

## Schools feel squeeze

DUBBY HENRY Last updated 05:00 11/12/2013



TAKANINI CENTRAL: More than 80 homes are going up opposite the Sikh temple on Takanini School Rd as part of a mixed-use development. Most have already been sold.

BOOMING: Takanini School is struggling to cope with roll growth, its principal Linda Kelly says. Primary schools are bursting at the seams as housing growth picks up in Addison, Takanini and Papakura North.

But the Ministry of Education still hasn't found land for a new one.

And it will take another three years for a new school to open once it does.

Meanwhile existing schools will be forced to keep taking more pupils.

That's a tough ask for Takanini School which already has 470 students on its roll and 30 children in some classes.

It was built for just 400, principal Linda Kelly says.

In 2007 the Labour government promised to build three new primary schools and a new secondary in Takanini by 2020.

It also referred to the possibility of a new Catholic primary.

The first state school was to open in 2010 but housing growth slowed when the global recession hit so the ministry held off buying land.

Now Auckland's housing market is running red hot and Takanini is a sought-after area with a "scary" rate of growth, Mrs Kelly says.

She can point to more than 600 new homes that have either just been built within her school's zone or that are planned for the near future.

The school is adding four more classrooms to try to cope.

It's also discussing with the ministry how many more students it can take before hitting an absolute limit.

Neighbouring schools would normally move their zone boundaries to help ease the pressure but Takanini's neighbours don't have any room to spare.

Cosgrove School is reintroducing a zone next year so it can limit its roll and Papakura Normal is already "chocka", its principal Judy Morgan says.

Growth is "a big worry" with classes of 28 or 29 students and hundreds more homes about to be built in the zone at the affordable housing development on Walters Rd.

Six new classrooms will be added next year which will "take a little bit of pressure off in the short term" but they won't be finished until mid-2015, Ms Morgan says.

And to the west Conifer Grove School will be dealing with another 450 homes once building starts at the Manukau Golf Course.

Principal Jan Robertson says the ministry hasn't bought any land for a new school to the west of Great South Rd.

In fact "we had to let the ministry know that development was happening because it wasn't aware", she says.

The ministry's head of sector enablement and support Katrina Casey says plans to build three primary schools in Takanini are still in the works but have just been delayed.

Officials are now looking for suitable land for the first school.

"New schools can take three to five years to open once land is bought," Ms Casey says.

Meanwhile Takanini School has several options, she says, including enrolment scheme changes and temporary classrooms.

**- Papakura Courier**