



# Craighead Diocesan School Special Character Review

conducted by Rev Dr Anne Van Gend, & The Rt Rev Dr Kelvin Wright  
through the Anglican Schools' Office, August 2017

## REVIEW SUMMARY: (ABRIDGED)

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There is so much that Craighead is doing right. The school's culture is supportive and inclusive and reflects the essence of its founding values. Academic and sporting excellence is as much a hallmark of the school now as it has been at any time in its proud history. The school's special character is taken seriously by all we spoke to. People associated with the school have a strong awareness of the issues involved in a school whose very existence is dependent on its Special Character, but whose student body is drawn from homes whose connection with the Anglican Church is often tentative, at best. The leadership of the school, from the Principal and Boards to the staff and the student leadership, seem determined to preserve and develop the values of the school and the deep spiritual roots from which those values grow.

The school has opted for the bold and principled decision to employ a full-time Chaplain from 2018 to spearhead the development in the school's special character. The new chaplain will be helping to further the growth of the school's spirituality and culture, at this time in our national history when the depth and traditions of a school like Craighead are becoming increasingly attractive to many parents.

This review follows three days of conversations between the reviewers and various members of the school community: Principal, staff, students and boards. It is structured around the Five Marks of Mission, a statement in use throughout the worldwide Anglican communion as an agreed formula defining the mission of the church. The reviewers used the lens of the Five Marks of Mission to evaluate the special character of Craighead, as it is defined in clause 6 of the school's integration agreement:

*"The School has a direct affiliation with the Diocese of Christchurch of the Church of the Province of New Zealand (commonly called the Anglican Church) and with the strength and support of this Church affiliation provides education based on the beliefs and philosophies of the Christian faith. It is the policy of the School to present an education balanced between tuition, religious, recreational and cultural activities aimed at developing character and maturity in the pupils. Integral to this policy has been instruction in the Christian faith and the use of the Chapel as a place of regular prayer and worship for the whole school. The Special Character of the School derives from its close association with the Anglican Church and a determination to provide an education for pupils which is based on the philosophy that only in the context of Christian faith and practice can knowledge be completely understood and personality fully developed. The pursuit of personal excellence is stressed in all fields of endeavour within the school. The School lays great emphasis on the development of each individual within a family atmosphere."*

The Special Character of the school is particularly embodied in the teaching of Religious Education, in the person of the Chaplain and in the program of worship in the chapel. It infuses everything that is done in the school, and is the rationale for the school's very existence. This review seeks to assess how well the Special Character finds expression in the life of Craighead.

## INTRODUCTION: BY THE RT REV DR KELVIN WRIGHT

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Craighead Diocesan School sits quietly a couple of blocks back from busy Wai-iti Road in the leafy suburb of Highfield, in Timaru. Approaching the school, I was struck by the simple elegance of the buildings, a well-integrated mix of old and new, set amongst mature trees and gardens. Inside the main foyer framed artworks spoke of the history and culture of the school and a small table, on which was set an Anglican Prayer book, cross and candle, spoke of the school's special character.

We were welcomed, warmly, by office staff and then given a brief introduction to the school by the Principal, Ms Lindy Graham, before attending Chapel. The Chapel of St. Anthony of Padua is a lovely building which gives the appearance of intimacy and coziness while actually being reasonably large. The modernist East window caught the morning light and bathed the wooden interior in multi-coloured light as students and staff filed quietly in to begin their day. A brief service of prayers, readings and a talk by one of the interim Chaplains, Rev Jill Maslin, was attended to with respect and interest. A hymn was sung with more volume and enthusiasm than I was accustomed to in school chapel services elsewhere.

The Principal took us on a brief tour of the school, during which the almost completed new gymnasium block and sports fields gave eloquent testimony to the school's self-confidence and investment in the future. Another statement of the school's commitment to its future, particularly in regard to its special character, is the decision made by the Boards of Proprietors and Trustees to employ a full-time Chaplain, a subject which was discussed frequently and enthusiastically by most of the people we met during the course of the review.

Over the course of three days, Anne Van Gend and I had the opportunity to meet with a good range of staff members and with the heads of both boards. We were hosted at a dinner for both boards and met several times with both interim chaplains. We attended an RE lesson and spoke at length with the teacher of RE. We spoke to the school counsellor and to the staff of the boarding hostel. We were invariably treated with great openness and warmth. I was impressed at the depth of understanding displayed about the school's special character and by the number of staff who were making their own thoughtful and committed spiritual journeys.

For me, however, the highlight of the visit was a lunchtime spent in the company of some of the students. This was a small sample of the school's community, drawn from the leadership of the student body and from those associated with the chapel, and I was deeply impressed by this group of self-assured, confident, able young women. There is a tension in any Anglican school between the fact that the Good News proclaimed by the Church is intended for all people and the fact that the modest fees required for attendance discourage participation from some sections of society. There is a tendency for integrated and private schools to be regarded as elitist, but although some of the girls we met were undoubtedly from quite privileged homes, they could not be so regarded. Craighead, as a boarding school, is a natural educational option for girls from rural South Canterbury and North Otago and there did seem to be a fair dollop of good farming common sense in the girls we spoke to. Girls came from a variety of backgrounds, and the presence of some represented considerable familial sacrifice. They had a good awareness of social and environmental issues and were strongly linked to their home communities and to the city. There is an ultimate test for my impressions of a school: "Would I send my daughter here? To be part of the environment in which these young people thrive, intellectually, physically, relationally, emotionally and spiritually? To be friended by and mentored by these girls?" You bet your life I would.

Of particular interest to me was the maturity of the girls' religious and spiritual understanding and their desire to see that expressed in service. As well as involvement in a good range of organisations

and initiatives, they have developed their own service organization to promote and co-ordinate projects within the school and in the wider community. They were positive about the chapel services and showed a desire (surprising in people their age) for more times for reflection and an increase in the celebration of Holy Communion.

There was appreciative remembrance of the recently retired and long serving Chaplain, Rev Ruth Blair, and of the positive assessment of the school in the last Special Character review, carried out in 2012, but the consensus seemed to be that with a new Principal and the imminent arrival of a new Chaplain, the Special Character of the school is in a place of change and progress.

The current interim Chaplains are a good match, with their balance of age and gender. The pastoral abilities of both were appreciated, particularly those of Jill, and both were praised for their accessible, thoughtful chapel services. The need for the incoming Chaplain to be young enough to connect with and be a role model for the girls was a constant theme.

### **Relationships with the Diocese of Christchurch**

The school has excellent relationships with the local parish where the interim chaplain, Josh Taylor is vicar. Relationships with other Timaru churches is cordial. The Bishop takes a keen interest in the school and visits regularly. Girls participate in various Diocesan functions.

### **Relationships with the Community**

With its name reflected in various names in the surrounding area, Craighead is a long-established part of Timaru's culture. Students participate in social service projects at a number of local venues, such as the local rest home and the women's refuge. The school is highly respected within the Diocese and the local community.

## **THE FIVE MARKS OF MISSION**

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There are many ways of approaching the question of how the "Anglican" aspect of a school's "Special Character" can be explored. The following is the framework that was used for this review.

While the Anglican Church is known for the variety of people, beliefs and traditions within it world-wide, in recent years it united to form "Five Marks of Mission." These five "marks" were agreed to across the Anglican Church as key ways they were invited to "join in with" God's work in the world.

## **TELL: PROCLAIM**

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*The good news of the Kingdom is proclaimed through the Special Character of the school.*

### **Observations**

#### **The Chapel**

The school Chapel is exceptionally beautiful and is one of those ecclesiastical buildings which really works in its ability to impart a sense of serenity and a connection with God. The four weekly Chapel services (two for seniors and two for juniors), give a constant reminder of the school's Special Character and are valued by students, staff and Board members. The school's website utilizes pictures and imagery from the Chapel to proclaim what is distinctive about the school. The girls seem justifiably proud of their Chapel and are well engaged in its life. What happens in Chapel is a regular topic of everyday school conversations.

## Attitudes Values and Relationships

When asked about the Special Character of the school, most people referred to the schools “values”. By this, they meant a number of things including the general atmosphere of consideration and courtesy which prevails at the school, along with its excellent academic and sporting record; but always there was something else, something deeper, which was searching for articulation. There was a recognition that the particular understandings of the Christian faith are reflected in the beliefs and actions of those who hold them. There was a desire for a genuine spirituality, in which there is a connection with a deeper and wider reality in a way which made a perceived difference in people’s lives. The interim Chaplains were praised for their ability to connect what happened in the Chapel with the lived experience of the girls and of the staff. When the new Chaplain was spoken of it was usually with the wish that she would continue to make those connections.

## Leadership

Lindy Graham arrived at Craighead in 2013 after a lengthy experience in a variety of schools, and with a good understanding of the particularities of single sex schools, rural people and what it means to teach in a Special Character environment. Staff and students spoke warmly of her assured and respectful leadership. There seems to be a strong sense of movement and direction and a sense that this derives from the school’s Special Character. Since a PD session on Special Character led by the Anglican Schools’ Office, many in the staff had made the connection between their classroom subjects and the deep philosophical issues inherent in the Christian faith. There is a very good sense of teamwork at Craighead, with staff speaking of each other with respect and understanding. The student leadership of the school’s Special Character is witnessed by the vigorous chapel committee. We were told that the two most rapidly growing cultural groups in the school were those with the most pronounced spiritual dimension: the chapel committee and the Kapa haka group. On a board level, both boards take their school’s Special Character seriously, as we witnessed in the conversations surrounding our meeting with them. Both Boards open with prayer which we were told is heartfelt and not merely a matter of form.

## TEACH

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*To teach, baptize and nurture new believers*

## Observations

### Religious Education

The Religious Education program is largely in the hands of the RE teacher who is a person of wide and varied talents who brings energy and imagination to her lessons. She seems to be greatly loved by students. She will undoubtedly be an invaluable team member should the new Chaplain be also involved in RE. Students appreciate what they are taught in RE classes, but echo the dilemma faced by any Special Character school: that while the school is founded on its Special Character, RE is not a key subject in junior school, nor offered as an NCEA subject in senior. It is therefore regarded by some as a kind of a garnish to their main educational diet. The limited time available for RE was noted by students with some regret. Across Special Character schools there is ongoing debate about the purpose of RE. Is it the academic study of religion? Is it a place of Christian formation and an opportunity to make disciples of Jesus Christ? Is it Bible study? Is it about the teaching of theology and philosophy? Is it instruction in the specifically Anglican heritage of the school? RE at Craighead seems to have dipped a little into each of these options, and a policy decision at Board level on the overall structure and strategy of RE may well have to wait until the new Chaplain is up and running.

Some girls expressed a strong wish to study religion at an NCEA level. They noted the small class size of some other subjects and asked if it would be possible to offer such a subject for only 3 or 4 girls. Of course, the ability of the school to offer such an option would depend on staff availability, student interest and some no doubt complex timetabling issues.

### Informal Instruction

The Chapel chats, held twice a term in a local café, provide students with the opportunity to discuss issues of faith and philosophy with a chaplain. Seniors expressed a wish for the opportunity for more such in depth discussion. Several staff spoke of the ways in which they tried to make their classroom lessons congruent with the Christian faith, and specifically, what was happening in the Chapel.

The girls were particularly appreciative of opportunities for quiet and reflection. Many expressed their appreciation for a candlelit night prayer service, and some a wish for more frequent Eucharist services.

## TEND

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*To respond to human needs by loving service*

### Observations

#### Pastoral Care

It is gratifying to see that the Co-Chaplains are an integral part of the school's excellent pastoral care structure, which includes form teachers, deans, the school counsellor, and student leaders. With the big sister and peer support programs there are excellent structures for developing a culture of care and inter dependence. The school consciously strives to encourage excellence in a wide variety of fields. There was considerable effort in the school (note particularly, but not exclusively, the *Social Stars* group and the efforts of the boarding staff) to address the relational problems inevitable when dealing with adolescents, in a way which was respectful of each student's worth and integrity. "My oldest was like a flower blooming which she came here. She felt she wasn't anonymous." It was stated, several times, by board members, staff and students, that Craighead aims at inclusivity, and beautiful and important though they are, the buildings are not as significant as the people who inhabit them. As the Chair of the BOT expressed it, "This is a school for everyone. I'm very clear about that. We will put in supports for anyone who comes. Everyone is of equal value."

Of course a group of adolescents will be prone to the issues associated with that time of life, but the school's awareness of such issues and procedures to deal with them are robust. A parent told us, "A friend has a daughter here with a mental illness. She said, "If it hadn't been for the school, we would have gone to the wall."

In particular, issues associated with social inclusion are dealt with effectively. In a school with so many high achievers there are some pastoral issues related to the performance orientation of some girls.

The pastoral needs of the staff are often met, at the moment, by interim Chaplain Jill. Some expressed the hope that the new Chaplain would be able to continue or even further this aspect of her ministry. Also noted was the need of the new Chaplain, should she prove to be young, of her own mentoring and care. This may be provided by the wider church, and/or a continuing relationship with St. John's of Highfield.

## Boarding

The staff of the boarding hostel are particularly impressive for their dedication to their work, their cohesion as a team and their ability. The difficulties faced by girls being absent from home in an, initially anyway, strange environment are dealt with imaginatively, firmly and compassionately. Some noted the dynamic of the International students, who, since the welcome provision of a place to call their own, tended to stick together as a group. In particular, it was asked what might be done to meet the spiritual needs of girls from non-Christian religious backgrounds

## TRANSFORM

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*To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation*

### Observations

One of the things the reviewers found particularly impressive was the senior students' initiative in organizing and running the Global Citizens group, in which opportunities for service were promoted and supported. The mere existence of such a group demonstrates a highly developed ethos of service and social responsibility, and the list of activities performed and organisations supported is extraordinary. The close links with and trips to Vanuatu were life changing for many of the girls who undertook them.

Among the many other groups led by students and facilitated by staff, are Amnesty International and SADD. Student leaders run a variety of activities to fundraise and raise awareness of the issues of justice and responsibility championed by these and other groups. It is significant both that the school encourages and enables students to take the initiative in leading these groups, and that students take on the challenge so enthusiastically.

The underlying values of the school, reflected in such small things as politeness to strangers has, apparently, a manifestation also in concern for and involvement with many community groups.

## TREASURE

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*To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the Earth*

### Observations

As is the case in the previous section, the girls seem to have a higher than average awareness of, and involvement in issues of sustainability and ecology. Some on the staff are supported by the school in providing a good example with their use of electric vehicles. Many students are from rural backgrounds and are conversant with the difficulties of balancing economic prudence and care of the Earth. The school's grounds give mute testimony to the power and beauty of the planet.

## Conclusion

It was a privilege to share briefly in the life of Craighead Diocesan School. We thank the staff, students and Board for the warmth of their welcome, the honesty and transparency of their conversation and their generous hospitality. We express our willingness to work in any way we can to further develop the Special Character of this impressive school.

**The Rt Rev Dr Kelvin Wright – former Bishop of Dunedin**

**Rev Dr Anne Van Gend – Director Anglican School's Office**