

High school rolls in city overflowing

Jo Gilbert

Half of Christchurch's state secondary schools are bursting at the seams, an internal Ministry of Education report shows.

Of the city's 28 secondary schools, 14, including four state-integrated schools, are oversubscribed.

Based on March rolls, 22,495 secondary school pupils are enrolled in the city, compared with a 22,464 capacity, the *Christchurch City Secondary Schools Network Status Report*, released under the Official Information Act, shows.

Shirley Boys' High School tops the list at nearly 20 per cent over capacity (230 more pupils than its state-funded capacity).

Papanui High School was more than 10 per cent oversubscribed (167 more pupils) and Cashmere High School was about 10 per cent over capacity (136 more pupils).

At the other end of the scale, only 55 per cent of places at Catholic Cathedral College were filled, with about 300 spaces available on its maximum 653 roll.

Three schools – Mairehau High School, Linwood College and Aranui High School – had approved plans to reduce capacity, while two, Cashmere and Akaroa Area, had approved funding for new classrooms.

The March roll is traditionally the peak period.

North-East Secondary Education (Nese) chairwoman Amanda Williams said the report was "unsurprising".

"We feel there's a shortage [of high schools] over this side of town and this [report] definitely gives us something

ADDITIONAL REPORT FINDINGS

- In the decade to March, enrolments had gradually increased, with 2446 more pupils enrolled in the period.
- All but five of the city's schools had higher rolls this year than in 2000, with Aranui, down 544, and Mairehau, down 291, recording the most notable drops. The biggest increases were at Papanui, up 504; Burnside High, up 356; and Cashmere and Shirley Boys', both up 297.
- This year's pupil numbers were up 618 on 2009, "a notable increase".
- Retention of year 12 and 13 pupils was stable until 2006. It has since climbed by more than 1300. This year, there are 604 more year 12 and 13 pupils than last year.
- Over the decade, year 9 enrolments have remained stable.
- Ten of the oversubscribed schools have enrolment schemes. All also enrolled pupils from out of zone, but if they had not, they would not have exceeded capacity.
- Based on population predictions, the 13 to 17-year-old group is expected to decline slightly until 2016, and then increase before declining again after 2024.

to work toward," she said.

Nese's push for a secondary school to be built in northeast Christchurch has been before the education select committee.

It recommended a review and community consultation on schooling in the area.

However, Shirley Boys' High School principal John Laurenson labelled the report misleading, saying it dealt with "half facts".

A decade ago, for example, Aranui High had a roll of more than 1200, but it was now about 650, yet the report said it was at more than 90 per cent capacity.

The city did not need a new school as there was plenty of room in existing schools, he said.

"Starting from scratch and building a new school five to 10 minutes up the road at a cost of \$25 million plus, versus putting in a brand-new classroom block at an existing school, which would cost about \$2m, just does not make sense.

"It's complete nonsense; a

waste of taxpayers' money."

The head of the city's most oversubscribed secondary school said the current roll of just over 1500 was sitting "just right".

"Schools are not necessarily at capacity, as the ministry's definition of 'capacity' is different to schools' definitions.

"But we are aware . . . we should not be putting any more [pupils] in our school," Laurenson said.

When making calculations, the ministry had not taken into account classrooms that schools built and operated themselves, he said, as it counted only "what it's responsible for".

Shirley had about five classrooms in this category.

Catholic Cathedral College principal Bruce Henley said the report did not show that their enrolments had been increasing over the past five years and were up 18 per cent last year. The roll was currently 380. Henley said he was expecting about 400 pupils next year.

■ Schools with capacity ■ Schools in excess of capacity * Schools with rationalisation plans in place

Christchurch secondary schools capacity (March 2010 rolls)

