

**Diocese of Dunedin Catholic Education Office**  
**External Review of Catholic Special Character and Development**

**REPORT ON**

**St Peter's College**  
**and Boarding Hostel, Rosmini House, Gore**

**17-19 October 2016**

School Type	Integrated Co-educational Year 7–13 College
Decile	8
Principal	Mrs Kate Nicholson
DRS	Mr Brendan Terry
Board Chair	Mrs Rhonda Reid
Chaplain	Fr Damian Wynn-Williams
Staffing Roll 2016	394 (including 16 International students)
Maximum Roll	506
Maximum Non-preference	26
Preference Enrolment Categories	5.1 , 5.2 , 5.3 , 5.4 , 5.5 .
Roll-generated teaching staff	29.81
Other staffing	nil
Ethnic composition	Maori 13%, Pacific 1%, Other 9%

Lead Reviewer            Mr John Boyce

Support Reviewer        Mrs Tui Pasco

*The Review Team wishes to thank the Principal and Staff for their support and enthusiasm for the Review process and for their organisation and hospitality.*

**Summary Page**

St Peter's College, Gore, continues to be an excellent Catholic School in the Dunedin Diocese. In a time of declining rolls in rural schools, it has maintained its roll, and is focused on excellence in academic studies, cultural and sporting pursuits. It looks for and finds opportunities to celebrate student success.

The school motto of "Charity fulfils the law" is at the heart of its strong focus on service and commitment to people in the community, the wider town and country areas. It has ensured that students present well in the community and demand for places by those less associated with Church is a sign of how well the school is perceived in the wider community.

A recent initiative has been to welcome 10 boarders whose education was at risk when the Gore High School hostel closed during this year. These students have been welcomed into the hostel community and have fitted into the hostel's Catholic character seamlessly.

The Board provides good governance for the College. It prioritises aspects of Special Character in its actions and budget, and understands the need for the school to treasure both its history and its Special Character. The Proprietor's Appointees on the Board are involved in all aspects of governance and guide the Board in matters of Special Character.

The Board and Principal have built a new leadership team that has the skills and talents needed to lead the school very well indeed. The team has strong understanding and enthusiasm for the Special Character, for academic excellence and Christian community. The staff is clearly effective in and outside the classroom, and demonstrates clear care for the students, and commitment to the Special Character of the school.

The Director of Religious Studies brings to the role an ability to connect with young people and to support their faith journey. With the Assistant Director of Religious Studies, the teachers of Religious Education, and the growing involvement of the team of tagged teachers, the leadership of the Catholic character of St Peter's is in good hands.

Staff at the College are welcoming, and supportive of the school's Special Character. Staff are proud of their pastoral care and the way they support student success. They join in regular professional development to deepen their knowledge and skills.

Students are friendly and inclusive. They are proud of the school and its achievements. Students talk positively about the school, its sense of family, its successes, its Masses, prayer life and liturgies - and the way the pastoral care of the College has been developed to track and support their learning.

Religious Education is planned and considered. It is closely linked to Social Justice work as the school makes links to faith and works. The development of contemplative prayer through mindful practices is a strong initiative in the junior school - and will be a challenge for the school to maintain and develop as these students move through the school. St Peter's is possibly uniquely placed to be a school where contemplation is universal within four years.

The popularity of the College has meant that a number of students have had little connection with the Church prior to enrolment. Supporting them in their entrance to the College and by way of evangelisation will continue to be a strategic focus for the school.

Proposals from this review related to strengthening and developing the existing good practice of

the school and to ensuring that the College aligns itself with the expectations of the Integration Agreement relating to tagged teachers and non-preference enrolment.

## Since the last review: Compliance Requirements

There were two issues requiring compliance at the time of the review.

1. The Board has acknowledged the need to continue their work in returning preference numbers to the required 26. This number had been exceeded through misinterpretation of the requirements and the Board and Principal are working with their Parish Priest and Chaplain to reduce the numbers without unduly affecting the intake at any one year level.
2. The other issue is the on-going struggle to appoint tagged teachers who are active in the Church as well as expert in their subjects.

## Recommendations for continuing growth and development:-

- That the College, perhaps with diocesan or national offices, develop a programme for students new to Catholic schools or active Catholicism. Probably less than 10% of the roll are active in the Church at the time of their enrolment and students expressed some bewilderment in environments of prayer, liturgy, sacrament - with the content, but also with the ritual that goes with it: "why do we stand?" "what does ... mean?" This programme might also be of benefit to the parents of these students as well. A sacramental programme needs to be offered as a final step in this process. It would be helpful if there were a nationally recognised and resourced programme for all schools.
- That the College work (perhaps with leaders in other schools in the diocese and/or with national offices) to develop an extension programme to deepen the understanding and practice of currently committed students. Perhaps these students could also work as buddies for students new to Catholic practice. If such a programme is developed it would be good if the school, the parishes, and diocese could find ways to support it with resources, staff and financially.
- That the Board consider who would be a worthwhile person to take responsibility for the assessment of the Special Character dimensions in the Principal's appraisal. This might be an opportunity to build on links with the contributing primary school.
- That the School Leadership Team continue to work to ensure Special Character impact in all curriculum management documents, as well as the teaching programmes and practices of all ELAs.
- That the Leadership Team look at ways to ensure Special Character is always a consideration in all decisions by including the DRS in those decisions.
- The College has had a difficult five years, especially for staff and Board. This may be the time to deliberately revitalise the Christian community among the

adults running the school. (This might be done through shared learning to enhance awareness of aspects of the Special Character, thus helping the Board to meet training expectations in this area.)

## **Catholic Special Character Dimensions**

*Catholic Community - Te Iwi Whanau Katorika The school is a community where Gospel values are central, where faith is nourished and where Christian celebration in the Catholic tradition is highly valued.*

***Spirituality: The individual and communal spirituality of the whole school community is promoted and nurtured***

The school is clearly Catholic in its commitment to communal spirituality and to the support of each individual's growth in faith. Its great strength is the sense of community it has built which focuses on authentic relationships and the links that many can make to the gospel. Students come to the school from a wide range of Catholic and non-Catholic backgrounds and most can make the connection to the Special Character focus of the School. They understand that in this school the link to the Gospels is found particularly through the school motto which is taken from the Rosminian Charism "Charity fulfils the law" and the Mercy Charism.

***Evangelisation: The school is a faith community which endeavours to spread the Good News by word and witness.***

The DRS and other staff are committed to ongoing development of programmes that encourage students to explore their spirituality and their role in the Catholic environment and the Catholic Church.

***Partnership: Education is a collaborative responsibility***

The school works well with the main contributing Catholic Primary School and there are clear links and plans to build and grow that relationship in the future. Both see their success based on a close and cooperative relationship. St Peter's and St Mary's are fortunate to have such an opportunity to share and support. Several programmes involve College students working with St Mary's pupils.

Relationships with the Parish are growing. The school is seen as part of the Parish and the Parish Priest is very supportive of school involvement in the parish - and his involvement in the school and hostel.

The school's current links are often in using the parish facilities more often for school and hostel liturgies and programmes, but staff are exploring ways to help students become part of the life of the parish through a range of ministries.

Staff are loyal to the school and supportive of the Special Character and its general aim. There is continued work to do to help staff develop their knowledge of Catholicism, and to see the importance of the role they play in engaging the students and making links to faith and life.

The student body is 13% Maori and the school is consciously supporting these students in a range of contexts in the College. Links have been made with the *rungaga* and a *hui* has been held, *Te Reo* continues to be compulsory for all students in years 7 and 8 and is offered as an option for older students. A *Kapa Haka* group meets regularly and is involved in formal welcomes. Language is used in assemblies and signage. There is opportunity for more links to be made with culture in the art, language, structures and symbols used around the College.

***Values: The school identifies and actively promotes gospel values.***

School documents make good use of the key values of the founders – Community, Commitment and Compassion. Students generally understand the importance of these three values and are enthusiastic when talking about them. They are recognised and demonstrated in assemblies, in class, around the school, and in the hostel.

***School Culture: Catholic Special Character is visible in the relationships, and the artistic expressions seen throughout the school.***

Visitors are welcomed by all. Students are naturally friendly and supportive. Hospitality is part of the Mercy Charism and the College life continues that tradition.

International students report being welcomed and affirmed in their new setting.

There are a number of religious icons and symbols around the College. Many of these are part of the College story and have been present for some time. Few new signs or symbols have been introduced. Corridors and foyers in the main area are rich in proclaiming and supporting student success and the house. Some classrooms could have more stories and illustrations alongside the crucifixes to show their connection to Catholic Character. There are few Maori expressions of faith and there are few symbols around the exterior of the College. The College might develop a plan involving students and Maori to help begin to address this.

***Leadership: Leadership effectively shapes the faith-based vision, direction, values and***

***outcomes of the school programme.***

The Board is well led and has appointed a leadership team with energy and vision.

The Board has strong and active representatives of the Proprietor and other members are fully committed to the Special Character of the school, recognising that this what makes the school special, and why they chose St Peters for their children.

School Leaders ensure that Special Character is at the heart of decisions, but are also considering ways to include the DRS in all decisions so that the Special Character is a deliberate consideration in all day-to-day decisions, and the person who normally actions Special Character helps form the decision.

The Director of Religious Studies has taken leadership of a wide range of activities. The Leadership team is looking at ways to ensure that his focus is on the Special Character rather than a range of other roles he has currently. He has a real presence in class and is able to engage students in difficult concepts, but too wide a curriculum focus and too great a workload alongside his Catholic roles place him at risk of burn-out.

The Assistant Director of Religious Studies shares his load, but may be able to take more responsibilities, and the Board may find a way to appoint a part-time Geography teacher.

***Stewardship: The school accepts responsibility for delivering education with a Catholic Special Character.***

The College understands its mission to be an extension of the parish and Catholic families. It has created a strong culture that has attracted many people to the College both as students and staff.

The school has two strong and interwoven charisms from the Mercy and Rosminian traditions. Staff and students relate to the traditions.

Documents and policies have clear guidelines and support for Special Character. A strength of the College is the way it has worked to include Special Character in key strategic documents. Most curriculum management documents have clear and explicit statements regarding the ways the Special Character is included in programmes of learning. The Leadership Team intends to ensure that this is done in all ELA management documents. The next step will be to ensure practical concrete steps are also included to guide their use in unit plans and lessons.

The Strategic Plan has goals for Special Character, and the Annual Plan has clearly stated Special Character steps towards their implementation.

There is work to do in the allocation of tags and the understanding of the Proprietor's

expectation for staff in tagged positions. The College has fewer tagged positions than required and needs to continue to work to address this as new staff are appointed. School Leaders are moving to develop a formation plan for staff who hold tags and roles and expectations for them, such as buddying staff new to Catholic schools and contributing to the effectiveness of liturgies. Many tagged staff already are well involved in tasks supporting the Catholic character of the school.

The enrolment process has shown that there are some tensions in the management of non-preference. After a review of the requirements for preference the school accepts that the non-preference roll is above that allowed by the Integration Agreement. The Parish and College are working together to establish an understanding that meets the Proprietor's expectations and supports the College to meet the demand for places. The College wants to engage in a proactive sacramental programme but that could be a significant workload issue, so leaders will seek support from the diocese and national office for programmes and resources (including people to lead such programmes). The programmes will give the opportunity to reduce the non-preference numbers with the support of the Parish and Diocese.

Job descriptions and advertisements are strong in their explanation of Special Character and the way they influence the programme of the school. Professional development is well resourced but staff find the continual need to travel and the scarcity of programmes at convenient times to be a barrier. However the Board and leadership team are committed to finding ways to support all staff to participate and complete expectations for certification.

The College has a strong appraisal system with clear and reflective links to the school's Special Character. However, the reviewer also discussed with the Board aspects of the Principal's Appraisal and how these might need to have more focus around Special Character with a reviewer expert in Special Character.

***Worship: A Catholic culture of prayer, liturgy, and faith based celebration is promoted in the school.***

Staff take turns beginning briefing with prayer. Prayer is part of form time, and all RE lessons observed began with prayer or liturgy. A *kete* of student prayer is available for junior classes, and practices of mindful meditation are used in the junior school.

Masses and other schoolwide liturgies mark important events in the Church calendar. Liturgies are well planned and involve students in leadership and ministries. Students respect those roles. The Chapel continues to provide an excellent space for smaller liturgies and the parish church for larger school occasions.



***Service: Students assist people in need through service and outreach opportunities.***

As part of its connection to the school motto, “Charity Fulfils the Law”, the school has strong connections to Catholic Charities such as St Vincent De Paul. During the review visit senior students spent a morning helping people and organisations in the town, and hostel students report a successful “Buy a Boarder” programme where they helped people in need.

***Collaboration with the Parish: The school collaborates with the parish of which it is part.***

One of the challenges for the College is the need to continue to enhance its relationships with the Parish which is based several kilometres away from the school. However, the College and Parish want to be pro-active in building and strengthening links through use of facilities, participation in events and liturgies, and in social action. Building such a relationship will take time and commitment.

***Pastoral Care - Manaakitanga***

The school community nurtures, supports and cares for individuals.

***Relationships: The school is a friendly, welcoming, cooperative learning environment where the dignity of each person is respected.***

A positive, warm, quiet and cooperative learning environment is apparent to all visitors. Students are proud of the strong and supportive relationships between older and younger students at school and in the community. Students believe that the relationships fostered in the school are an expression of the school’s Special Character.

Maori students are encouraged and supported. Progress of Maori students is tracked and reported as part of Ministry of Education strategic focus. The Maori students achieve well above the national norms. It has already been stated that opportunities for more connections to Maori through symbolism and language, as well as on-going *hui* with parents, could be explored.

There continues to be a strong and positive group of international students enrolled in the school. This has presented the College with a very valuable cultural diversity as well as other gifts and talents - essential aspects of modern life not easily found in Gore. The opportunity exists to learn aspects of culture and language which will support these students during their time in the school.

The school and hostel have systems for affirming and recognising good behaviour, and behaviours that demonstrate commitment to the school’s values.

***Safety: The school provides for students and staff an environment that is safe – physically, emotionally, spiritually, socially and culturally.***

Students reported that St Peter's is a safe College. They were able to discuss challenges to safety and show that if there were issues, that staff react and intervene in a timely way.

Bullies are not tolerated and the students can explain how the College manages the normal range of behaviours for teenagers. Learning Tutors track and plan to support the pastoral and academic care of the students. The Deputy Principal and Assistant Principal play a critical role in keeping focus and guiding its success.

***Behaviour Management: Discipline processes are just, compassionate, respectful and consistent.***

The school has a detailed and supportive manual for staff to use in managing behaviour. Students understand that there are consequences for inappropriate behaviour. They report that consequences used by the school are generally fair. Students interviewed believe that where the College has exercised its disciplinary functions the process used has been fair.

Stand down and suspension figures remain low.

The emphasis is on positive behaviour rather than punishment and reaction.

***Cultural Awareness: The school is open to the enrichment of diverse cultures.***

The school continues to develop its culture of inclusion and welcome to people from a range of cultures. The *Kapa Haka* group continues to grow in strength. International students report that they are happy and welcome.

Some *Te Reo* is used to name spaces and in greetings in assembly but it will grow as more of the 13% Maori students access their language and seek connection in language around the college and in liturgy.

***Organisation: Pastoral care is organised in a way which is evident to all members of the school community.***

The Senior Managers of the College have made a serious commitment to refining and defining the organisation of pastoral systems. Staff manuals and other documents explain and support staff in their use of the systems. There is a genuine attempt to engage with every child. Tracking and sharing information is a strength of this College. Tracking sheets show the appreciation of school leaders that engagement in school

generally can be increased through appropriate support from all the pastoral systems.

*Religious Education - Te Whakaakoranga Whakapono The school helps fulfil the teaching mission of the Church by living and teaching h values of Jesus Christ*

***Leadership: The Principal and the Director of Religious Studies provide leadership and sound management in Religious Education.***

The Principal has embraced the challenge of being a teacher of faith and genuinely leads the College in Special Character, and is a consistent role model of down-to-earth modern Catholic involvement in the Church.

The Director of Religious Studies has shown that he has the knowledge, skills, charisma and enthusiasm to lead and engage staff and students in Special Character. As he is able to focus more singly on the development of the Special Character he will even more effective. He understands the role and he has the energy and vision to help all students make positive and lasting connections with Jesus and with the Church.

The Assistant Director of Religious Studies has clearly defined roles, and the experience and formation to contribute to the work and leadership of the Special Character. The Review Team is confident leadership of the Special Character of St Peter's is in good hands.

***Religious Education Curriculum: The Religious Education programme is soundly managed and professionally delivered.***

Religious Education is planned and delivered across the school within the time guidelines of the Proprietor. St Peter's has begun the two-year programme of implementing the Year 7-10 realigned Religious Education Curriculum to better meet the needs of her students. To complement the curriculum St Peter's also makes a strong emphasis on seasons of the Church and Social Justice projects that fit with the College motto "Charity fulfils the law". The Director of Religious Studies monitors the programme and the units taught.

Data collected from the Religious Education programme in years 7 – 10 is collated. Unit plans have sections where teachers record what they will change with the units when next they teach it. The challenge for St Peter's College, as with all year one to ten programmes, is what to record and how to record it so that meaningful data can be gathered for governance and changes made to programmes to suit learners.

***Integrated Curriculum: The teaching of Religious Education is integrated with other curriculum areas especially those which include ethical issues, personal relationships and sexuality education.***

During the review, schemes for a range of departments were reviewed. All departments are well planned and most make clear how they understand the part they play in transmitting Special Character through resources used, topics chosen and the awareness of challenges to Catholic teaching in some subjects. All Heads of Essential Learning Areas need to ensure they have clear and explicit statements that shows their awareness and guide teachers in supporting Special Character in their day-to-day lessons and contacts with students.

***Resources: The Board of Trustees makes financial provision for Religious Education and Catholic Special Character resources.***

The Director of Religious Studies reported that funds for resources are available as needed. The Board has supported the department and staff with technology and other resources as required. The Chapel which is outside the Integration Agreement is also funded by the College.

***Professional Development: The school provides opportunities for regular Religious Education professional development and spiritual development for all staff.***

The College has supported staff to undertake formation particularly associated with the Catholic Education Conference and the understanding of the Rosmini and Mercy Charism. This funding has only been partially spent, but the Board will work to encourage all tagged staff to participate in at least 12 hours formation each year.

The College is to be congratulated on the way it has integrated Special Character topics into staff training meetings - and for the excellent staff participation rates.

***Communication: The school communicates with parents about Religious Education programmes.***

The new website and the regular newsletters are good ways of branding and supporting Special Character. Newsletters frequently have Special Character comment and the web site has strong and practical links to the school charism and history.

The College is aware that not only is there a significant group of non-Catholic parents but also a large group, with preference, who are re-connecting with the faith through their children. It is important the College is able to support their journey with website connections to resources. Ultra-fast broadband will help the school make links and share more topics with parents so that they understand the work that students are doing

in school. The College is aware that they need to continue to seek ways to share this knowledge and practice.

**Catholic Special Character Review Team October 2016**

**John Boyce Lead Reviewer**

# Rosmini House Review

**Roll: 71 (10 GHS students)**

**Non-Preference Numbers: TBC**

The review took place as part of the review of Special Character for the College. It included visits to the Boarding House and interviews with the Director of Boarding of Rosmini House. Student comment came from the groups arranged by the school.

## **Spirituality**

The Boarding House has worked hard to ensure that the House is an extension of school and family life. It has policies and expectations for prayer and participation in formal liturgies. Prayer is a regular part of House life with grace before dinner and prayers before bed. Students speak positively and knowledgeably of the school and hostel values. Students normally attend the parish Mass on Saturday evening.

All students are involved in Social Justice projects, and the tone of the House is that of a positive and supportive Christian community. Students are encouraged to complete service which is organised each term by the student council. The recent *Buy a Boarder* work programme was spoken of with enthusiasm. Any profits or goods from such events are donated to various charities that support the welfare of young people.

The Rosmini House management team has developed prayers for grace and evening prayer. These are student driven and provide an environment where prayer is part of the regular pattern of life in the hostel. They are also working to further develop artwork, awards (such as the new Mercy medal), their newsletter initiative, character-development graphs, and information boards that reinforce and enhance their Catholic environment.

Rosmini House management has encouraged parents to visit at times when liturgies are celebrated and to stay after the liturgy to discuss aspects of House life. The House hosts families on these occasions.

At the beginning of each year the Rosmini House staff run their own retreat which sets out the expectations for behaviour and engagement around Special Character. It is aware that many children coming to the Boarding House come with very limited association with the Church.

The Chaplain is welcomed and is encouraged to visit and dine with students. The Director of Boarding also works hard to integrate a number of students referred by CYF as part of the philosophy that the boarding house is a place of hope for young people.

## **Pastoral Care**

The pastoral care of the Boarding House is well planned and documented. It is well regarded by the students who speak highly of the support they get on arrival and through the year.

The Boarding House caters for students from year 7. Management has staged the support mechanisms to ensure that these children are nurtured to independence as they progress through the year levels. Of particular note is the mentoring programme in term 1 and 2 each year. In this programme senior students meet frequently with a new student and become an “older sibling”. Senior and junior students commented on the success and value of the bonds between students of different ages. The recent integration of 10 students from the closed Gore High School Hostel has gone well, and students are proud of the way new students (local and international) are welcomed and included.

Staff also meet formally with each student weekly and document the meeting. At staff meetings issues are shared and concerns shared. Actions are taken when appropriate. Staff are proactive when dealing with sensitive issues and document in detail their support of students who have particular issues. Records show high levels of supervision.

The Boarding House is welcoming and inclusive. Surveys are taken regularly with students. Students report that they have easy access to staff and are heard when they have concerns. Data from surveys is used to develop action plans which contribute to improvement. Self-review is a regular part of the management of the boarding house. Management take pride in this process and document subsequent action plans, their implementation and review.

Leadership and responsibility is encouraged in the House. Leadership roles are well documented with senior students having responsibility for many general leadership functions and Special Character leadership including the organisation of masses or liturgies. Students also have a voice through their student council. Students from different year levels are proud to take responsibility for the quality of house life.

Where student families struggle to meet their financial commitment to the Boarding House, support has been found with St Vincent de Paul and the Rosminian Trust. The Hostel Board also allocates a significant amount of money to the ‘Student Welfare fund’ which is used to ensure all students have access to resources, and the same quality boarding experience. The Hostel Board has taken their obligation of care seriously and provided generous funding for pastoral support of students and families. Making the house accessible to all Catholic families, regardless of their means, is clearly aligned

with Catholic Social teaching and the charisms of the school's founders.

### **Management and Leadership**

The Director of Boarding and the Boarding Manager are not Catholic but they understand the expectation for leadership of Special Character. Formation experiences and Professional Development is planned and includes Special Character expectations. There are a significant number of other staff who are Catholic. In selecting staff, the management is conscious of the need to promote Special Character, and makes good use of RE staff from the school in providing professional development in this area.

A particular strength of the Rosmini House management is the documentation around Strategic Planning, Annual Planning and Human Resourcing. Good policies describe expectations and the appraisal system is well documented and focused. It has clear Special Character expectations.

### **Rosmini House Recommendations:**

- That Rosmini House staff and students continue to develop their programme for raising Catholic and Christian young people in a positive and family-friendly environment where Gospel values, community, and Catholic Social Teaching are explicit and turned into worthwhile action.
- That Rosmini House continue their work in attracting Catholic families to their Catholic environment.
- That the House continue to develop concrete signs and symbols of their Catholic environment.

Staff and students at Rosmini House have created a positive and Christian environment where children are welcomed, heard and formed in an atmosphere that reflects the values of good Catholic homes. Visiting the boarding house and speaking to staff and students was a very affirming experience.

**Catholic Review Team September 2016**

**John Boyce Lead Reviewer**