

Maximum Roll, Enrolment Scheme and Waiting List information handout

Introduction

In October 2020, the Cornerstone Christian Education Trust (the entity that is the proprietor of Cornerstone Christian School) was informed by the Ministry of Education that its application for a maximum roll increase had been declined. As a consequence, the parents of 123 students seeking enrolment for 2021 were sent letters explaining that we could not enrol their child/ren and notifying them of their child/ren's position on the waiting list.

An information meeting was then arranged so that parents who were concerned about the situation could be given an opportunity to share their concerns and learn why the enrolment scheme was implemented and designed as it was. It also outlines the school's next steps.

The information below is based on a Powerpoint that was shared at the evening.

Background – how did we get to this point?

1987

- Cornerstone Christian School opened as a one-class, Independent Year 1-8 school using Lifechurch's creche.
- A garage on the Lifechurch property was converted into a classroom. Two more classrooms were built.
- Parents paid teachers' salaries and helped – supervising children during breaks, cleaning bathrooms, mowing lawns, fundraising etc.



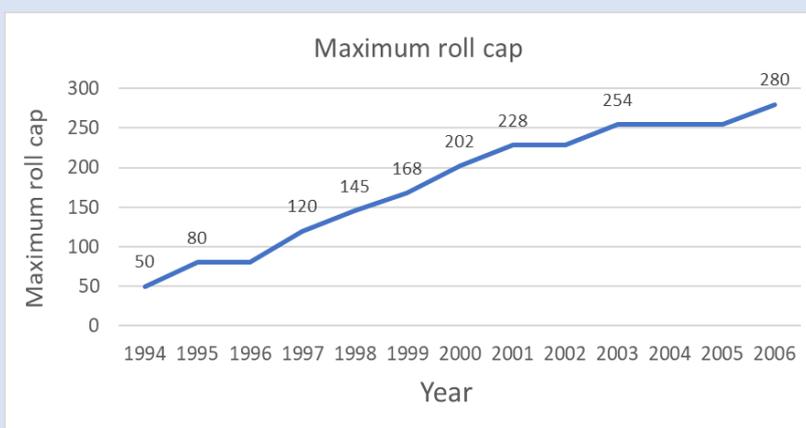
1994

- Cornerstone Christian School became a State-Integrated school with a maximum roll cap of 50 students.
- The MoE started paying the teachers' salaries and for most of the school's running costs.
- Parents start paying 'attendance dues' to cover costs only related to land and buildings.
- More families opted in and steady roll growth began.



1995-2006

- The MoE granted a series of maximum roll cap increases until the cap reached 280 students.
- At times, students were placed onto a waiting list due to lack of places (this sometimes included the siblings of students already enrolled at the school and children attending Cornerstone Christian Preschool).
- Each year, parents asked whether there was a plan to develop a composite (Y1-13) school.



1997

- The Roberts Line (Mihaere Drive) property was purchased.
- Families cleared trees and farm buildings from the site.
- Classrooms were built year by year as the roll grew.
- Junior classes continued to be taught at Featherston Street until 2007; families had children in two locations.



2008

- The MoE declined an application to increase the maximum roll.
- The Proprietor was told that it should not even consider applying to make Cornerstone Christian School a composite school as this would never fly.
- The Proprietor was told that an enrolment scheme would need to be implemented before any further maximum roll increase applications were made.



2013

- The Proprietor applied to the MoE for Cornerstone to become a composite school.
- The MoE approved the application together with a maximum roll increase to 340 students in 2014 and 430 students in 2016.
- The MoE told the Proprietor that a State-Integrated school does not require enrolment scheme because the maximum roll cap limits the roll.



2014-2015

- The MoE approved a further maximum roll increase to 580 students (45 students per year level) rolled out over five years.
- Students were placed onto a waiting list; this began to grow.
- The MoE and Proprietor met regarding partnering to accommodate growth in the North East of Palmerston North.



2017-2019

- The Proprietor applied to increase the maximum roll to 730 (54 students per year level).
- The application moved very slowly and further consultation with other schools was required in mid-2018.
- The waiting list grew to more than 150 students by Sept 2019.
- The MoE informed the Proprietor in Sept 2019 that it did not support the increase but would likely do so if certain conditions were met.
- One condition was implementing an enrolment scheme, and the MoE advised how the scheme could be designed in order to strengthen the case for a maximum roll increase.



2020

- The BoT designed the enrolment scheme in keeping with the MoE's (restrictive) guidelines and its advice.
- The community and school network were consulted on the enrolment scheme's design.
- The enrolment scheme was approved by MoE in mid-2020.
- The Proprietor was informed on 9th October that the maximum roll increase application had been declined.
- The following week, waiting list letters were sent to the parents of 123 children whom the school was not able to offer enrolment for 2021.

What are the problems?

- We are at our maximum roll cap of 580 students.
- There is high demand for places at the school; 123 children missing out on enrolment for 2021 (including siblings of children who are already enrolled at the school, children who attend Cornerstone Christian Preschool and Lalanga Mo'ui Tongan Early Childhood Centre, and children whose applications are 'preference' and who live in Zone 1).
- The MoE declined the application to increase the maximum roll. A chief reason is the impact it believes increasing our roll would have on the school network; particularly LAC and secondary schools that have further capacity to enrol students.
- The MoE decision didn't come through until 9th October; just a few days prior to this we were expecting some increase in the maximum roll for 2021 (which would have allowed more students to be offered enrolment, mitigating the problems).
- The MoE has asked the Proprietor not to pursue the matter for a couple of years so that the enrolment scheme has time to be embedded before they reconsider.

Why did we implement the Enrolment Scheme?

- We were required by MoE to implement an enrolment scheme; many local schools have been asked to do so because the MoE is concerned about the school network and wants to have more children attending their 'local school'.
- The MoE would not consider a maximum roll increase until the Board of Trustees had implemented an enrolment scheme.

How were enrolments processed previously?

- Applications were processed as soon as the application form had been received and the proprietor had determined whether the application was 'preference'. 'Preference' is a Ministry of Education term indicating that the parents of the applicant have established a connection with the school's special character.
- Once the available places were filled, further applications were placed on a waiting list ordered by the date of application. The waiting list usually included some siblings of students already enrolled at the school and some children enrolled at Cornerstone Christian Preschool and Lalanga Mo'ui Tongan Early Childhood Centre (since not all parents got their children's application forms in early).

Would my child have had a better chance of being enrolled if the BoT had designed the enrolment scheme differently, or if it had not been implemented at all?

For 2021:

- Almost all families who missed out on enrolling their children under the enrolment scheme would have missed out if the enrolment scheme had not been implemented since there were very few spaces available under a maximum roll of 580 students.
- The design of the scheme may have slightly decreased a few students' chances of enrolment, but very little impact would have been evident.
- The problem is **the difference between the maximum roll cap and the demand for places**, not the enrolment scheme itself.

For 2022 onward:

- Some families may have had a better chance of their children being enrolled if the scheme had been designed differently; however, the changes would have weakened the school's case for a maximum roll increase.
- For many families, the answer depends on whether the next application to increase the maximum roll (2022 onward) is successful.

Why aren't the siblings of children currently at the school given 1st priority?

Ministry of Education requirements dictate that:

- All preference students living within a 'local zone' [Zone 1] must be given first priority. If there are more 'local zone' applicants than spaces available, a ballot must be conducted to create the order

in which they will be enrolled, i.e. the siblings of currently enrolled students living in the 'local zone' cannot be given higher priority than other preference students living within the 'local zone'.

- For students living outside of the 'local zone', siblings can be given priority over other children living outside the 'local zone'.

In our enrolment scheme:

- In Zone 2, siblings of students who are currently enrolled receive priority over other students living in Zone 2 (behind the children of school staff and children who attend the named early childhood centres).
- Outside Zone 2, siblings of students who are currently enrolled receive priority over other students living outside Zone 2 (as above).
- Our 'local zone' [Zone 1] was kept small so that fewer applicants would be ranked ahead of the prioritised siblings living outside of the local zone.

Why is there a second zone?

- Proprietor has always had a vision for 'cradle to grave' education and desires to give priority to students whose parents have chosen a Christian education pathway for them from early childhood.
- The MoE advised that the only way the children from specific early childhood centres (specifically, Cornerstone Christian Preschool and Lalanga Mo'ui Tongan ECE) could be given priority was if there was a second zone encompassing area where these preschools were located. Eden Christian Kindergarten was also included as a named early learning centre because the priorities also apply to preference students living outside Zone 2 (e.g. Feilding).

What can be done about the situation?

The Proprietor and BoT believe it is in our best interests to:

- Investigate a newly created 'grandparenting clause'. This clause was included as part of the 2020 Education and Training Act passed into law in September. The clause may allow preference students who are the siblings of students who were already enrolled at the school when the enrolment scheme was implemented (mid-2020) to be ranked alongside Zone 1 preference applicants for enrolment in 2022 and beyond. The legislation was designed to help state schools who've been struggling with a similar issue for years. The BoT has decided to pursue this in Term 1 – 2021 with a view to hopefully having it in place for 2022 enrolments.
- Encourage families wanting to enrol their children at Cornerstone to **keep their children on the waiting list** even if they are currently well down the list. This will support future maximum roll increase applications. Furthermore, in a few years' time there will be more spaces available each year as larger cohorts start leaving the school at Year 13 and there are less students whose enrolments were already confirmed prior to the enrolment scheme's implementation.
- Commit the matter to the Lord in prayer.

What should we do if our children are on the waiting list?

- Pray that the Lord will go ahead of the Proprietor and prepare the way for another successful maximum roll increase application.
- Consider another school for your child for 2021, because:
 - We cannot guarantee enrolment to Zone 1 students for 2021.
 - There may be a few more places for Zone 1 students, but this depends on how many students leave the school in coming weeks/months. We have made allowance for some attrition already.
 - We are unlikely to have places in 2021 for students living outside Zone 1.
- Keep your child on our waiting list, even if they seem to be well down the list; a good-sized waiting list will support the next application to increase the maximum roll.
- If you already had children attending the school in mid-2020, watch the 2021 school newsletter for updates from the Board and Proprietor about progress with adding the 'grandparenting clause' to the enrolment scheme.
- Consider the priority order in the enrolment scheme but be mindful that not all preference Zone 1 applicants can be enrolled at the current time.