

New Takanini school to ease pressure

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DESPERATELY NEEDED: A new primary school in Takanini, located at 181-191 Walters Rd, has been approved by the Ministry of Education.

Principals are crossing their fingers a new school in Takanini will open before already swelling student numbers become too much to handle.

The Ministry of Education has set aside \$20 million to build a new primary school on land at 181-191 Walters Rd, one of three proposed primary schools for the area.

It will cater for years 1 to 8 and take up to 700 students.

The ministry has been driven to build the schools by demographic projections that show the school-aged population in Takanini is expected to grow by 4000 by 2020.

Takanini School principal Linda Kelly has been feeling the pressure of the growth in the area for several years.

In the 14 years she has been principal, her school has grown from 250 students to 450 and 12 new classrooms have been built since 2011.

Kelly says it's great to finally have progress on a new school because the original consultation for it was in 2007. She's just hoping her own roll won't get out of hand before the new school opens for the beginning of term one in 2017.

"I don't know if numbers will grow a lot and that's the scary part," she says.

"What we will do is keep ensuring that we have put our school up to the highest quality.

"Hopefully we can hold the fort until the new school opens."

Just down the road from the site of the new primary is Cosgrove School, which is also under pressure from growing student numbers.

Principal Gus Klein says he has more than 600 students when the ideal number is 400 to 500.

He's hoping the roll doesn't creep up to 700 or 800 students before the new school opens.

"I don't think our school was ever designed to have that many students in it," Klein says.

"The new one would alleviate the strain on my school," he says.

But Klein questions the location, saying it's very close to Cosgrove School and also to Papakura Normal Primary, about a kilometre away on Porchester Rd.

Despite that, he says there's no doubt the new facility is needed.

Education Minister Hekia Parata says Takanini is a sought-after area because of its special housing areas and private land development and there is a need to cater to the booming school-aged population.

"The new school will be a fantastic addition to Takanini and will ease the pressure that current schools in the area would otherwise face," she says.

Enrolments for the new school will open in the second half of 2016.

- Manukau Courier