

Enrolment zone to help ease the pressure on growing school



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The Queen Elizabeth College roll has grown in the past nine years under principal Chris Moller and the school is now looking to introduce an enrolment scheme. (File photo)

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A Palmerston North school is proposing to introduce an enrolment zone as it deals with a growing roll.

Queen Elizabeth College was working with the Ministry of Education to bring in a zone, which would come into effect for term one next year.

Principal Chris Moller said it was to ensure the school's classrooms didn't get overcrowded as the increasing roll was putting pressure on space. The roll was about 450 now and would be capped at 540.

Part of the reason for the growth was that the school [started teaching intermediate children in 2024](#). Twenty-four intermediate children enrolled in the first year and it had risen to 80 this year.

Moller said they wanted to have 50 children in each year of intermediate, then another 50 available spots for new children in year 9, which would mean an intake of 100 year 9 children every year.

He said the board wanted the college to be “a high-performing small school”, showing care for a community that “has a lot of needs”.

“One of the reasons the school is growing is we’re getting a reputation for looking after kids,” Moller said.

“We’ve got an open attitude for support.

“We realise these days families need a lot of support. We’ve got breakfast, got options for food at interval, hot soup, we’ve got the school lunches programme, we lend them computers, give them stationery.”



Principal Chris Moller says Queen Elizabeth College is getting a reputation as a school that cares. (File photo)

Queen Elizabeth College used to be a much larger school. In the 1980s it had about 1200 students but that dropped over the years and it was fewer than 200 when Moller started in 2017.

Moller said it came down to getting three things right.

“It’s people, property, policy ... It started off with culture, it’s about getting people on board.

“We’ve got a generous site, a swimming pool, two gyms, a generous provision of classrooms.”

The zone for intermediate children took in parts of Takaro, Cloverlea, Milson and the central city.

The high school zone was larger and covered the north-west corner of the city, as well as rural areas out to Glen Ōroua, Rongotea, and Newbury.

Moller said they wanted to keep the intermediate zone small and not take other schools’ areas.

Last year Queen Elizabeth College was given a letter confirming support from the Ministry of Education due to financial difficulties. The school was temporarily in a negative working capital position, but made progress during the year and got back into a good financial position.

Moller said a lot of the issues were because the school had been renovating big spaces and paying for things itself.

“We got ourselves into a rapid-growth phase having to do a lot of property and maintenance work and new infrastructure. [The ministry] didn’t pay until we got proof of kids.”

It had spent \$50,000 on upgrading its pool facilities and was upgrading changing rooms, which were also used by the College Old Boys rugby club.

The next project would be work on the two-storey G block building, which was partly closed. Most of the top floor couldn't be used because it needed an external stairwell for a fire exit.

Meanwhile, St Peter's College was also proposing to bring in an enrolment scheme. This would essentially implement an internal policy the state-integrated school already followed.

The college received more applications than places available and gave preference to children whose parents had a connection with the school's Catholic special character.

The scheme would begin at the start of next year.

St Peter's acting principal Jared Ratana did not respond to a request for comment.