consultation with the Leader of Learning Social Sciences, to understand key concepts in assessment focus.

The RST Leader of Learning is commended for her curriculum leadership and the impact this is and will continue to have.

“The intentional expectation and fostering of collective responsibility across the faculty has, enhanced the mana and the capability of staff, and the mana of Religious Studies as an academic subject of worth.” (RST LOL)

The College has developed and introduced two additional Religious Studies classes in the senior school. Religious Studies – Environmental at year 12 and Religious Studies – Faith in Action at year 13. Both classes involve ākongā in hands-on practical experiences reflecting their RNDM mission charism and principles of Catholic Social Teaching.

For the majority of ākongā Religious Studies has a positive impact on their lives and is seen as a space for reflection, moral growth, and cultural understanding. This was evident from voice gathered from ākongā when asked, *“What difference is Religious Education making to you?”*

For younger ākongā, RST fosters a sense of connection with God and encourages kindness, gratitude, and respect. Comments such as, *“It makes me feel closer to Jesus”* and *“It helps me live a better life,”* reflect this early impact. By Year 8, students describe deeper engagement: *“It adds tremendous depth to how I understand the world, cultures and history.”*

As students progress, RST increasingly shapes critical thinking and personal values. Year 10 notes, *“Religious Education helps me think more deeply about life, my values, and how I treat others.”*

Senior ākonga highlighted broader benefits, including moral development, *“RST class helps me understand God’s purpose more, and helps me grow a deeper understanding of the world and who I want to be as a person.”* *“Providing me with a unique perspective with which to make decisions daily.”* Some ākonga emphasised the practical skills, *“It is making a huge difference in my education... the skills needed for RST translate into all my other subjects.”*

Catholic Curriculum

The plan to intentionally and strategically guide staff to effectively integrate a Catholic perspective across all curriculum areas has a place under Strategic Plan 2026-2028 Goal #2 He aho manawanui | To strengthen engagement and resilience in our learners. This is timely as feedback from ākonga indicates that connections to Catholic ideas outside Religious Studies do occur, but they are generally limited and inconsistent across subjects. The most common examples mentioned are morning prayer and kaiako referencing *“Ako, Manaakitanga, and Wāhine Toa to the school motto Age Quod Agis—that whatever we do, we do to the best of our ability.”*

Subject-specific connections were made by some ākonga, however, for the majority of ākonga they could not recall specific examples, suggesting that such connections are not consistently embedded across all curricula. As a result of this voice, there is an opportunity to strengthen Catholic special character connections across all curricula. In doing so the College will explicitly *bring faith, culture, and life into harmony, nurturing a Christian vision for living and seeing the world and assisting its young people to embrace a Christian way of living.* (Being Church in Aotearoa New Zealand Catholic Schools, NZCEO, NCRS 2025) The PNCEO is available to support the College in developing a strategic approach to this.

The development of a cohesive relationships and sexuality education programme that reflects a Catholic worldview as expressed in *Wonderfully Made in God’s Image* has been a priority. Collaboration between the Head of PE/Health and the DRS around developing relationships and sexuality education across the College has been a significant area of development and growth. The College has invested in several staff attending *Having Life to the Full* (grounded in John 10:10) which ensures a common understanding and language of this important material.

A further focus for the College is the ongoing journey of weaving Te reo, te ao Māori, tikanga Māori and mātauranga Māori through the College’s curriculum and College life, so that learners can respond in a way that is meaningful to their faith journey in their cultural context.

A very comprehensive ākonga Māori survey followed up with recommendations was facilitated by the Taurapa mātauranga/ Te heke rangatira, MAC Deputy National Coordinator / Iwi Liaison. The purpose of this survey was to determine how programmes, processes and practices at Sacred Heart Girls’ College create the conditions and or opportunities for ākonga Māori to achieve success as Māori. This voice and subsequent next steps will provide guidance so clear and consistent practices that give effect to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi across the spiritual, cultural, and educational dimensions of the school

community will continue to be prioritised. This is reflected in Strategic Goal #3 He aho Kaupapa Māori | To grow respect and understanding of Te Reo Māori me ōna tikanga. The College is to be commended for its authenticity and lateral thinking when consulting with whānau Māori and ākonga Māori.

Recommendation

- To strengthen Catholic special character connections across all curricula. The PNCEO is available to support the College in developing a strategic approach to this.

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?

This dimension will be evaluated by Sacred Heart Girls' College over the 2026 year with the support and guidance of the PNCEO Evaluation for Development Advisor.

Recommendation

As outlined in the PNCEO Supporting Guidelines for Catholic Special Character Internal Evaluation document.

- Set time aside to engage in Te Whakaatu Karaitiana | Christian Witness pages 23-27 in the **Catholic Special Character Evaluation for Development** document.
- Decide on **ONE** focus area - Catholic school community, Partnership and Collaboration, Pastoral Care, Service and Outreach to begin the discernment process of what Sacred Heart College will evaluate.
- Complete the **Opportunities Table**. From this exercise the *narrow focus* for the internal evaluation is decided.
- Book a zoom with the Evaluation for Development Advisor in Term 1 2026 to discuss gathering the **WHAT?** data and next stages for support.
- Term 4 2026 - a final internal evaluation template will be supplied to Sacred Heart Girls' College. This completed template will be added as an appendix to the 2025 Catholic special character evaluation report.

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?

Stewardship

In their stewardship and compliance with legal obligations, Sacred Heart Girls' College leadership team and School Board governance safeguard and strengthen its Catholic identity. In doing so Catholic special character is kept alive, vibrant and aligned with the goals of Catholic education.

The board's vision, strategic direction, policies and budget, intentionally and consistently focus on strengthening and safeguarding Catholic Special Character.

In 2026 the Board will be opting into the SchoolDocs policy platform. This will ensure sustainability for the school and Board moving forward.

The Board is demonstrating, through the leadership of the Principal, sustained commitment to their induction processes and ongoing professional formation in Catholic special character and cultural competencies. This is safeguarded and prioritised in the Board workplan. Formation sessions will be on a rotation so all Board members take responsibility.

Legal Obligations

The school **is compliant** with its Integration Agreement regarding:

- Appointments committees contain at least one Proprietor's Appointee for all permanent appointments including Principal, DRS and teaching positions.
- Maximum roll compared with actual roll at time of evaluation.
- Number of preference students / non-preference students.
- The Board consults, communicates, and works with the Proprietor to ensure Catholic special character is safeguarded and strengthened.

The school **is not compliant** with its Integration Agreement regarding:

- the number of Schedule 6: Clause 47 Education and Training Act 2020 (Cl 47) (previously S464) positions held (excluding principal and DRS) compared with number or percentage of Cl 47 positions specified in the Integration Agreement or the supplementary schedule.

Enrolment

Roll Audit

School: Sacred Heart Girls' College New Plymouth

Date: 24 July 2025

Maximum Roll: 735

Actual: 735

Non-Preference Maximum *as per Integration Agreement*: 36 (5% of max roll)

Actual: 16 (2 % of actual roll)

Preference Criteria	Number of Students	% actual roll
5.1	611	83%
5.2	12	1.5%
5.3	66	9%
5.4	30	4%
5.5	0	0
Preference with no criteria	0	0
Total of signed preference roll	719	98%
Non-Preference Roll	16	2%
International Fee Paying Students	2	<i>Phasing out, not accepting any further international students</i>

The Manager of Catholic Schools, Diocese of Palmerston North thanks the College for the opportunity to conduct a roll audit on behalf of the Proprietor, the Mission College Trust Board. The Manager of Catholic Schools commends the Executive Assistant for the excellent systems in place regarding enrolments.

Following the audit, the Manager offers the following recommendations to further strengthen enrolment and preference procedures at the College:

- Establish a coordinated system between the parish and the College to ensure follow-up after students have received the sacrament of baptism.
- Attach baptism certificates to existing preference forms, and update the student management system (SMS) to reflect any changes in preference criteria.
- For non-preference students who have been baptised, communicate clearly that they will need to schedule an appointment with the parish priest to obtain a preference certificate.
- Consider including responsibility for these activities within the position descriptions of both the Chaplain and the Executive Assistant.
- The Manager of Catholic Schools has granted permission for the College to accept a small number of preference certificates that are up to six months older than the standard two-year validity period. Or as advised by the PNCEO Manager

Recommendation

The school is **not compliant** with its Integration Agreement regarding:

- the number of Schedule 6: Clause 47 Education and Training Act 2020 (CI 47) (previously S464) positions held (excluding principal and DRS) compared with number or percentage of CI 47 positions specified in the Integration Agreement or the supplementary schedule.

The Proprietor and the Principal continue to remain in communication around the school's inability to appoint to CI47 positions.

Catholic Special Character Evaluation Report Summary

Areas of growth since the 2019 review report

- The ongoing journey of weaving Te reo, te ao Māori, tikanga Māori and mātauranga Māori through the College's curriculum and College life, so that learners can respond in a way that is meaningful to their faith journey in their cultural context.
- Sustainable leadership model developed through the DRS and Religious Studies Leader of Learning positions.
- Collaboration between the Head of PE/Health and the DRS around developing relationships and sexuality education across the College.
- The College has invested in several staff attending Having Life to the Full (grounded in John 10:10).
- The development of two additional Religious Studies classes in the senior school. Religious Studies – Environmental at year 12 and Religious Studies – Faith in Action at year 13. Both classes involve ākonga in hands-on practical experiences reflecting the RNDM mission charism and principles of Catholic Social Teaching.
- The Board is demonstrating, through the leadership of the Principal, sustained commitment to their induction processes and ongoing professional formation in Catholic special character and cultural competencies.

Recommendations

Dimension 2: Mā te Mātauranga ka Tipu: Growth in Knowledge

- To strengthen Catholic special character connections across all curricula. The PNCEO is available to support the College in developing a strategic approach to this.

Dimension 3: Te Whakaatu Karaitiana-Christian Witness

- As outlined in the PNCEO Supporting Guidelines for Catholic Special Character Internal Evaluation 2026 document, Sacred Heart Girls' College is to complete the evaluation of Dimension 3 Christian Witness.

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

The school is **not compliant** with its Integration Agreement regarding:

- the number of Schedule 6: Clause 47 Education and Training Act 2020 (Cl 47) (previously S464) positions held (excluding principal and DRS) compared with number or percentage of Cl 47 positions specified in the Integration Agreement or the supplementary schedule.

The Proprietor and the Principal continue to remain in communication around the school's inability to appoint to Cl47 positions.

The Evaluation for Development Advisor is confident that Sacred Heart Girls' College has the willingness and ability to address these recommendations fully before the next external evaluation. The Catholic Education Office staff will assist the Principal, Board and staff in creating a Catholic special character development plan to address these recommendations.

The evaluation team thank the community of Sacred Heart Girls' College for the welcome, hospitality and cooperation extended to them and for the opportunity to experience the way that they safeguard and strengthen Catholic special character. The organisation and preparation for the external evaluation by the school is greatly appreciated.

This report will be shared with the Sacred Heart Girls' College Trust Board, NZCEO for the purpose of moderation and Bishop John Adams.

Pauline Balm



Evaluation for Development Advisor

Teresa Edwards



Manager Catholic Schools

Sacred Heart Girls' College New Plymouth

Progress in meeting the 2019 Catholic Special Character Evaluation for Development recommendation on relationships and sexuality education

Sacred Heart Girls' College New Plymouth is making excellent progress towards fulfilling this recommendation through intentional leadership and the development of a collaborative mindset.

Four staff including the Principal and DRS attended *Having Life to the Full* in Taranaki in 2022, and key staff have been identified to attend in September 2024. The impact of this course is clearly demonstrated by the shared desire of the senior leadership team to instil its key ideas as the foundation for the 2024 school year. The 2024 whakatauki is *Kua tae mai ahau kia whiwhi ai te ora: I have come that you might have life*. This message is apparent in school newsletters and is reinforced by the Principal through her intentional messaging in assemblies. A staff formation plan for 2024 relating to the whakatauki was developed by the Senior Leadership Team. Its aim is to bring all staff on board with the key messages that underpin *Having Life to the Full* and the *Wonderfully Made in God's Image* document. The school year began with a session called 'We are all made in the image of God'. This was presented by the Principal, DRS and Leader of Learning in RE. In Term 2, the Principal led a session on *Te Kahu o te Ora – A Consistent Ethic of Life*. Two more related sessions are planned for the year. The Principal has also used her experience from *Having Life to the Full* to plan and deliver Board formation on relationships and sexuality education.

The HOD PE attended a Refresher for Sexuality Education run by the PNCEO in December 2023, enabling her to become up to date with current best practice. She is working alongside another passionate teacher from the PE and Health department who has been given additional salary recognition to lead and implement a cooperative, cross-departmental approach to teaching relationships and sexuality education. Leaders of Learning in RE and Health and PE are keen to make this work. Initial meetings have been held and a plan of action has been developed, with support from the PNCEO Secondary Advisor. Key to the success of this moving forward is the development of a shared 'statement of intent' and systems that promote regular communication and transparency through a Teams page.

The Principal is aware of the responsibility of the Board to consult with its community around the Health programme. This is planned for Term 4, 2024.

Candice Adams
Secondary Advisor
31 May 2024