



**Cornerstone Christian
School**

Learn, Serve, and Grow in God

OUR SCHOOL STORY

Est. 1987

Our journey began in 1979 with a group of parents determined to establish a God-centred school in Palmerston North

Cornerstone Christian School to open its doors in February

What began as an idea in 1979 has finally come to fruition.

Palmerston North's first Christian School – the Cornerstone Christian School – will open in February next year.

The Manawatu Christian Schools Association's plan to set up such a school has received support from members of the community. Association vice-president Bryan Christiansen said 33 families had become financial members, and many more had shown an interest in the project.

Plans to establish the school are well under way. The association's executive council had decided to buy a house on the New Life Centre property in Featherston Street. It had launched an appeal to raise \$50,000 for the property and initial resources.

Meanwhile, the executive council has been costing resources such as school furniture, textbooks, equipment and other materials.

Mr Christiansen said the minimum number of children for the first classroom would be 25 to 30. Applications received after the initial quota had been filled would go on to a waiting list until there were enough children to fill a second classroom.

There would be a working bee and another barbeque in January next year to prepare the facilities, Mr Christiansen said.

Manawatu Standard Ltd, 1987



Foundation pupils in the Lifechurch crèche in 1987

The school opened in February 1987 and work began to build a classroom and playground on the site owned by the Palmerston North New Life Centre (Lifechurch) at 590 Featherston Street.



Clearing the site for the first classroom and playground



Cornerstone Christian School - (Y1-8) 590 Featherston Street, 1987

From 1987 until 1993 Cornerstone operated as a private school. Its mission: “To provide for parents a balanced Christian education to develop children to their full potential in God.”

The school relied heavily on fundraising, fees and parent involvement. A “loving family atmosphere” was evident and the school’s founders were determined to aim for excellence.

The school’s first principal, Mrs Lois Price, led the school from 1996 until 2003. Mrs Price did a considerable amount of work developing the school’s curriculum.



Christian concepts dominate curriculum

Cornerstone Christian School in Palmerston North offers teaching based on biblical concepts. The school is inter-denominational and uses the Bible as its main resource, says Principal Lois Price.

It draws its name from the biblical concept of Jesus as the cornerstone of the Christian faith, and that everything else should be built on him, she says. This flows into the school’s teaching, in that the curriculum is based on Christian concepts and the state curriculum fitted into that.

Established as a private school in 1987, Cornerstone became integrated into the state system as a “school of special character” at the beginning of last year. This has meant more people have been able to afford to send their children there – a fee of \$525 goes to New Life Church, which owns the property and buildings but has not direct input into the school’s management. It will not change the nature of the school’s teaching, however, as under the integration agreement with the Ministry of Education, only teachers who undertake to maintain and preserve the school’s special character can work there.

Manawatu Standard, 1995



In 1994 Cornerstone successfully applied to the Ministry of Education to become a state-integrated school with a Special Character:

Cornerstone Christian School is a Christian school established by and for parents choosing a God-centred education for their children.

Because God is:

- the Creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible, sustaining and ruling over creation, including man.... and is
- the source of all wisdom and knowledge,

God the Father, Jesus His Son, and the Holy Spirit are relevant to every area of study and endeavour in the school.

Statement of Special Character

The school began to grow rapidly. Several maximum roll increases were granted by the Ministry of Education. To accommodate roll growth the proprietor purchased a block of farmland on the edge of the city at 61 Roberts Line in 1997.

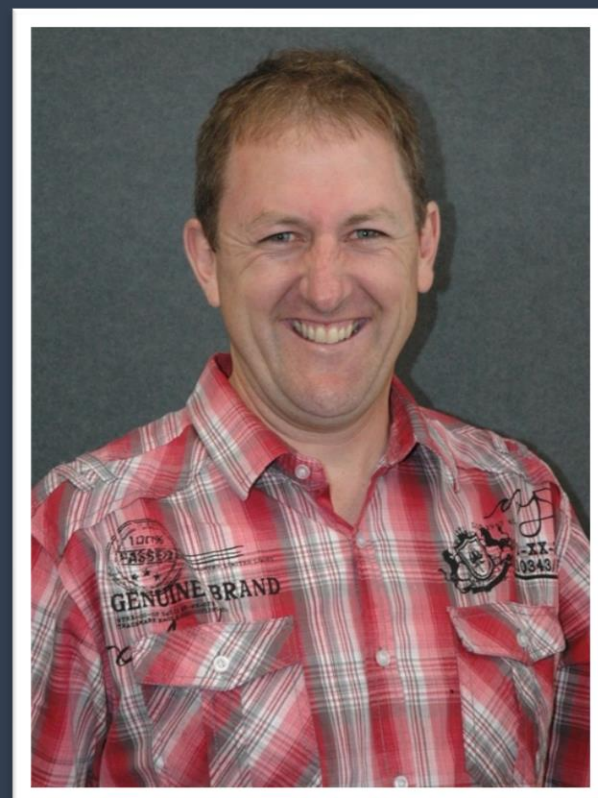


The first 2 classrooms at Roberts Line were opened in 1998 and the school operated on two sites until 2007. Further classrooms were built at Roberts Line and by 2007 there were 11 classrooms on the site, accommodating 250 students.



In 2004 Mr Nigel Tongs became the school's second principal.

Mr Tongs' passion for the arts, particularly music and drama, were a blessing to the school and several highly successful school musicals were performed to the delight of parents.



Mr Tongs
composed our
school song,
“Jesus is our
Cornerstone”

Principal Nigel Tongs describes the school's vision for excellence.

“We aim to see children develop to become responsive, responsible and competent young followers of Christ who go on to lead in their various vocations, and to make a difference in our world. It is hugely rewarding to see children grow within an environment where identity, faith and personal strengths are nurtured.

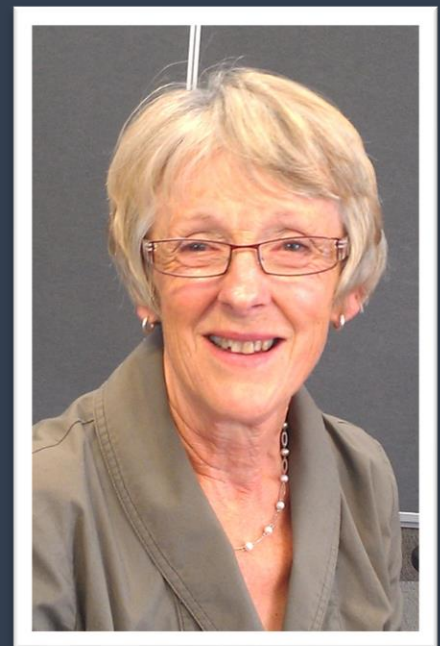
“We are privileged to have a strong sense of partnership with parents. Our teachers work with parents to help children to become achievers of excellence, especially in science, computer-based learning, music, hockey mathematics and literacy.

Manawatu Standard, 2011

Long-serving staff members Mrs Carol Randell and Mrs Jane Barker did a considerable amount of work in 2007 to prepare the school for the launch of the *New Zealand Curriculum*. This document gave Cornerstone considerable flexibility to incorporate the special character into its curriculum.



The Cornerstone curriculum, earlier based on the Fruits of the Spirit and the Ten Commandments, was developed to focus on four themes: God is Sovereign, God is Creator, God is Holy and God is Redeemer.



The school's mission statement was tweaked to emphasise the partnership between the school and parents and the role that students themselves have in developing to their full potential.





The school frontage shifted to 119 Mihaere Drive when the administration building was completed in 2011.



In 2012 the school celebrated its 25th jubilee. We gave thanks to the Lord, were reminded of the vision of the school and were encouraged to continue to aim for excellence.



Foundation pupils (left) and some of our past and present staff (below) at the 25th jubilee





In 2013 Dr Peter Ferrar became the school's third principal. Dr Ferrar's background as a secondary science specialist teacher and Christian composite school principal opened exciting possibilities for Cornerstone.

Our Vision: "To be confident followers of Jesus Christ, equipped and inspired to creatively impact our world."

"Every primary school, intermediate school and secondary school teaches units on things like volcanoes, whales and ecology – there's just so much overlap in the New Zealand system – but when you've got a composite school you've got a seamless curriculum and you can make sure children are learning different things and they're growing all the time," Dr Ferrar said.

"And, along with the smooth progression, the nicest thing for me is actually growing the whole family feeling in the school where the older ones actually enjoy looking after the younger ones."

Manawatu Standard, 2013



Cornerstone was represented at a national tournament for the first time in 2013 when the Cornerstone Cowboys hockey team, twice Manawatu champions, competed at the Aims Games for a very credible 6th placing.

In response to strong community support to extend the education offered into secondary schooling, in 2013 the proprietor submitted a change of class application to the Ministry of Education.



Office of Hon Hekia Parata
Minister of Education
Minister of Pacific Island Affairs

Sarndra Rauzi
Chairperson
Cornerstone Christian School Board of Trustees
119 Mihaere Drive
Kelvin Grove
Palmerston North 4414

Tênâ koe Mrs Rauzi

I have recently considered the application from your Proprietor to change the class of Cornerstone Christian School from a Year 1-8 school to a Year 1-13 school.

I have considered all the information presented to me and I have decided to approve a maximum roll increase to 340 and a change of class to Year 1-9 from 27 January 2014, and a change of class to Year 1-10 from 27 January 2015.

I have also decided to approve a maximum roll increase to 430 and a change of class to Year 1-11 from 27 January 2016, Year 1-12 from 27 January 2017 and Year 1-13 from 27 January 2018 subject to two conditions. These conditions are a positive Education Review Office (ERO) readiness review for senior secondary provision in 2015 and NZQA approval and accreditation.

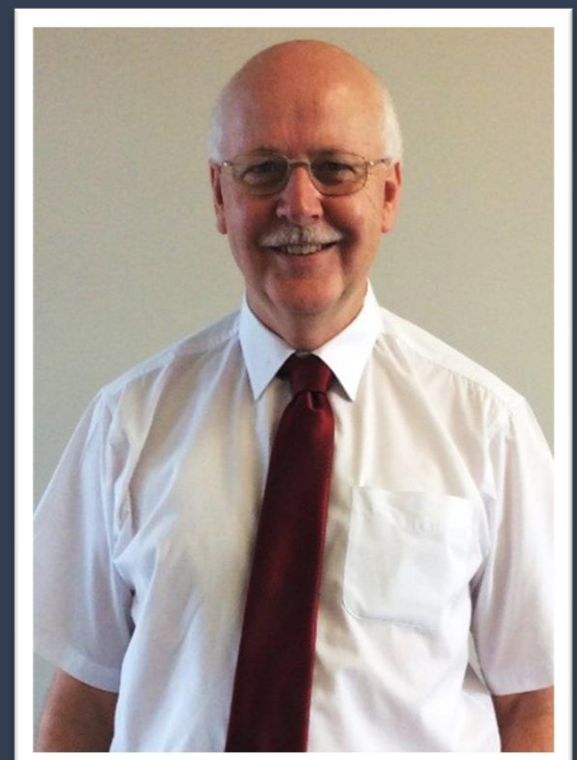
I acknowledge the achievements of Cornerstone Christian School as recognised in your most recent Education Review Office Report and congratulate the school on these positive educational outcomes.

Heoi anō

Hon Hekia Parata
Minister of Education



The school's first Year 9 students began their secondary education in a purpose-built science laboratory in 2014. The first Assistant Principal (Secondary), Mr Barry Jackson, was appointed. Barry's dedication helped the school to complete the Ministry's requirements, in order to attain senior secondary, (Y11-13) by early 2015.



The first of several planned secondary blocks was built in 2014 incorporating specialist art and music facilities, general-purpose classrooms, break-out spaces and offices. Two of the classrooms open into one large space suitable for drama.



G-block was
officially
opened in
2015.



The Principal and Board of Trustees
Cornerstone Christian School
Palmerston North 4414

Dear Peter and the Board of Trustees,

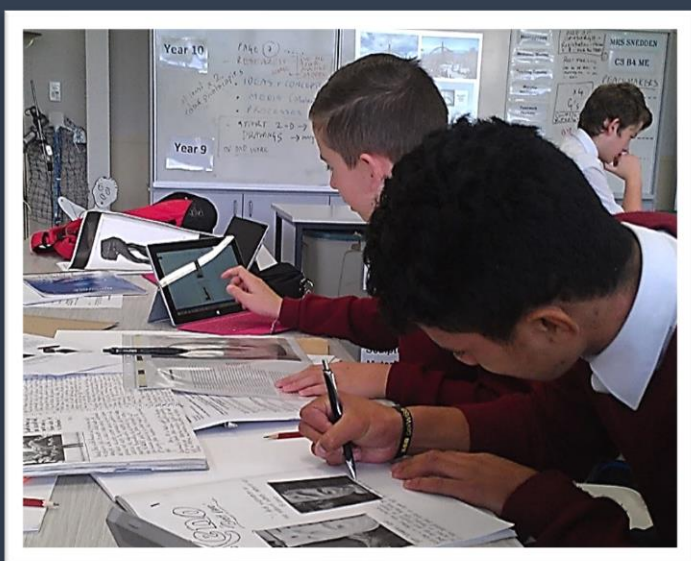
On behalf of NZACS I would like congratulate you on the recent opening of your secondary building. I recognise that this is a significant milestone for your school and an important development for Christian schooling in the lower North Island. This will enable high quality teaching and learning in a modern environment for large numbers of students over many years to come. Thank you for your vision and passion to see this project through to completion. I look forward to a tour next time I visit the school.

I would like to acknowledge the significant amount of work, wisdom and seeking the Lord in prayer that has been required of you, your staff, your Board of Trustees and Board of Proprietors in order to get Cornerstone through this significant milestone.

You guys are doing an incredible job; providing quality Christian Education. I greatly admire the commitment and dedication of the staff and boards under your leadership Peter. I will continue to pray for the Lord's blessing on your entire school community.

Yours sincerely,
Craig Utting, Chairperson
NZ Association for Christian Schools

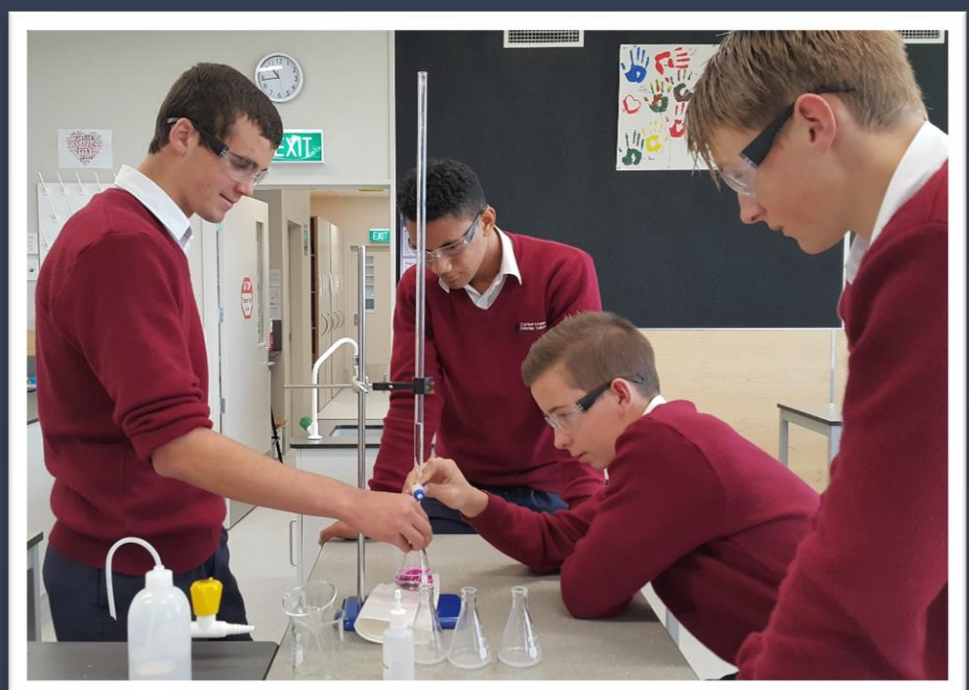
By Term 2 2015, the school had successfully fulfilled conditions set by the MoE in order for it to offer senior secondary (Y11-13). Later that year, the first group of Y9-10 extension students gained excellence and merit endorsements in NCEA Level 1 Mathematics. In 2016, the first full cohort of Y11 students gained very pleasing results in NCEA Level 1; a 91% pass rate, 23% receiving overall Excellence endorsement and 37% receiving overall Merit endorsement.



The MoE recognised the strong roll growth occurring at New Entrant level and increased the school's maximum roll, with provision for this to increase to 580. This enables Cornerstone Christian School to enrol around 46 New Entrants each year.

A second secondary block was built in 2016, comprising a science suite, general-purpose classrooms and break-out spaces.

In September 2018, work on a gymnasium was completed.



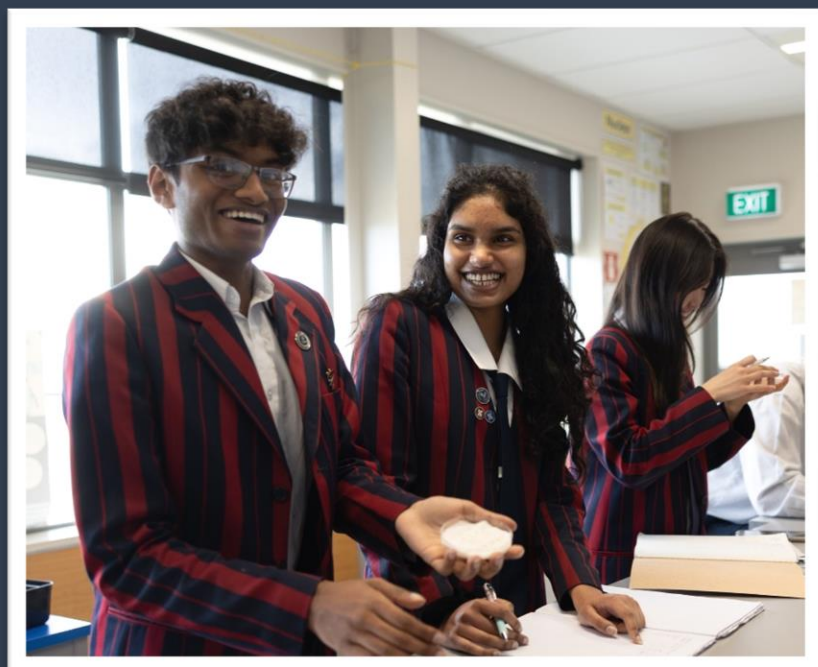
CCS further developed in 2019 to add L-block to accommodate our growing school, with the Year 7-8s initially moving into this space in 2020. These year levels were also formally added as part of the secondary department and in 2021, the Year 7 and 8's moved to their permanent home in G-block.



In 2020, Mr Chris Mitchell became the school's fourth principal. He began at CCS as a Year 7 teacher in 2008 with particular strengths in Maths, Science and Technology and Leadership. He was previously our Primary Assistant Principal before stepping into the role of Principal. Mr Mitchell has a passion and dedication to lead CCS forward through both consolidation and new growth.



Between 2020 and 2024, CCS has continued to grow in numbers and in strength. Our NCEA results data continues to track at a high level of achievement and success both throughout Years 11-13 and beyond.





In 2023, I-block was completed, which included a pastoral suite, a specialist art department and more classrooms. L-block was further developed to include the music and drama department and the food technology department were created.





Primary Production

CCS has run several productions over the years, with some of the more recent productions being performed by either the primary school or secondary school. These are always of an extremely high calibre.

