



Catholic Diocese of Dunedin
Te Hāhi Katorika o Otepoti

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

**Catholic Special Character
Evaluation for Development**



Trinity Catholic College
Hei ākonga mā te Karaiti

Dunedin

Evaluation conducted on 17 – 19 March 2026
Report confirmed 5 May 2026



School Details

School Charisms: Dominican / Mercy / Edmund Rice

Address: 340 Rattray St Central Dunedin 9016

School type: Year 7 – 13 Secondary College

Actual roll: 887 (incl 34 non-domestic International Students)
NZ European 61% Māori 14% Filipino 10% Indian 9% Other 9% Pasifika 6%

Maximum roll: 900

Non-preference maximum (5% of maximum roll) : 45

Current non-preference number: 43

Roll based staffing entitlement: 59.6 FTTE

Actual staffing: 59.6 FTTE

Required number of Special Character CI 47 positions: 18

Filled number of Special Character CI 47 positions: 20

Principal: Kate Nicholson

Directors of Religious Studies: Moananu Pesamino Tili (Liturgy),
Hamish Sutherland (Yr10-13 RE), Michelle Tili (Yr7-9 RE)

Board Presiding Member: Michelle Branford

Chaplain: Rev Vaughan Hook

Evaluation Team

Lead Evaluator: Paul Richardson – Catholic Education Office Dunedin

Assisted by: Jo Walshe – Principal, St Kevin's College, Oamaru

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, 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 the Trinity Catholic College

Trinity Catholic College is on Rattray Street, on the site that has housed Catholic education in Dunedin since 1871. Originally the site of Christian Brothers' High School, founded in 1876, it now encompasses the land that has variously accommodated St Dominic's College which was founded in 1871, St Joseph's Primary School and the Christian Brother's Junior School in 1964.

There were other significant sites of Catholic education in Dunedin and two of them housed other founding schools of Trinity Catholic College. Moreau College (an amalgamation of the Dominican Sisters' school St Dominic's College, and the Mercy Sisters' school St Philomena's College, founded in 1897) was created in 1976 and was set on the St Philomena's site in McBride St. St Edmund's School (founded in 1949) was for boys from Y5-8 and served the southern suburbs of Dunedin. St Paul's High School, Moreau College and St Edmunds came together in 1989 on the Rattray St site as a Y7-13 co-educational Catholic college named Kavanagh College. In 2023 Kavanagh College was renamed Trinity Catholic College.

The College's founding religious orders - the Dominican Sisters, the Sisters of Mercy and the Christian Brothers - were the original founders of the various schools that are part of Trinity Catholic College's history.

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

Trinity Catholic College continues to thrive as a place of encounter. A shared understanding and vision for spiritual development within the college community is naturally articulated by the Principal and key faith leaders who ensure that spiritual formation is seamlessly woven into the fabric of everyday life. The team has created an environment where faith is both accessible and lived. The Chaplain's consistent presence around the college and at various community gatherings, enriches his own faith and has been instrumental in building relational trust and deep spiritual engagement.

Evidence of this success is most visible in the school Masses, which leaders characterise as both respectful and 'transformative.' This has been a powerful way of sustaining the community both spiritually and emotionally and particularly so during a time of crisis in 2024. In a time of significant emotional and spiritual upheaval, the college's reliance on faith-based outreach extended beyond its own walls, offering support within the wider educational community. The Principal recalls a united response 'with liturgy and faith at the forefront,' demonstrating the college's spiritual identity as a source strength and resilience. This is a fine example a mature spiritual life that sustains its members in times of adversity and celebration.

Evangelisation

The spiritual ethos of the college involves effective practices and communications that facilitate an encounter with Christ. The Principal places an emphasis on consistent communication 'from day one' about the faith based nature and values, founded on the gospel, and reflective of the college's founding, Mercy, Edmund Rice and Dominican charisms.

Evidence of this can be seen in routine newsletters that contain regular articles from the Principal and Special Character Prefects. Their active involvement ensures that evangelisation is integrated into the student leadership structure.

The colleges effectively uses social media, highlighting the many and various events and celebrations with an emphasis on its Catholic Special Character.

A significant development since the previous evaluation is the establishment of *Te Kaika Moana*. This designated area serves as a vital focal point for Māori and Pasifika spiritual expression, successfully weaving *Tikanga*, *Te Reo*, and *Katorikatanga* (Catholicism) into the daily life of the college. It is a place where ākonga and kaiako can gather for Lenten Prayer and Rosary, particularly during the months of May and October, and where *Waiata* is common as is the use of *Inoi* [prayer]. This exemplifies a culturally responsive approach to faith. It was a privilege to be welcomed in the context of *Mihi whakatau* to commence the evaluation

The sacramental program has contributed to spiritual growth within the college with increased numbers of baptisms and confirmations, supported by strong parental interest. The junior DRS is proactively utilising her parish formation skills for the benefit of the college, with significant

number of akonga and other family members expressing an interest in the faith and sacramental formation. This initiative supports a dynamic environment where evangelisation is both culturally inclusive and sacramentally grounded.

Faith-Based Leadership

Leadership is effectively modelled as 'Christ-first,' with the Principal's pastoral response during tragic community incidents receiving particular commendation. The current faith based leadership model has been intentionally strengthened in a diversified approach to ensure a strong curriculum focus across junior and senior levels and a dedicated liturgical and sacramental focus. This dual DRS model is viewed as a structural strength that ensures both spiritual depth and operational efficiency.

Student Leaders demonstrate a growing awareness of their responsibility as faith role models, further embedding a culture of authentic witness throughout the school community. They play significant practical and supportive roles in the organisation of college liturgy, working closely with the DRS, Chaplain and senior college leaders.

Further Development

- *Continue with effective support initiatives for 5.2 – 5.5 students and their families to maximise opportunities for faith and sacramental formation.*

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 college continues to benefit from stable, progressive leadership that positively shapes community perception and authentically reflects its core values of Respect, Service, Justice, and Truth. The Principal and her senior leadership team are widely regarded by staff and parents as pastoral and present, fostering a genuine culture of welcome. Their productive relationship with the board is a particular strength, with regular effectiveness reporting across all areas of college.

The co-Directors of Religious Education, strengthened in both number and focus, are a source of spiritual energy within and beyond the college. Supported by the Chaplain, they actively promote and participate in Miha Māori, and Youth Mass within local parishes. Recent growth initiatives have included DRS and Dominican Conferences involving presentations, visible leadership roles at staff and parent gatherings, and the valued behind-the-scenes work of accompanying and encouraging staff. This vibrant team is a significant asset to the college's mission and identity.

Religious Education

Since the previous evaluation, significant work has taken place in the Religious Education Programme to ensure its continued high status, sound management, and professional delivery. Change is particularly evident in the Years 7–9 integrated learning area, supported by the implementation of *Tō Tātou – Our Faith* and a refreshed focus on achievement objectives. A clearer delineation now exists between Religious Education and Integrated learning.

The establishment of a Director of Religious Studies (Years 7–9) has strengthened assessment practices, unit planning, and the tracking of curriculum allocated time and coverage. Regarded still as ‘work in progress’ this development is providing leaders and the board with greater assurance that students are progressing in their learning and faith formation.

The Director of Religious Studies (Years 10–13), as a faith and faculty leader, plays an instrumental role in staff formation, facilitating meetings and supporting new staff in the key traditions of the faith. He works in close proximity with colleagues to ensure effective timetabling and delivery, and is frequently present in the classrooms of those he supports.

The Principal receives information through annual effectiveness reports and increasingly strengthened progress and achievement data from the years 7–9 area. She also meets regularly with Proprietor Representatives, staff, and Special Character student committee members. Disaggregated reporting by ethnicity and gender at board level reflects a meaningful commitment to equity and accountability.

Catholic Curriculum

The college demonstrates a well-considered approach to integrating Catholic Worldview across curriculum and daily practice. It is expected that staff actively seek connections between curriculum learning and Catholic Special Character in Years 10–13, while Integrated Studies in Years 7–9 draws meaningfully upon *Tō Tātou Whakapono – Our Faith* to help contextualise unit planning within the NZ curriculum. Catholic Social Teaching Principles are authentically embedded within Religious Education and Retreat programmes, forming the foundation of Service and Outreach initiatives. [Dimension 3]

Cross-curricular integration is evident through purposeful links between Religious Education, Science, Social Sciences, and Physical Education, with Kaitiakitanga providing a unifying principle. The use of real-world resources such as Caritas, alongside ongoing teacher development to support emerging methodologies, reflects a thoughtful and cohesive approach to living Catholic Special Character.

Further Development

- *The integrated junior, Years 7 – 9, model remains in a consolidation phase, and leaders recognise the need for sustained structural support in cross-curricular collaboration.*
- *Suggested Internal Evaluation - Inquire into the assessment design for the junior Religious Education curriculum to ensure it serves all learners well and encourages strong learning engagement.*

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 college presents as an authentic and vibrant Catholic community in which spiritual life and Christian witness are actively nurtured. Strong relationships with local parishes, founding religious congregations, and contributing schools are a notable strength. Regular Miha Māori and Youth Masses reflect culturally responsive faith practice, while the annual celebration of Mercy and Dominican Charism Days demonstrates meaningful integration of founding congregations' charisms into community life.

Relational wellbeing is a clear priority, evidenced by pastoral structures such as 'break-time buddies,' in which senior students mentor junior peers. Cultural diversity is recognised as a strength, with dedicated responses including the appointment of a Māori/Pasifika Dean and a Whānau class providing pastoral care and cultural connection for up to 60 students. Deeper engagement with Te Ao Māori and the history of Aotearoa New Zealand are identified areas for continued growth. Staff survey data suggests the school has yet to fully integrate Catholic traditions from within its Indian and Filipino communities — a possible focus for Internal Evaluation. Do these students 'see themselves and their faith in the current school model?'

The now-disestablished Dunedin Catholic Schools' Kahui Ako has made a significant contribution to the college's Special Character and Social Justice culture. Its legacy is evident in the shared commitment to continue this collaborative work under the refreshed identity of Te Korowai o te Kotahitanga — signalling both continuity and renewal in pursuit of a shared Catholic Special Character mission.

Partnership and Collaboration

The college demonstrates a genuine commitment to collaborative education, evidenced by meaningful engagement with its Māori community. The establishment of Te Kaika Moana as an inclusive, neutral space reflects authentic partnership, while whānau-led hui signals a shift from consultation to authentic collaboration.

Cultural practices such as Year 10 Māori leadership camps and Kapa Haka incorporating Inoi and Himene affirm that Te Ao Māori is valued and embedded in college life. Te Reo Māori is offered to NCEA Level 2, with university-level staff development underway, and Māori whānau representation on the board strengthens bicultural governance. Parent feedback reflects genuine partnership, supported by effective communication tools and informative NCEA evenings.

The college's longstanding community connections are recognised as a valuable resource. The possible reinstatement of on-site Sunday Masses, following parish consultation, acknowledges the school as a spiritual home for many. Overall, the college exhibits strong relational foundations across its Māori and wider school communities.

Pastoral Care

'Trinity Catholic College exists to promote excellence in learning and teaching in a climate of faith and pastoral care for the Catholic Community of Dunedin.' [Vision Statement]

The Principal states that the pastoral vision statement, created for the college when it opened in 1989, remains as relevant today as it was then. The college seeks to ensure that education occurs in a safe, nurturing environment supported by a strong pastoral care network. Pastoral Care permeates the entire college community and is considered a key reason for roll growth and current reputation. Current key improvement strategies involve review of pastoral programmes in the current Implementation Plan for Catholic Special Character. [Ref: Dimension 4]

The Principal points to positive, strong relationships with the Presiding Board member and senior leaders as supportive of her own wellbeing. Staff receive affirmation and appreciation through briefings, acknowledgement of extra-curricular events, and generous leave provisions for significant family events.

A staff survey reveals high levels of satisfaction. Staff feel genuinely supported, valued, and trusted, with strong collegial relationships and approachable leadership identified as foundations of a positive wellbeing culture. Recognition practices, professional autonomy, and a shared sense of community and purpose are consistently appreciated. The overall picture is one of a caring, affirming environment where people feel they belong.

The school utilises a restorative practice model. The '5% triage' system allows the Senior Leadership Team to support students with extreme behavioural or mental health needs, with a fresh-start policy central to the school's ethos. Staff note a decline in student resilience and organisational skills post-Covid, necessitating significant time investment in a small number of high-needs students.

Service and Outreach

Recognising the Christian call of care for others and quest for justice and equality the college is proactive in its service and outreach activities. Long-standing programs such as the Edmund Rice Camps and the, *'what would Jesus do?'* framework successfully grounds student outreach in a clear theological context, fostering a sustainable culture of leadership where former participants return as multi-generational mentors. Other local outreach initiatives include a consistently full roster for Mercy Parish cooking and food distribution across parishes, and environmental initiatives like tree planting. In discussion, it was evident that junior students can articulate the theoretical values of service, however they may benefit from more support to translate school-based values into external community action.

Further Development

- **Cultural Inclusiveness:** Staff survey data suggests that the college has yet to fully integrate the Catholic traditions of its diverse ethnic communities raising the question of whether these students *'see themselves and their faith in the current school model.'* Deepening engagement with *Te Ao Māori*, the history of Aotearoa New Zealand is also encouraged.

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

The governance and management structures at Trinity Catholic College are highly effective in safeguarding Catholic Special Character. While rapid roll growth of 24% has placed pressure on class sizes and staff workload, the College demonstrates strategic responsiveness through a deliberate focus on staff wellbeing and professional development.

Catholic Special Character is purposefully embedded and visible across school life through a 'Climate of Faith and Pastoral Care.' This is further evidenced by a range of annual goals encompassing charism development, pastoral programmes, restorative practice, and inclusive support for ethnically diverse learners.

The College is proactively reviewing policies and practices surrounding the ethical use of AI, reflecting forward-thinking and values-aligned leadership in a rapidly evolving educational landscape. It is also currently involved in the process of transitioning its suite of Policies and Procedures into the *SchoolDocs* facility which also includes Catholic Special Character Evaluation Dimensions.

Internal Self-Evaluation

The most recent Internal Evaluation (Dimension 4) encompassed all dimension focus areas, generating an ambitious range of goals for the Catholic Special Character annual work plan. While narrowing the focus for identified priorities is appropriate, the college possesses the collaborative expertise across its senior leadership, DRS team, and Special Character groups to effectively progress a significant number of improvement strategies.

Future internal evaluation intentions include seeking to further improve data from effectiveness reports and continuing the review of the health and sexuality curriculum.

Catholic Special Character Reporting

The board receives comprehensive reports on student progress and achievement, including effectiveness reports focused on the delivery of Tō Tātou Whakapono and NCEA internal achievement.

Reporting across Years 1–7 has strengthened following a review of the integrated curriculum model with Religious Education now established as an independent curriculum area within the thematic reporting framework, and subject to ongoing evaluation.

This structural refinement also seeks to enhance the board's capacity for analysis and simplify the interpretation of student achievement data. Reporting continues to evolve in response to the ongoing refreshment of the state curriculum, reflecting the college's commitment to meaningful data gathering and reporting.

Legal Obligations

A review of the annual attestation [November 2025] document shows 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.
<https://safeguarding.catholic.org.nz>
- 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)
- Confirmation that the Health Curriculum is delivered in accordance with the Special Character of the school.
- Consulting with both the community and Proprietor, [Ed. & Training Acts.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	531	60%
5.2	14	2%
5.3	118	13%
5.4	146	16%
5.5	1	0%
Non-Preference	43	5%
FFP International Students	34	4%
Total roll	887	100%
Maximum roll	900	95% of capacity (excluding FFP students)

Examples of Strengths [Identified in staff feedback]

- **Living Values:** Staff overwhelmingly report that the school values are not just 'on the walls' but are 'lived.' There is strong alignment between Catholic teachings and daily restorative practices, which staff find makes conflict resolution straightforward and authentic.
- **Community and Collegiality:** A recurring theme is the "family feel" and "village" atmosphere. Staff feel highly supported by their peers and leadership, noting a culture of humour, kindness, and 'staff appreciation Fridays.'
- **Service Culture:** The school successfully translates faith into action through 'Faith in Action' initiatives, such as St. Vincent de Paul Society and Young Vinnies, which staff see as a major success.
- **Integration of Prayer:** Daily prayer and staff reflections are cited as practical ways the school centres its mission, even for non-Religious Teachers.

Progress with Recommendations from the 2023 External Evaluation

- There is a keenness within ākonga to see prayer life further developed. One such initiative proposed is the formation of a liturgy committee to support the DRS team. A periodic evaluation of prayer life across the college with a focus on the richness of prayer in its various forms would also ensure its continued impact.

Prayer life has been enriched with more student led opportunities and notably the establishment of Te Kaika Moana as an additional prayer space – eg Lenten prayer and Rosary. The school year began with staff refreshment and development in prayer, traditional prayer, song, waiata, reflective prayer, meaning of Sign of the Cross as a prayer, staff led prayer. Designed to assist with class prayer with ongoing role modelling from the Principal and DRS.

- Take steps to ensure that the integration of Religious Education does not compromise its high status or the effectiveness of its outcomes and that there is an effective tracking system in place for coverage. The implementation of Tō Tātou Whakapono – Our Faith, might present an opportunity to ensure that the required content hours are being met.

Significant development has taken place particularly in the Years 7 – 9 learning area also involving the appointment DRS for the junior area also allowing a greater focus in the Years 10 – 13 learning area.

- Provide the board with information and data from other than NCEA year groups. The board requires regular information about Religious Education progress from the year 7-9.

Reporting to parents has been refined to allow for the highlighting of Religious Education as delineated from other curriculum areas an element of thematic reporting. This has also enabled more effective board reporting and is the subject of ongoing review due to current educational change.

- Continue to refine the internal evaluation process to ensure that the methodology used is manageable and continues to be meaningful for growth and development.

Works well in a collaborative approach with key staff seeking further information and voice as required. There is effective alignment between Internal Evaluation and Strategic / Annual implementation planning. Refer to Dimension 4.

- Continue to follow up with caregivers to ensure that the category of preference enrolment (5.1 – 5-5) is verified with the parish priest or delegated representative.*

Preference categories are now SMS recorded as part of the enrolment process.

- Proprietor's appointees to prepare and submit their annual report to the bishop independently of the internal evaluation process. (Ref: 2020 Handbook for Boards of Trustees of New Zealand Catholic State-Integrated Schools – Pg 40: Compliances)

Refer to revised procedures implemented in Dunedin Diocese requiring appointees to individually submit their reports annually.

Key Recommendations to Support Development

- **Formalise cross-curricular integration structures:** Establish regular scheduled collaboration time between Religious Education, Science, and Physical Education staff, particularly to co-develop the sexuality topic ensuring it continues to reflect Catholic Special Character. Clarity of roles and shared planning accountability will help sustain integration.
- **Cultural Inclusion - Consider as an Inquiry focused Internal Evaluation.**
Staff survey data suggests that the college has yet to fully integrate the Catholic traditions of its diverse ethnic communities raising the question of whether these students 'see themselves and their faith in the current school model.' While the 'family' culture and staff collegiality are exemplary, there is growth potential in more intentionally weaving the diverse cultural expressions of its multicultural Catholic population into its liturgical life and empowering students and diverse cultural groups to lead the expression of their own faith.

In Conclusion

It was a privilege to visit Trinity Catholic College where the Church's mission is strongly evident through all areas of school life. 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 suggestions for further development across dimensions and recommendations to strengthen existing good practice. The organisation and preparation for external evaluation, and hospitality extended to Jo Walshe and myself is greatly appreciated.

Ngā mihi nui

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

Lead Evaluator

5 May 2026



Catholic Diocese of Dunedin, Te Hāhi Katorika o Otepoti

