

# Information for parents and caregivers at St Joseph's School

## From the Board of Trustees

7<sup>th</sup> July 2011

Hello to all in the St Joseph's community:

### **Summary:**

This bulletin contains important information about the future of St Joseph's and some actions that the Board has unanimously agreed will be to the school's advantage. In summary:

1. The Board is applying for an increase to the maximum roll entitlement for the School, from its current level of 125 children to a new maximum of 175.
2. In support of this the Board is recommending a significant level of investment in the infrastructure of the school over the coming decade.
3. To explain and discuss these items, **the Board invites all parents and caregivers to an information session, to be held in the School Library on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> August at 7pm.**

### **Background – our School:**

The school roll was as low as 57 in the early 1990s, and fluctuated between 70-85 from 1995-2008. However, strong growth in 2009/10 has seen us finish 2010 with 116 students, and we expect to finish 2011 with +/-120. Assisted by this growth, and with careful financial management, school finances have recovered from a seriously low ebb in 2007/8 to a much healthier position this year. Our improved reputation has greatly increased interest in the school; Kathryn reports she has been fielding several enrolment enquiries a week. There are now waiting lists for Years 1-4.

### **Demand in our suburbs:**

Most will be aware of the ongoing increase in infill housing in our area. Stonefields will add 2500 homes to the region, and the Orakei Point development a further 700; there will be parents wanting Catholic education for their children. The Diocese have confirmed that there is a general surge in demand for Catholic education, and that most Catholic schools in the Eastern Suburbs and the City have waiting lists, and are typically on sites where space is limited. Accordingly, and in a real vote of confidence for St Joseph's, they are extremely keen for our school to grow – support which is echoed at the Ministry of Education.

### **The Board's conclusion:**

The Board therefore concludes that the demand is there to support a larger roll at St Joseph's, and that we have the vital support of both "owners" of education for this change. We are one of the few Catholic Schools which can accommodate expansion. The Board has seen enormous growth in the strength of the school in the past 3-4 years, and we are confident the school is on sound foundations to grow healthily and successfully. It is also important that we apply now in order to meet this year's window of opportunity for Ministry consideration of maximum roll increases across all NZ schools. Considering all the issues, the Board believes the time is right for this move.

### **What will we gain from moving to a maximum of 175?:**

In my December 2010 report to the community, I noted that growth – and how much – would be a primary issue for the Board this year. The Board has devoted considerable time and thought to this issue, and have settled on a proposed increase in our maximum roll to 175, since:

1. A roll of between 160-175 will sustain 7 classrooms with 7 fulltime teaching staff.

2. This nominally allows one teacher and one room for each of years 0-6, but in practice each class would likely be composite to some extent, given normal fluctuations in year numbers.
3. A maximum roll of 175 would still leave St Joseph's as a small school in an Auckland context, with most of our neighbouring Catholic schools having larger rolls. Further, we can accommodate this growth – although investment in our infrastructure will be required.
4. With this change, the Board believes our finances will be stronger, our resources broader, our resilience greater, the depth and flexibility of our staff enhanced, opportunities for our children improved and diversified, and we will be more attractive for staff and families.

### **What are the risks with this change?:**

There are several risks; the Board sees the two most significant as:

1. That the special character of the school is diminished or lost because of growth. During consultation for the school's new Charter, parents articulated the St Joseph's difference in the following ways: "country-like location", "friendly", "individual values", "Catholic faith", "personal relationships between children, teachers and parents", "school unity", "closeness – like a family", "caring, supportive and nurturing community". The Board has received information that other Catholic Schools of our proposed size also receive excellent feedback from parents about pastoral care and special character, and we firmly believe the school's special character can be maintained – and even strengthened – with this move.
2. That we lose our feeling of space - so rare in the city and unique to our location - through over-building. The Board has considered a number of development options and prefers the one which consumes the least green space – although at this stage no design or engineering professionals have been consulted about possible site redevelopment.

### **When will this happen?:**

It is important to realise that this change will not come overnight – this is a shift that may take 10 years to come to its completion. In particular the application for the maximum roll increase:

- (1) will take some time to approve – up to 6-12 months.
- (2) will be positioned so that it is contingent on "Policy 2" funding – which is additional money the Government would provide to fund the capital costs necessary to accommodate approved growth.
- (3) even when/if it is granted, the school roll is likely to increase steadily rather than spectacularly. Roll projections suggest around 140-145 by end of 2015, for example.
- (4) obviously we need classrooms and teachers before we can grow the roll.

### **Infrastructure investment:**

Over the last 12 months, the Board has assessed the capacity and quality of space within the school. Our assessment and calculations confirm we not only need more space (along with improved amenities such as car parks, playgrounds etc), we also need more modern learning spaces. The Board has therefore developed a 10 year property vision for the school which is intended to address these issues and support our growth. This will be discussed with the Diocese and a timely programme of work, with funding, will need to be agreed and implemented before the school can start to grow our roll beyond 125. However, the Diocese and Ministry support for the maximum roll increase should be positive for us when funding for much-needed improved infrastructure is considered.

***Please do reflect on this information and come to the meeting in August to learn more, and ask questions. I hope to see you there!***

***John Williams, Chair, Board of Trustees***