

# St JAMES' SCHOOL

## Christchurch

### Integrated Catholic Primary (Years 1-6)

**Roll:** 120

**Ethnicity:** Predominantly Maori, Pacific Island. Pakeha approximately 27%

**Principal:** Monica Renwick

## History

St James School has a well-developed values programme, that is firmly underpinned by the school's special Catholic character and clearly visible in every aspect of school life.

The Principal has exercised strong leadership in creating for the school a vision that is up-to-date, informed by educational theorists such as Howard Gardener, Julia Atkin and Benjamin Bloom, and interlocking with newer areas of educational research into multiple intelligences, thinking skills and current brain theory. Like the principals of a number of other successful values schools, she is committed to the concept of values being the foundation of everything that goes on in school life.

The programme has developed over a period of several years beginning with the Christian faith, developing into a mission statement of their core values ( quality education in a Catholic environment, equal opportunity to learn, respect for self and others, peace), and then growing into a vision for the school as family –“not just a school - but a family”. The 1996 UNESCO Report “Learning the Treasure Within – Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” fitted well with the school's vision and direction at the time and led to their taking part in the ASPnet initiative. More recent stages of evolution include thinking skills, the use of multiple intelligences and current brain theory, as well as links with the wider world through projects such as the Bexley Wetland Heritage site, and the World Wildlife Fund.

The values programme at St James School is supported by excellent documentation.

## Systems

- The school calls the overarching framework for its learning programme, underpinned by its vision and values, “**Pathway to Success.**” This concept provides coherence and links different aspects of school life. Documentation is clear, simple and able to be understood by everyone in the community. The principal believes that “Keep it simple” is a key factor in creating good communication, and therefore successful learning, in a multi-cultural school.

- Behaviour management practices are outlined in one of the “Pathways to Success” and offer an example of the school’s values in action. “Behaviour Recovery” rather than “discipline” is the term used. Notable is the position taken by the staff at St James that “The incident is between the child and teacher and that is where it should stay.”
- The principal makes her expectations of staff very clear. She says “to work at St James School teachers need a backbone, for strength, a wish bone to ensure they share the vision and a funny bone, in order that they can be creative and have fun.
- Another Pathway to Success states that “When we look at values it is like looking into a mirror. We reflect on ourselves”. There are a number of mirrors installed in the school’s buildings, and children are encouraged, when they see themselves, to reflect on the fact that what they look like at that moment is what others see of them.
- The chosen terminology at St James’ is “Values are the plan. Virtues are the activity.” They will say that a person with virtues lives out his or her values
- Modelling the school’s values at all levels of school life is considered to be fundamental. Examples are the school’s on-going involvement in the Bexley Wetland project; and their policy that allows parents to come and go as they wish, including visiting the staffroom for coffee or tea and making themselves at home.

## **Results**

The school has a happy, welcoming and purposeful atmosphere. They say that “our school is an oasis of peace within our community”. ERO reported in 2003 that students are “confident and friendly. They demonstrate a strong sense of self-worth that clearly reflects the values promoted by the school. The teachers provide an environment for students that embodies the Christian principles associated with the school’s special character”

## **Key Features**

- The leadership exercised by the Principal resulting in excellent and clearly articulated concepts and documentation that the whole school community can understand.
- Coherent and well-thought-out terminology that is consistently used.
- A constantly evolving “living” programme of values that makes good use of current educational thought and ideas.

