

## Broadsheet of Good Practice in Integrated Schools

### Editorial

This Good News includes two stories of the joy of people, schools and parishes faithfully sustaining and developing the practical, spiritual, religious and educational aspects of parish-school life together. St Joseph's, Pukekohe and Holy Cross, Papatoetoe remind us of the many ways we can carry this out.

There is also good news which takes us into new territory: ground breaking classroom practice in religious education at Bishop Viard College, Porirua and internationally acclaimed inclusive education at St Francis de Sales, Island Bay.

The wonderful good news of our latest new school is also celebrated in this edition. Sancta Maria Catholic Primary School in Flat Bush, Manukau City serves the

burgeoning population of south east Auckland, creating a new centre of "innovative and inspiring Catholic education of excellence."

Thank you to our writers for sharing their good news with us. Enjoy their stories and be inspired by them, as you go about creating your own daily good news.

Susan Apáthy

## ***Inclusive Education Framework for Special Education at St Francis de Sales School***

Mandy Serci, SENCO, St Francis de Sales School, Island Bay, Wellington.

At St Francis de Sales we strongly believe in the importance of equality for all in education. During the last ten years we have been on a journey to develop a holistic structure that supports students, parents and staff. We have developed a collaborative environment that encompasses and respects all the members of the team. This has been vital to ensure successful inclusionary practice at St Francis de Sales.

We have also developed a learning framework to ensure students' cognitive and social success. Within this framework there are three key strategies that cater for individual needs.

**The Choice Card:** this is an innovative visual strategy that addresses the four most important needs of the child with special needs in a school, namely, a sensory learning programme tailored to the child's particular sensory needs, cognitive skills, social learning and communicative and motivational needs. Through use of the Choice Card the child is enabled to participate fully and independently within an

inclusive context. The Choice Card strategy has been used in a wide variety of settings and has been shared with many other professionals and a variety of schools, who have incorporated it into their practice.

**The Learning Journey Record:** this is a journal which visually charts the child's year in a book format. Through photographs, notes and samples it becomes a motivational tool for the child and a communicative and assessment tool for the whole team.

**The Learning Room:** this is a specially designed area where the child can develop all the skills needed for inclusion. The children work individually and in small groups, developing skills in socialisation, communication, literacy and numeracy. This area is safe and secure, enabling children to participate in a sensory learning environment that is tailored to their individual needs. We also run an experienced-based programme and our special needs students take part in a wide variety of activities such as horse riding, all sports programmes, class camps and many outings into the community to develop life skills.

Another feature that makes St Francis de Sales stand out is our buddy system. Senior students, under the leadership of senior Buddy Leaders, care for the children and teach social skills during breaks. The students devise their own timetable and lead activities. The responsibility the seniors show is much commented on and admired throughout the whole school community.

Over the years at times there have been worries with funding, behaviour and other concerns but we know that, by always having faith and working within our framework, all will be resolved and concerns can be worked through. St Francis de Sales has always striven to offer the very best to all our students. Our motto is 'The measure of love is to love without measure'. We feel that it is fulfilling our motto to embrace and support any child with special needs who comes to our school.

# Parish and School Partnership

Ann O'Grady, Director of Religious Studies, Holy Cross School, Papatoetoe.

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In Papatoetoe the school and parish are located on a common site. We are proud of the strong relationship we have developed with our parish community. Our children interact freely with the parishioners whom they see regularly at our Friday class and school Masses.

The school and church reflect one community of people who learn and worship together. We want our students to be lifelong learners who demonstrate the Catholic values of our Faith and the Mercy Charism of our school. We want them to emulate our core values of Human Dignity, Compassion, Reconciliation and Service in their daily lives and we hope that our close school-parish relationship will enable them to see these values in our parishioners who are their role models.

The parish priest, the principal and the DRS work together for the children of the school and parish. Father regularly visits the classrooms and supports the Religious Education programme. We jointly prepare the children for the sacraments of initiation and reconciliation.

Once a week a senior and junior class combine to lead the parish liturgy. This leads the children to greater appreciation of what Eucharist is about. The school also leads the parish Sunday liturgy monthly and this has become very popular with parishioners.

Some staff are active members of the parish and visible role models for our students and their families at Sunday Mass.

We celebrate major feast days with a Mass and morning tea. Many parishioners join us for morning tea and watch the children participating in a variety of different activities. Some parishioners live in local rest homes and they love it when the children visit. There are also the mid-year concert and Christmas entertainment put on by the children for older parishioners.

Our classrooms are used for the catechetical programmes run by the Samoan, Tongan and Iraqi groups. The parish hall is used by the school. We are working on a new joint community hall facility. When the school administration block was rebuilt we

incorporated the parish offices, which allowed us to share our resources. The school is a good recruiting ground to get families more involved in the parish and working together and the parish supports families in our school. The proprietor appointees on the BOT are the parish priest and parishioners with long associations with the school. The PTFA is seen across both school and parish life. Parishioners provide an opportunity for our Year 7 and 8 students to learn about career choices and to hear how they see their job from a Catholic perspective.

The local community often approaches the school-parish community to participate in ecumenical services and combined Christmas carol services. The local Santa Parade committee approaches us to provide a float for the parade to reflect the Christian message of Christmas.

Our parish and school share a common vision – the desire to provide a Catholic education for our children and to teach them the ways of Christ.

## Parish School Relationships – What works well at St Joseph's?

Jocelyn Uasike, Principal, St Joseph's School, Pukekohe.

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The relationship between our school and parish is strong. Establishing and maintaining this relationship requires commitment and work from both parish and school – it does not just happen by chance.

Practices that strengthen and enhance our school parish relationship:

We are a parish school. Many of our parishioners, and sometimes their parents and grandparents, have been educated at St Joseph's. They have a pride and sense of ownership in the school. We use every opportunity to welcome parents and parishioners into our school. Parishioners recount stories ranging from when they helped to build the swimming pool fifty years ago, to helping build the new school hall in more recent years. Working bees, fairs, cake stalls and special celebrations involving school and parish have always been a strong feature of the Pukekohe community. These projects continue today, bringing people together and building community.

Our parish priest and assistant priest maintain

a strong presence in our school. They join the staff for morning tea at least once a week. They make a point of getting to know new staff and when staff or pupils are new to the area they often visit them in their homes.

The parish bulletin is displayed in the school every week and the weekly school newsletter is available in the church. The school willingly publishes parish notices in the school newsletter and vice versa.

The principal prepares a short written report for the Parish Council meeting each month and Board of Trustees members take turns to attend the Parish Council meetings and speak to the report. The minutes of Parish Council meetings are then circulated to all Board members each month.

Each year the Parish Council and the Board of Trustees have a social event, usually a shared meal, taking turns to organise the event. This is very effective in strengthening relationships between the two groups.

The school and parish willingly share facilities and resources. Prior to the building of our new

school hall the school used the parish hall and recently the parish has used the school hall as the parish builds a new church and revamps its parish hall.

Many of our school staff are actively involved in parish life, taking on various ministries within the parish. This strengthens school-parish ties and helps maintain good communication.

Our founding order, the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, has a community within our parish and the sisters are always welcome visitors to our school. This year the sisters celebrate the 125th jubilee of the order's arrival in Pukekohe. School staff have been key members of the committee organising jubilee celebrations.

In addition to class and full school Masses held during the week, a school-assisted Sunday Mass is held each term.

Groups within the parish often provide support for school activities, e.g. the youth group helps at the school fair, and at times the school PTA or groups of students assist with parish based activities.

# Sancta Maria Catholic Primary School, Flat Bush: our Newest School of Excellence

Gina Benade, Principal.

Months of preparation led to the sound of little voices and the patter of feet on February 5th 2010 – and our beautiful new building was transformed into a school by our students, teachers and families.

Sancta Maria Catholic Primary School is a Year 0–6 state integrated school situated in the heart of the new town of Flat Bush, in Manukau, South Auckland. The school is located on a shared Catholic campus with Sancta Maria College and the St Luke's Catholic community.

Our 1st March roll was 177 students.

From the beginning, the Establishment Committee desired a school that would provide a nurturing, gentle and caring environment, in which children would be loved and cherished as sacred individuals, created in the image of God. Thus the school name was born. Sancta Maria is Latin for Holy Mary, the mother of God. The beautiful and immaculate spirit of Mary fills and permeates our school, guiding and nourishing us on our collective journey, as she walks with us to God. All that takes place in our school has a clear focus on the life and virtues of Mother Mary.

We identify Mary's virtues as: full of grace, obedience, faithfulness, compassion, thoughtfulness, hope, contentment and determination. We trust that these virtues will support our children to become students who are educated, successful and active citizens with Catholic faith in their hearts. Our school culture values uniqueness, and encourages

ownership and self-awareness, so that we all have confidence to reach out to others. We are committed to consultation, co-operation and building a community that works together in harmony with respect and understanding.

We believe that Mary's virtues support our school mission of providing an innovative and inspiring Catholic education of excellence. This means developing a love of learning and personal excellence; respecting God's creation; and developing our God-given gifts.

Our mission is encapsulated in the school motto, 'Growing in Faith Together' which encompasses all of our dreams and wishes for our community.

In our first year we are focusing on getting to know each other and developing our community. One way of achieving this goal has been to collaborate as staff, students and community on our approach to the New Zealand Curriculum. We have prepared our school curriculum from a positive Catholic perspective.

Already such strong signs of positive spiritual, educational and community success exist at Sancta Maria Catholic Primary School that first-time visitors express their disbelief that the school is only five months' old! We trust that this beautiful school will create a special place in the hearts of all who spend time here.



▲ *Reading together.*



▲ *Filipino dance.*



▲ *P.E. in the courtyard*



▲ *Morning Prayer*

# The New World and Religion

Jane Norman, Teacher of Science and Religion, Bishop Viard College, Porirua.

I have taught at Bishop Viard College for about five years now, and found that I was hitting the same problem over and over again in my classroom: how to make Religious Education relevant and interesting for the students sitting in front of me. Many students in Catholic secondary schools feel that Religious Education is a subject of little value and, therefore not worth their effort. So, after a few years of banging my head against a brick wall I decided it was time for a change, time to set aside the texts that were older than my students and bring in the technology.

The first thing out the door was the way I organised homework. It was virtually impossible to get a student to hand in a 500 word essay on the topic of the week. Essays and opinion writing were replaced by mp3 'readings' and questions where students have a commentary or lecture on mp3 that they have to upload, discuss with their peers and then answer questions. Students are now asked to produce a 30 second video clip on a topic using their cell phones or digital cameras, or they are asked to create a podcast. In assessments, students are now given the option to submit a video documentary instead of writing an essay. They can submit PowerPoint presentations or well backed artwork, allowing each student to draw on their personal strengths in assessments.

The classroom is now online, allowing students to access their class from any internet-accessible computer anywhere they are, whether they are at home sick or overseas in Samoa with family. Students can download notes, videos or mp3s to reinforce their learning in class. To supplement my expertise in the subject, we now have access to guest speakers from around the world via skype and video conferencing, meaning my students can ask the tricky questions to the experts whether they be in Christchurch, Auckland or on tour in East Timor.

Turning my classroom around was definitely not an easy task. A lot of it came with hard work, putting hours of time into creating the online classroom, searching out electronic resources and getting access to the equipment, but I can truly say the rewards are worth it. Since bringing my Religious Education class into the 21st Century I have been blessed with greater attention from my students, more homework submissions and higher quality assessment work to mark. The change is the greatest reward. In the words of Pope Benedict XVI "These technologies are truly a gift to humanity and we must endeavour to ensure that the benefits they offer are put at the service of all human individuals and communities."

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### Contact Details:

New Zealand Catholic Education Office (NZCEO)  
PO Box 12 307, Wellington

Tel: 04 496 1739 | Fax: 04 496 1734

Email: [nzceogs@nzceo.catholic.org.nz](mailto:nzceogs@nzceo.catholic.org.nz)

Website: [www.nzceo.catholic.org.nz](http://www.nzceo.catholic.org.nz)