

Collaboration and Strategy



When considering the “big picture” of Middleton Grange School (MGS) and its future strategic direction, historical and relational context is important.

One context which has had a significant impact on the school has been its willingness to be involved in “groups of schools.” A specific analogy of why this is important and how this works is the Christian metaphor of “the body.” Biblical passages such as 1 Cor 12:12 ff and Eph 4:16. Principles drawn from this metaphor acknowledge differences in the individual parts but a conformity in purpose where each part works for the good of the whole even to the extent of the cost of individual sacrifice.

A full description of the historical significance of MGS looking beyond itself can be found in the publication: “‘We Rest on Thee’ A History of Middleton Grange School 1989-2014” by Dr Michael Reid. A quote from M. Larson former MGS Principal is particularly pertinent:

“How can we work together to support each other, avoid reinventing the wheel and jointly improve the quality of what is happening in our schools and develop a combined voice to advocate with the Ministry of Education for increasing the capacity of Christian Schools?” p.189.

Successive strategic plans for MGS have recognised the importance of this wider context of mutual cooperation and with MGS being one of the larger and longer established schools within its networks, MGS has often committed resource to foster cooperation and relationship and grow the cause of Christian Education through fellow providers. Notwithstanding there is also the blessing from the Lord as one gives cheerfully and sacrificially (2 Corinthians 9:6-15)

More specifically then the impact of this on the school’s strategic direction has been twofold:

1. Reduction in the number of strategic goals which are specifically MGS focussed.
2. Commitment to expend limited resource on strategic goals which are “outwardly” focussed.

MGS belongs to a number of “groups” and each of the organisations MGS belongs to provides boundary and commitment to scope and content of its strategic thinking:

Christian Education Network (CEN) (formerly the Christian Schools’ Network): Of particular importance is the four “partner” schools within the immediate CHC context. MGS has an agreement through its enrolment scheme that the graduating Y10 preference pupils from the three contributing Y 1-10 schools (Aidanfield, Hillview and Emmanuel Christian Schools) have a very high priority of entry into the Year 11 senior classes of MGS. MGS organises its senior college capacity so that there is always room for these graduates. As Rolleston Christian School has grown its roll, its graduates from Y8 have also been included in this mechanism.

Such arrangements impact on prioritising school resourcing.

Educationally the CEN also has elements of cooperation which become included into the MGS Strategic Plan.

CEN Community of Learners (Kahui Ako aka CENCOL). (See <http://www.education.govt.nz/communities-of-learning/>) This government initiative while voluntary, is seen as an important program to participate in by the Ministry of Education. The CENCOL is faith based and has a very similar grouping of schools to the CEN. The CENCOL comprises (MGS, Aidanfield, Hillview, Rolleston and Emmanuel Christian Schools and the Christchurch Adventist School.). A COL is required to set a number of common Achievement Challenges across participating schools. These then also become part of the MGS Strategic Plan and are included in the school's teacher professional development program.

Christian Schools' Trust (CST): The proprietor of Middleton Grange School and three other CEN schools- Aidanfield Christian School, Rolleston Christian School, and Ashburton Christian School. Being sister schools, this relationship also takes time and commitment. The CST either legally owns the school properties or in the case of Rolleston and Ashburton Christian schools, leases these from the particular school's founding trust. The CST is therefore responsible for any loans or funding in relation to land and buildings. It has an obligation to ensure that the land and buildings meet the minimum standards set by the Secretary of Education for state schools and most importantly the CST has the right and responsibility to preserve the schools' special character. The CST holds the Integration Agreement with the Crown and also has an MOU with each of the schools which sets how the school operates in a number of important spheres such as maintaining and promoting the special character of the school as well as how a school determines who are preference families, employment criteria and long property priorities.

New Zealand Association for Christian Schools (NZACS): Middleton Grange's membership represents a commitment to share relationship and time with Christian School Principals from around the South Island with a focus on Christian Education professional development. MGS is the largest of these schools so often acts in a support role and is the logical venue to host SI and National Conferences. NZACS often acts as a shared resource in preparing responses to calls for submissions to proposed changes or changes in relevant government policy.

Association of Integrated Schools (AIS) and Association of Proprietors of Integrated Schools (APIS). While strictly both of these are proprietor organisations, there are at times national initiatives for integrated schools promulgated by such groups which may be relevant to Middleton Grange.