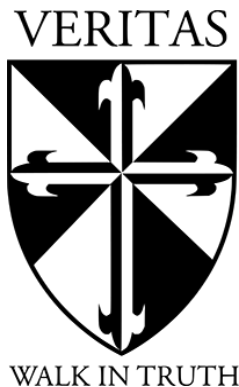




Catholic Diocese of Dunedin
Te Hāhi Katorika o Otepoti

He Pūrongo Arotake Mātauranga
Ahurea Katorika ā Waho

Catholic Special Character
Evaluation for Development



St Joesph's School
Queenstown

Evaluation conducted on 22 – 23 April 2026
Report confirmed 11 June 2006



St Joseph's School

School Details

School Charism: Dominican OP

Address: 25 Beetham St Queenstown 9300

School type: Year 0 – 8 Full Primary 6

Actual roll: 121

NZ European 50% Filipino 13% Sri Lankan 8% Latin American 6% Māori 6% Australian 5% Indian 4%
Chinese 1.5% Fijian 1.5% Other 5%

Maximum roll: 175

Non-preference maximum (5% of maximum roll) : 9

Current non-preference number: 10

Roll based staffing entitlement: 8.72 FTTE

Actual staffing: 8.72 FTTE

Required number of Special Character CI 47 positions: 4

Filled number of Special Character CI 47 positions: 2

Principal: Alan Grant

Director of Religious Studies: Emma Sullivan

Board Presiding Member: Catkin Bartlett

Parish / Chaplain: Rev Cipriano Fernandes

Evaluation Team

Lead Evaluator: Paul Richardson – Catholic Education Office Dunedin

Assisted by: Virginia O'Neill – Director of Religious Studies, St Mary's School, Mosgiel

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 Church. 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 see what it is doing well and identify next steps.

Evaluation Dimensions

- Te tūtaki ki a Te Karaiti - Encounter with Christ.
- Te whakatupu mā - te mātauranga - Growth in knowledge.
- Te whakaatu Karaitiana - Christian witness.
- Te kaitiakitanga me to whakapakari i to tuakiri Katorika - Safeguarding and Strengthening Catholic Character.

History of St Joseph's School

“We have a great history in Queenstown - the Dominican sisters arrived to teach at our school on its current site in 1883. The Dominican pillars of prayer, learning, community and service are evident in our school and our learning. The Dominican charism or mission is based on truth, learning, discovery, thinking, excellence, prayer, community and service. That means that at St Joseph's School we will:

Always be honest
Always be learning
Always do our best
Listen to God's call
Do our bit

Our School Blessing embodies our school's vision, our value and our Dominican charism.

*Our awesome God and teacher
We praise and thank you for all you have given us.
Bless us as we learn and play,
Watch over our families and our community.
May our school be a place of honesty, respect and learning,
where everyone does their best and does their bit.
May God be always with us.”*

<https://stjosephsq.school.nz/index.php/our-school>

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

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?

Spiritual Formation

St Joseph's School demonstrates an authentic commitment to its Catholic Special Character, integrating faith into the 'very heart' of the community. A defining strength is the alignment of Catholic theology with Te Ao Māori, creating a unique bicultural identity that enriches the spiritual life of both students and staff. The school actively fosters a sense of Whanaungatanga, Manaakitanga, and Kotahitanga, ensuring a strong sense of community where all are known to each other.

Spiritual engagement within this community is anchored in its liturgical and prayer life. This involves regular participation in Sacramental celebrations. Each week begins with class led liturgy in the church. The proximity of the church ensures its prominence within the community as a sacred, familiar space. This is further supported by the use of Te Reo Māori in prayer, and the integration of himene and waiata, demonstrating a deep respect of Te Ao Māori.

The school has identified Karakia as an area for further development, to transition from a routine practice into an opportunity for genuine encounter. This vision involves expanding the depth of classroom, school-wide, and staff prayer in its various contexts, and ensuring that it consistently reflects cultural diversity while retaining Catholic tradition.

By prioritising authenticity and cultural inclusivity, the school provides a grounded spiritual environment. The ongoing focus on refining prayer practices suggests a proactive approach to spiritual growth, ensuring that the school's Catholic Special Character remains dynamic and inclusive for all members of the community.

Evangelisation

The school demonstrates an authentic commitment to sharing the Gospel through an invitational approach that supports meaningful relationships between home, school, and parish. The Sacramental Programme serves as a vehicle for faith development providing families, particularly those with 5.2–5.5 preference status, a welcoming pathway into the Catholic community. The school's inclusive approach to Religious Education, complemented by regular Masses and morning teas, has yielded tangible outcomes, including multiple baptisms in the past year.

Leadership plays a pivotal role. The Principal and DRS accompany families with genuine care and personal contact, while Catholic identity is maintained as visible and accessible through purposeful communications.

Student agency is encouraged with Year 7 and 8 students embracing their role as ākonga rangatira — leading prayer, supporting liturgy, and modelling faith for younger peers. This fosters a sense of pride and ownership across the school community. Collectively, these efforts create an environment where holistic, authentic faith is not merely promoted but genuinely lived.

Faith-Based Leadership

Faith-based leadership is a defining strength of the school, clearly evident in the collaborative and spiritually grounded practice modelled by the Principal and DRS. Their shared personal faith is evident in their leadership approach, and colleagues have affirmed that their knowledge and encouragement is both valued and effective. Support for ongoing professional learning and development can also be found through diocesan events and the Catholic Convention which is a significant three yearly event. Kaiako are encouraged and supported to pursue additional study through Te Kupenga.

A deliberate emphasis on growing leadership capacity within the school community supports the personal, professional, and spiritual formation of both kaiako and ākonga as outlined in Dimension 2.

Further Development

- *The identification of prayer 'as an area for further development' as an opportunity for genuine encounter - a possible focus for Internal Evaluation.*
- *Continue to maximise opportunities to achieve an aspirational goal for all ākonga, to become part of the faith community, especially those enrolled in the preference category.*

DIMENSION 2: Te Whakatupu Mā Te Mātauranga: Growth in Knowledge

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

Leadership

The capacity of the school leadership to effectively enable growth in knowledge and understanding is evident in many ways. Central to the school's leadership philosophy is 'Servant Leadership' which is enacted across the school community. Students in Years 7 and 8 engage in a dedicated leadership retreat, while Year 8 ākonga participate in the Ākonga Rangatira programme, providing meaningful opportunities to explore and embody servant leadership in an authentically Catholic context. Service is woven purposefully into the leadership programme to form confident, well-grounded rangatira.

At the staff level, ongoing formation and professional learning sustain a culture of Catholic leadership. The DRS participates in termly regional meetings, the Catholic Education Convention, and the Diocesan Gathering, while termly Professional Learning Group sessions and focused staff meetings reinforce Catholic character across the school.

Board members, whānau, and parent volunteers are actively engaged, enabling servant leadership to extend into the wider school community.

Religious Education

The high status of Religious Education is underpinned by sound teaching practice and effective leadership, authentically integrated within the daily life of the school. Kaiako are thriving professionally, affirming the value of Tō Tātou Whakapono and its online resources.

The Regional Advisor's facilitation of inter-school professional learning is highly valued, fostering collegial connections that strengthen classroom delivery. Ākonga are meaningfully engaged in their learning and demonstrate sound faith knowledge. They reflected on their learning with confidence and expressed pride in the leadership responsibilities entrusted to them. Although aware of the Dominican history of the school, some students appeared to know little about the life of St Dominic – a possible improvement focus.

The Principal affirms that Tō Tātou Whakapono authentically integrates a Māori Catholic worldview throughout its themes. This enables Te Reo and Tikanga Māori to be incorporated into teaching and learning, to enrich the religious and cultural experience of all ākonga.

The Director of Religious Studies seeks to ensure that Religious Education is prioritised across all dimensions of school life and is approached with the same academic rigour as Literacy and Numeracy.

Catholic Curriculum

The school demonstrates a developing integration of Catholic worldview across its curriculum and culture. Staff individually express confidence in this area, describing Catholic values woven across inquiry topics, reading, writing, and social sciences, with Religious Education serving as a connective thread. Catholic Social Teaching principles are applied meaningfully, particularly through Caritas resources, moving students beyond charitable response toward understanding the structural causes of need — justice in action.

Catholic identity is clearly evident in the school's ethos and daily life, expressed through morning, lunchtime, and end-of-day prayer, liturgical celebrations, restorative practices grounded in Gospel values, and behavioural conversations framed through Christian discipleship.

It is suggested that leaders and kaiako collectively examine whether a Catholic perspective is consistently and deliberately embedded across all curriculum areas.

Further Development

- *To add strength this area, more deliberate school-wide curriculum planning that makes Catholic perspectives visible across all learning areas would provide greater consistency and accountability.*

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?

Catholic School Community

The school demonstrates a strong and authentic commitment to its Dominican charism, which serves as the foundational pillar of its identity. The principle of *Veritas* is deeply embedded in the school's daily culture, branding, and values. This spiritual heritage is effectively animated through the *Ā Tātou Whakapapa* programme, which sees student identity and encounter in a Dominican context. Consequently, internal relationships between staff, students, and whānau are described as warm, open, and effective, fostering a supportive environment where ākongā feel known and valued.

The school has faced external pressure from a minority of parents regarding its policy of giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. These tensions have involved a direct challenge to the school's Catholicity. Further dialogue on the matter will involve careful consideration of the expectations of the 'New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference' also recently articulated by the Chief Executive of the National Catholic Education Office.

The relationship between the school and the Parish remains challenging and needs to be a continued area of focus.

Partnership and Collaboration

The school faces genuine challenges in approaching local Katorika Māori Pākehā history. The Principal reports that within the current curriculum environment, space for localised content is limited. While Tō Tātou Whakapono provides some scope for this work, it remains an area for further development.

The Principal reports that Engagement with Māori whānau and mana whenua has been inconsistent. A meaningful consultation process with whānau Māori was undertaken in the past eighteen months, though its outcomes have proved difficult to navigate. Sustained engagement with mana whenua has been challenging in recent years, though the school is hopeful that a new contact through the local District Council may signal a positive shift. Currently, there is no regular, structured engagement with whānau Māori. The Principal has identified this as an area for growth.

Encouragingly, staff and the Board have each publicly affirmed their commitment to giving effect to Te Tiriti, providing a sound foundation from which to build more authentic and consistent partnership.

Pastoral Care

Responses from across the school community indicate that the school's approach to pastoral care is authentic and Christ-centred, characterised by a genuine commitment to accompany its people with dignity, compassion, and practical support. Pastoral care is embedded within school systems, with dedicated time at the start of staff, leadership, and syndicate meetings, ensuring that students requiring additional support are known about and collectively attended to.

The Principal affirms staff through regular communication and wellbeing conversations. Family needs are recognised and supported through generous leave provisions. The DRS describes a holistic approach to staff wellbeing, marked by regular check-ins, open communication, and planned social connection. Teachers are given a wellbeing day each term as part of their Classroom Release Time entitlement. The Principal's wellbeing is sustained through intentional time management, positive relationships with the leadership team and staff, and collegial networks across the local area and wider educational community.

The Board has recently developed a People and Performance Strategy to consolidate wellbeing initiatives, ensuring consistency and continuity across the school.

Cultural celebrations, including Matariki, whānau group activities, and a Waitangi Day liturgy, further reflect the school's commitment to ensuring all members of the community feel valued, connected, and genuinely cared for. This is a clear and recognised strength.

Service and Outreach

The school demonstrates a strong commitment to a counter-cultural, Christian vision of leadership grounded in service. The effectiveness of this is evident in a range of diverse local outreach initiatives, including environmental action, and community support for organisations like Caritas and Happiness House. These efforts foster an appreciation of the value of 'service' among students. [For it is in giving that we receive – St Francis of Assisi]

The school identifies a need to formalise and broaden these experiences. The current suspension of core programs like Young Vinnies highlights this need. Future growth will ideally focus on creating a structured service framework that more explicitly integrates Catholic Social Teaching, ensuring service remains an integral part of student development.

Further Development

- *Where possible facilitate dialogue regarding Te Tiriti o Waitangi to reinforce the school's inclusive Catholic Special Character.*
- *Continue to pursue regular, structured engagement with whānau Māori.*
- *Enhancement of Community Service and Outreach activities is identified as an area of growth.*

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

St Joseph's School maintains a steadfast commitment to its Catholic Special Character, integrating it directly into its strategic vision: *'Creating confident learners who, like Jesus, make a positive difference.'* This identity is grounded in the core values of *Respect* and *Honesty*, alongside a Dominican charism that calls the community to *'Walk in Truth and with Respect.'*

The school's primary strategic goal, 'Holistic growth towards full potential,' emphasises spiritual development as a priority. To bring this vision to life, the school aligns its annual objectives with measurable outcomes, such as meeting ministry attendance targets and conducting student wellbeing surveys focused on 'belonging.'

These intentional structures and priorities suggest that the school's faith-based identity is central to its direction and student experience. Although expressed in general terms, this focused approach aims to ensure that Catholic vision and values remain the heart of the school's culture.

Internal Self-Evaluation

The school's current strategic initiatives and annual goals are grounded in evidence, informed by a 2025 student wellbeing survey involving approximately 80% of students in years 3-8. It is suggested that a survey of this nature might in future be aligned to the Pastoral Care focus area for an effective Internal Evaluation.

The intended 2025 Internal Evaluation [Encounter with Christ] based on Faith Based Leadership, at various levels in the community, was not completed. Given the current vision to grow leadership capacity it is suggested that this Internal Evaluation be revisited at an appropriate time in the future.

Catholic Special Character Reporting

The Board receives comprehensive, well-structured information about Catholic Special Character through regular Principal reports, encompassing a broad range of events, observances, celebrations, and insights into teaching and learning.

A notable strength is an alignment with the four Dimensions, providing board members with a deeper understanding of the scope of each Dimension. The informative way in which reports are written, particularly across Dimensions 1 and 2, is commendable.

To further enhance the reporting process, consideration could be given to incorporating more reflective and evaluative commentary that addresses the effectiveness of initiatives, their impact on learners and staff, and opportunities for growth and improvement. This would enrich board discussion, generate more purposeful questions, taking an already sound reporting practice to a higher level of effectiveness. Dimension 3 has not been a focus in reporting for some time.

Legal Obligations

A review of the documentation and annual attestation data shows general compliance. This includes *Safeguarding Practices* and *Health Curriculum* requirements:

- Confirmation that the overriding principle of the Safeguarding Policy adopted by the proprietor is reflected in the wording of the school's Child Protection Policy.
- Attesting that the school has sufficient measures in place to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults during all school related activities. (Children's Act 2014)
- Consulting with both the community and Proprietor, [Ed. & Training Act s.91] to ensure that the Health Curriculum programmes, and their delivery, reflect Catholic Special Character.

Preference roll as at the date of the evaluation

Preference Category	Number of Students	% of Current Roll
5.1	45	37%
5.2	2	2%
5.3	30	25%
5.4	28	23%
5.5	2	2%
Non-Preference 9 available	10	8%
Not determined	4	3%
Total roll	121	100%
Maximum roll	175	69% of capacity

Further Development

- *Ensure that focused Internal Evaluation is carried out annually and use data from improvement outcomes to inform subsequent strategic/annual planning.*
- *Consider further improvement enabling Catholic Special Character board reports to be more reflective and evaluative emphasising effectiveness and impact.*
- *Ensure that Catholic Special Character reporting is balanced coverage of each dimension.*
- *Ensure that all enrolments are categorised on the preference form [5.1 – 5.5] or non-preference, prior to formalising the enrolment.*

Examples of Strengths and Growth

- A defining strength is the alignment of Catholic theology with Te Ao Māori, forging a unique bicultural identity that enriches spiritual life and fosters Whanaungatanga, Manaakitanga, and Kotahitanga — ensuring every member of the community is known and valued.
- A commitment to authenticity and cultural inclusivity helps shape the school's spiritual environment. Continually refining prayer practices reflects a proactive approach to spiritual growth, ensuring Catholic Special Character remains dynamic and inclusive .
- Year 7 and 8 students embrace their role as ākonga rangatira — leading prayer, supporting liturgy, and modelling faith — fostering pride and ownership, and creating a community where the faith is genuinely lived.
- Servant Leadership sits at the heart of the school's philosophy, enacted through dedicated leadership retreats and the Ākonga Rangatira programme, forming confident, well-grounded rangatira who embody leadership in an authentically Catholic and cultural context.
- The Dominican charism and the principle of *Veritas* are deeply embedded in daily culture and identity, authentically animated through the Ā Tātou Whakapapa programme, which grounds student identity and encounter in a rich Dominican context.
- Pastoral care is authentic and Christ-centred, with dignity and compassion embedded in school systems. Dedicated time at staff and syndicate meetings ensures students needing support are collectively known and attended to across the community.
- A counter-cultural, Christ-centred vision of leadership grounded in service is evident through diverse outreach initiatives — including environmental action and support for Caritas and Happiness House — fostering a genuine appreciation of service among students.

Progress with Recommendations from the 2023 External Evaluation

- Catholic Special Character qualifications vary amongst kaiako. It is important that this be managed through monitoring, close support, ongoing professional learning and encouragement for further study to support growth, confidence and satisfaction in the role.

The school actively participates in regional diocesan and professional learning group meetings focusing Tō Tātou Whakapono. Religious Education and Catholic Special Character feature prominently in teacher preparation days and termly staff meetings, most recently covering Prayer. A Teacher Only Day in Term 3 will enable staff to attend 'The Gathering.' While qualification pathways in Religious Education are highlighted, pursuing them remains challenging given teacher workload and national curriculum expectations. Support is available for any staff who wish to pursue further study.

- The school has a meaningful plan of actions throughout the year from a stated target, “*Initiate storytelling of our Catholic Dominican heritage (our charism).*” To add further strength to this initiative, consideration should be given to stating the target in terms of a specific measurable outcome, for example *Ākongā will be able to tell stories ...*

Current annual planning has incorporated a general statement, ‘How we will measure our progress.’

- Suggestions for further improvement in the internal evaluation process are to seek to include the voice of ākongā, whānau, hāpori pāriha [parish] and mana whenua in the discussion and involve proprietor’s appointees with internal evaluation.

Internal evaluation of Catholic Character is led by the Principal who consults with the DRS and the wider Leadership Team and informs the Board. It is recognised that there is still an opportunity to include a wider voice in the collection of evidence around the focus of each year’s internal evaluation.

- The reporting brief needs to be widened to include the Religious Education curriculum. There is a recognised need for the principal to become informed about the effectiveness of Religious Education at the classroom level, and to provide the board with information about the growth and development of ākongā. Following discussion with the Principal and DRS, consideration might also be given to the board receiving information from the DRS in terms of special character events and with references, where appropriate, to the evaluation dimensions, their effectiveness or impact on ākongā and community.

The Principal's Report has been restructured to strengthen Catholic Character reporting, organised around evaluation framework dimensions — a change the Board has welcomed as it provides better insight into school life. The DRS is not routinely asked to report to the board in recognition of an already full role. An upcoming Board meeting will feature a DRS presentation on Tō Tātou Whakapono, covering its introduction, staff implementation work, and available NCRS resource materials.

2023 Compliance matters addressed

- The board attestation is to be submitted to the proprietor before the end of each year.
- Proprietor appointees are required to submit their report annually to the bishop.

The Board attestation has been completed annually as required using the portal accessed through the Diocesan Education website. Since 2025 Proprietor’s Appointees are now required to individually complete the Google Form which is available on the website at the end of each year.

Key Recommendations to Support Development

- *Ensure that focused Internal Evaluation is carried out annually and use data from improvement outcomes to inform subsequent strategic/annual planning.*
- *Ensure that all enrolments are categorised on the preference form [5.1 – 5.5] or non-preference, prior to proceeding with enrolment.*

In Conclusion

It was a privilege to visit St Joseph’s School, where the Church's mission is strongly evident. The school board, Principal and leaders are deeply committed to having the Catholic Special Character at the centre of all they do. This report contains a number of suggestions for further improvement across the dimensions and key recommendations to support strength and growth. The organisation and preparation for external evaluation is greatly appreciated.

Ngā mihi nui

Paul Richardson B Ed, Dip Tchg, Dip Ed L, Dip RE, CFLE

Lead Evaluator

11 June 2026



Catholic Diocese of Dunedin, Te Hāhi Katorika o Otepoti