

Equality of Choice for Single Sex vs Co-ed Secondary Education for Families.

Community Strategy on Secondary School Zones



We would like to share with you the North East Secondary Education Committee's (NESE's) community strategy on secondary school zones, which focuses on the needs of families in North East Christchurch. We wish to inform decisions around the establishment of the new zone for Shirley Boys' and Avonside Girls' High Schools, as well as Christchurch's Secondary School Zone Review.

NESE's main objectives are:-

- To encourage families to use local co-ed secondary schools in the East.
- To ensure every home will have access to both co-ed and single sex secondary education through a dual layer zone.
- Parental choice becomes a choice between co-ed, single sex, religious, private and alternative education, rather than between co-eds in different locations.
- Every school has a defined catchment or zone.
- Primary school catchments are enclosed and surrounded by the local secondary school's catchment.
- Entry to secondary school is continued as a natural transition from attending the local primary school.
- School zone catchments are designed to enhance safe access to schools, preferably using active transport, including walking, cycling and scooting. Major roads, rivers and train tracks are considered to be catchment boundaries.
- Community input is included in education planning to optimise outcomes for students.

Local Schooling

One of the Ministry of Education's key goals is for families and students to be confident about enrolling at their local school. Significant numbers of students currently travel from our local area to other schools for their secondary education. NESE's vision is for most students living in the North East to attend Mairehau, Haata, Shirley Boys' and Avonside Girls'. We would like these four schools to be confidently considered as equal options for secondary education.

Dual Layer Zone - Providing Access to both Co-ed and Single Sex Secondary Education

NESE advocates for every residential address to fall inside a defined zone for a secondary school. NESE has been advocating for a dual layer zone for Christchurch secondary schools, where every home will be able to access both co-ed and single sex secondary education, since 2011.

Some, but not all of our community's established goals were achieved with the decision to move Shirley Boys' and Avonside Girls' High Schools to QEII Park. NESE continues to advocate for our

community, as our ongoing consultation shows families living in North East Christchurch would like to continue to have access to a co-ed option for secondary education.

Our vision for the schools at QEII Park is a shared home zone, with 100% of the home zone for Avonside Girls' and Shirley Boys' High Schools being shared with both Mairehau High School & Haeata Community Campus. For clarity, this would mean homes inside the zone for the schools at QEII Park would also have "in zone" access to both Mairehau High School and Haeata Community Campus. A fully shared zone will enable families living in the area to identify, support and connect with all four secondary schools. This will encourage our community to feel equally connected with Mairehau High School and Haeata Community Campus as it will with Avonside Girls' and Shirley Boys' High Schools.

This idea firmly supports the concept that co-ed education is a confident, main stream, education pathway, and that single sex education is one of a number of options for alternative education. NESE believes this will create a strong mandate for the four schools to improve interschool co-operation; provide for the diverse community and help build long term relationships with families.

Community Demographics

Before the earthquake, families living in our area had a long established culture of moving house to access secondary education elsewhere. Over the last six years families have been tied to their broken homes. Out of zone enrolments at Shirley Boys' and Avonside Girls' increased significantly. Plenty of out of zone spaces were available due to the impact of red zoning significant areas of their school zones. This also meant families have not felt the need to move away. However, many families still choose to send their children to other areas of Christchurch for secondary education.

Statistics for families living in the North East have changed considerably since the earthquake. There are a high number of 'as is where is' houses providing low cost rentals. An increased number of rental houses in the area means more families are choosing to live in the area from Christchurch and around New Zealand. A high number of migrant families from overseas are present in the local population.

The area has many existing two bedroom houses from the 1990's. Additionally, an increased number of over sixties houses are being built where there were previously family homes.

There is minimal room for new subdivisions in the area. The undeveloped land east of Marshland Road is likely to remain undeveloped so will not add to student numbers. Development of this would require rezoning through the district plan which was last reviewed in 2016. Zoning did not change under the review and is set under the Resource Management Act. Nearby Prestons and Prestons Park were rezoned under the Land Use Recovery Plan (LURP) which required Government intervention in response to urgent need.

These housing statistics along with the low socio-economic circumstances of many families in the area indicate a careful approach is needed when deciding the boundaries for Shirley Boys' and Avonside Girls' new school zone.

Community Discussions

One idea discussed in the community suggests that most families in the North East will choose single sex secondary schooling when it is so close at QEII Park. Historically, there have been strong numbers of out of zone enrolments at both Shirley Boys' and Avonside Girls' High Schools. NESE's community consultation suggests the majority of families continue to prefer co-ed education.

Interestingly, families with pre-schoolers express a preference for co-ed education. As their children grow older discussion about single sex education develops as families are influenced by:-

- Advertising of the single sex schools in local papers making the schools seem more familiar and prevalent in the area.
- Location of the single sex schools on Council bus routes and parent's route to work, facilitating getting to and from school and enabling after school commitments.
- Year eight students have a strong affiliation with their friends and wish to go to the same secondary school as their peer group.
- Perception of the co-ed schools in the East. Both Mairehau and Aranui have suffered from a bad school vs good school perception.

NESE's vision is that students in the North East will attend local secondary schools and that when students choose co-ed secondary education they will also choose a co-ed school in the North East. It is important to design school catchments and zones which foster equality in choice for both single sex and co-ed schools for students and families in the North East.

Zone Size

The size of the zone is important. A small exclusive single sex zone could cause a reoccurrence of families moving house to be 'in zone', with families moving into the small single sex zone. NESE considers a larger zone signifies that the single sex schools are not offering an exclusive area, but rather that the schools make up a layer of choice for families. NESE promotes that choice should not be one co-ed school against another co-ed school, but rather that choice is between private, integrated character, alternative, single sex and co-ed schools.

Co-ed Secondary School Accessibility

We want to ensure students have safe access to secondary school. Currently, it is difficult for students living in the Parklands area to access Mairehau High School using self-reliant methods. Students living in Southshore do not have direct safe access to Haeata Community Campus. There is currently little provision for safe pedestrian and cycle access from Prestons to Mairehau High School. Seventy and eighty km speed zones on Mairehau Road and Marshland Road are not safe to cycle through. Notably, there is easy, safe access from both Prestons and Southshore to QEII Park.

Measures should be actively planned and implemented to make the co-ed secondary schools easily and safely accessible. These health and safety issues need to be addressed for families to consider these co-ed secondary schools as safe, secondary education options that feel connected to their communities.

Buses

School buses currently cost around \$500 per student, per year. Most students from Burwood, Westhaven, Prestons, Waitikiri, The Limes, Tumara Park, Queenspark, Parklands, Northshore, North New Brighton, New Brighton, and Southshore could access QEII Park using active transport, free of charge. This would suit the individual student's timetable well, easily accommodating students' extracurricular activities.

The Christchurch Metro Bus Network should be considered when establishing a new zone for the schools at QEII Park. Bus route 60 provides a direct link from South Shore to QEII Park. This enables students from South Shore to utilise existing public transport to travel to school.

Bus route 135 provides a direct link from Waitikiri to within a block of QEII Park. The new zone for the schools at QEII Park should include the subdivision known as The Limes at the top of Burwood Road and the Waitikiri subdivisions in order to make use of existing public transport in these natural catchments.

Avonside Girls' & Shirley Boys' New Zone

NESE recommends that the zone for both schools should be identical. The new zone boundaries should include all homes within QEII Park's "active transport catchment" area.

Consideration should be given to utilising the existing public bus network. Families living along established bus routes could use public transport, establishing lifelong habits, when students travel to school by public bus. This would minimise duplication of transport requirements – a worthy environmental benefit.

Investigation of the concepts below regarding Mairehau, Haeata and Southshore would help identify the precise optimal boundaries for the new zone.

Mairehau High School

We believe in the concept of students attending local schools. All members of a community should feel connected to their local schools. We feel Mairehau would benefit by establishing a stronger community focus, which might come through having an official zone. A zone would help primary students identify with Mairehau, helping them envisage their future education path. Mairehau could invest strongly in relationships with local primary schools within the zone. Schools benefit significantly from the support generated by connecting with future students and school families.

Haeata Community Campus

Haeata Community Campus was established with the goal of creating a tightly supported community campus south of the Avon River, in the traditional area of the merged schools. We would be interested to know Haeata's current vision for its local community area. The Ministry's catchment should mirror this, and it should be reflected in the implementation of a zone for Haeata. We have included Haeata in our recommendation for the four schools to share the single sex schools' whole zone with Mairehau as Haeata has a different education provision being a Y1 to Y13 school.

Southshore

Families in Southshore currently send their students to a huge number of secondary schools across the whole city. It is important to plan for this peninsula's access to secondary education.

Does Southshore fall within Haeata's vision of its local community area? Safe travel routes from Southshore to Haeata should be established. Students in Southshore can easily travel to QEII Park without crossing any major roads by cycling or using the public bus. We believe active provision should be made to zone the Southshore community to support their students' access to secondary education, with the choice of both single sex and co-ed schools.

Prestons

This new subdivision is well served for primary education but is awkwardly placed for secondary education. Students need to take two busses to access any secondary school across all of Christchurch, including Mairehau and the QEII Park campus. Cycles can access QEII Park safely by road and via the Rothesay Road green corridor. Pedestrians can walk to Waitikiri then bus to QEII Park. Cycle access to Mairehau is via heavy traffic roads with seventy and eighty km speed zones. There is no provision for safe pedestrian access from Prestons to Mairehau High School.

We anticipate Prestons students are likely to attend secondary schools across the city. If they have to get two busses, they can travel anywhere. This mirrors current student secondary school choice in the Parklands area. Students will also attend the school nearest their parents' work.

Schools Zones

School zones have several benefits. They ensure students can attend their local school. They also encourage state resources to be well utilised as students are distributed to all schools.

The current school zone arrangements have several negative outcomes. Families choose schools for their children, sometimes at great distances from their homes. Many primary students are unsure which secondary school they will attend, even at the end of year 8, losing momentum and confidence in their Learning Journey. Some schools advertise and promote themselves as being better. There is still a strong perception of "good school vs bad school" in Christchurch. Families believe there is prestige in getting "in" to a school when they are out of zone. Some schools struggle to get local students to attend them, especially those without a zone. Marketing does not always reflect the teaching, learning or opportunities students will receive by attending the school.

School Zones - A Community Perspective

NESE's document "*School Zones - A Community Perspective*" has been well received by schools and education leaders. It is available to read online:-

<http://nese.org.nz/NESEs%20School%20Zone%20document%20August%202016.pdf>

Christchurch's Zone Network

We understand the Ministry might be considering implementing a traditional single layer zone for the schools at QEII Park. This surprised committee members who were involved throughout the extensive consultation undertaken to form the Education Renewal Recovery Plan and in subsequent consultations. A traditional single layer zone is out of step with both community preferences.

Our assumption is that the whole city will be comprehensively zoned following the current zone review. While the conversations around zoning the schools at QEII Park are separate from those across the whole city, the two conversations must be held with consideration to one another. It is essential that the new agreed zone for the secondary schools at QEII Park fits well with other decisions made during Christchurch's secondary school zone review.

NESE considers that careful zone implementation is critical. We feel more students in a North East shared zone are likely to attend one of the four secondary schools, rather than a secondary school further away.

The zone review outcomes must be robust. The decisions should encourage an education pathway that is clear and interactive, allowing students to easily access and participate in education. It must result in the best outcome for both schools and students across Christchurch, enduring into the future.

NESE's key goals relating to school zones are:-

Primary aged students will have a clear vision of their future secondary education pathway.

- Transition from primary to secondary school will become easier for families. Students will have a logical education path which transitions easily from primary through to secondary education.
- All residential addresses will fall inside defined catchments for both primary and secondary schools.

Barriers to education are actively reduced.

- Travel distance is minimised.
- Schools have an inclusive practice where uniform cost, travel cost and zoning issues meet the needs of all learners.

Schools develop robust networks through sharing resources and working together.

- Strong connections are generated between local primary and secondary schools.
- Transition to secondary school is facilitated.

NESE's suggestions are considered conclusions, reflecting community feedback and discussions with education leaders. We want students to have easy access to secondary education; to be able to focus on their learning and remain engaged in their education. Improving student access and attendance at school, will empower students to achieve their best.

We feel it is important all ideas are given the opportunity to be discussed. Committee members are available to meet with you to discuss these ideas further.