

THE CATHEDRAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Christchurch

Independent, co-educational (Years 1 to 8)

Roll: 288

Ethnicity: Pakeha: 97% Maori: 1% Asian: 2%

Headmaster: Owen Arnst

History

Spiritual values in the Christian tradition are at the core of the Cathedral Grammar School, which was founded in 1881 under the auspices of the Anglican Cathedral in Christchurch principally to provide choristers for the cathedral choir. The cathedral “owns” the school, and appoints the Board. Consequently Anglican traditional values are a non-negotiable part of, and central to, school life.

The Cathedral Grammar School was involved in the original Living Values project in 1998, with Years 1 to 3 being most active in implementing the resources provided at that time. A parent survey was carried out, also as part of the project. This indicated that there was a reasonably consistent attitude to values held in the school community, and that parents were generally happy with the approach taken by the school.

Since that time, and with the appointment of the present Headmaster in 1991, the school has taken up the Virtues Project as the basis for its teaching of values, to support the pastoral care programme and to provide a school-wide structure and approach. The Headmaster explains the interaction of the school’s Christian foundation with the Virtues project by saying that Christian core values are important to them as an Anglican school, while the virtues are universal human characteristics which “nobody could argue with...” that provide an excellent basis for day-to-day “teachable moments”..

The Headmaster has worked with staff to pull together the values vision for the school and to document a set of key goals called “Guiding Principles”. In this initiative the Core Values, Pastoral Care, Citizenship and Virtues are tied together around the Anglican beliefs, ethos and rituals which remain very much at the heart of the school. This document, and the staff Professional Development that goes with it provide the school with a practical means for going forward day-to-day with a clearly articulated vision and operational plan. The vision is supported by the by-line “Adding the values that matter most” and appears regularly in school documentation.

The Cathedral Grammar School was, as a church school, always going to have a clear set of values at the centre of school life. The integrated system of Anglican values, pastoral care and relevant material gleaned from the Virtues project, is all linked by

consistent, thoughtful and up-to-date use of terminology that provides a shared language understood by everyone – students, staff and parents.

Systems

- The list of virtues provided in the Virtues Project literature is used by the school, its contents having been agreed among the staff at the beginning of the school year. The virtues are worked through on a week-by-week basis with material presented in the classroom, in chapel (the Headmaster notes that the virtues turn up over and over again in the Anglican liturgies), school newsletters and a variety of other documents and activities. In outlining the value for the week a definition of the virtue is provided alongside “Signs of Success” – “Congratulations! You are practising kindness when you...” A “caught in the act” programme rewards children who are found to be demonstrating the virtues, and they earn points which leads to the opportunity to sit in the Headmaster’s chair and call Mum on his telephone.
- The structure of the school is in three parts – Pre-school, Junior school and Prep school. The virtues are tailored to be accessible at all levels.
- School policies, such as the behaviour modification policy and the bullying policy make use of the language of the virtues, in order to achieve consistency and in order to support the school’s approach to discipline which is reflective rather than punitive. This way of dealing with inappropriate behaviour provides a means of dealing with these matters discreetly and one-on-one, rather than publicly and punitively.
- Staff professional development and published procedural guidelines are linked to the virtues – “Teachers’ use of the language of the virtues is very empowering...” Using “teachable moments” is encouraged, as are setting boundaries and explaining carefully where these are. Staff are expected to know the literature and make use, especially, of the five basic strategies.
- Staff must support the school’s special character, and “the Anglican school ethos” is referred to in contracts and position descriptions. P/D programmes are specifically linked to the values system and virtues programme of the school.
- The school considers itself a “family”. The school defines pastoral care as “how we look after one another”. This attitude to school life is demonstrated particularly in the “Valued Children” document. This inclusiveness is reflected in the activities that are valued in their community – special church services for past pupils, the personal acknowledgement by the Headmaster of every child’s birthday, detailed weekly newsletters to parents providing values information.

Results

- Places in the school are keenly sought. There is a loyal parent community that is supportive and appreciative of the school's values programme. The school is a spiritual centre for many of their families.

Key Features

- As summarised by the Headmaster, Cathedral Grammar aims, in its values, to be: traditional, integrated, clearly articulated and "with an Anglican spin."