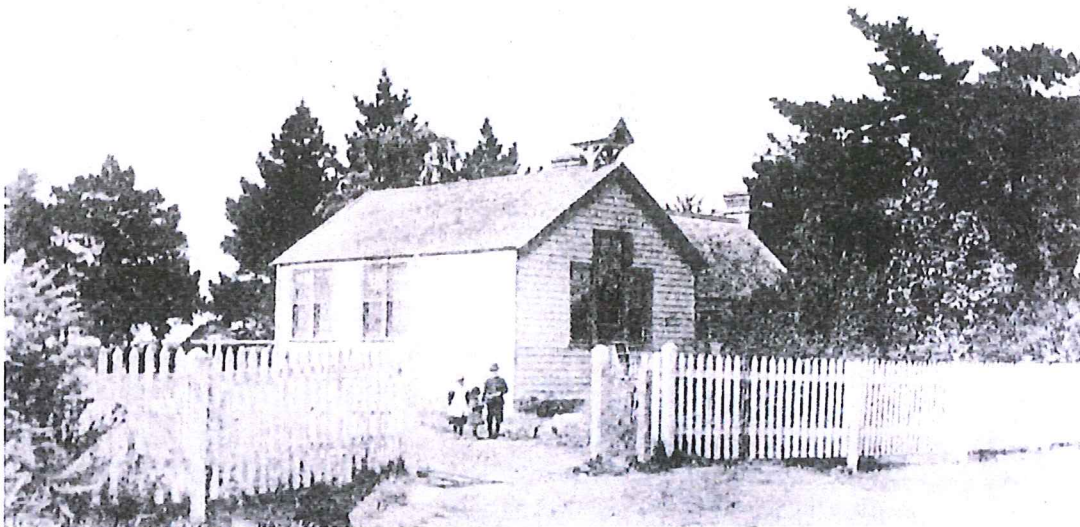


Received
27/03/2013



Old Greenpark School 1871



Modern Greenpark School 2013

Hon Hekia Parata.
Minister of Education
Private Bag 18041
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON 6160

Cc. Kathryn Palmer
Acting Regional Manager
Ministry of Education
PO Box 2522
CHRISTCHURCH 8140

Thursday 28 March 2013

Dear Hon Hekia Parata

Please accept this letter as the official request by the Greenpark School community for the Ministry of Education to withdraw its proposal to close Greenpark School. Please find our attached submission (13 pages). This outlines the rationale and evidence for our request. We consider that the Ministry of Education report regarding the Greenpark School proposal contains inconsistencies and the recommended course of action will not be of benefit to Greenpark or the wider Lincoln Cluster. We are focussed on remaining open and using our proud 140 year history as the springboard to rejuvenate our school as a top end agri-business 'School of the Land'. After your decision to withdraw the Ministry of Education's proposal to close our school, our rejuvenation committee look forward to working rapidly and constructively with you, your officials, and our school's agri-business partners to achieve our vision.

The Greenpark School community was severely knocked by the Ministry's rejection on 18 February 2013 of our innovative and well researched school proposal. Following this decision we have critically reviewed the relevance of our proposal to the Ministry's original vision for reshaping education in the Greater Christchurch area. We have thoroughly researched the reasons given by the ministry to justify closure, and find these to be inconsistent with the rationale to keep other schools open. We have also critically assessed the available Ministry data on the investment cost to keep Greenpark School open. As you will see in the attached submission the Ministry's rationale to close Greenpark School is flawed, inconsistent with other decisions, and does not optimise the use of the existing investment in the schooling resource of the Lincoln area. Our critical assessment finds none of the Ministry's stated reasons to close Greenpark School can be justified, and closure would not be a prudent use of the Government's investments during these difficult economic times. The Greenpark School community has galvanised behind the clear and strong justification to keep our high quality rural school open for another 140 years.

It is clear that the interim decision to close Greenpark School has used a flawed process. We agree with the Ministry that Greenpark School has not been given the same opportunities as a number of other Schools (e.g. Ouruhia School, as acknowledged in s57 (Casey 2013b). We are pleased that other schools have been given the opportunity to stay open, but the rationale needs to be consistent and fair across the board. The facts we present show this has not been the case for the Ministry's stated reasons for closing Greenpark School. The question needs to be raised "was this a predetermined decision?". Because of this, we ask that the Minister withdraws the decision to close Greenpark School.

On behalf of the Greenpark School Community and Board of Trustees,
Geoff McMillan, Board of Trustees Chairperson

Greenpark School Board of Trustees process of consultation with the School community

The Boards consultation with the school community showed an overwhelming majority disagreed with the decision to close the School.

Although the disagreement with the decision was overwhelming, initially there was mixed feelings about whether to accept or fight the decision.

Many thought the decision was predetermined, and some thought that there was no point in further putting our case forward. The majority were determined that we should continue to fight the decision.

The more research that was done the more inconsistencies became apparent. This galvanized our resolve to fight on.

A working group was formed with the Board to challenge this interim decision and to keep Greenpark School open.

Analysis of inconsistencies in the Ministry of Education Proposal to close Greenpark School, dated 18 January 2013.

Introduction

The Ministry's report states several factors contributed toward their decision to continue with the closure proposal. These included our low roll, low capacity, proximity to other schools and costs to repair, amongst others. Analysis of the Ministry's data clearly shows inconsistencies in the rationale to close Greenpark School (Table 1). We question why we are the only "rural outer plains" zone school earmarked for closure.

Table 1 Summary data for predominantly rural Schools with a similar profile to Greenpark School that are included in the renewal plan for the Greater Christchurch area (Ministry of Education 2013). Schools coloured yellow were identified for closure, but decision reversed. Further comprehensive data on more schools is available in Table 2.

Cluster		2012 roll	2010-2012 % roll growth	Operating capacity ¹ %	Cost of Repairs ² \$M	Proximity to nearest school ³ (km)	Cost / learner (Open) ²	Cost / learner (Close) ²
Akaroa	Duvauchelle	23	-18	31%	\$0.27	10	\$10,732	\$10,732
	Okains	18	6	36%	\$0.17	15	\$10,732	\$10,732
Darfield	Greendale	24	0	48%		11		
	Sheffield	71	39	71%		8		
	Springfield	30	-12	60%		8		
Hororata	Hororata	59	-32	59%		10		
	Windwhistle	25	-32	50%		18		
Oxford	Viewhill	36	-8	72%		10		
Lincoln	Greenpark	38	41	51%	\$0.23	6	\$8,529	\$6,765
Hornby	Yaldhurst Model	115	6	77%	\$1.28	2	\$16,180	\$14,196
	Gilberthorpe	97	13	55%	\$2.49	2		
Rolleston	Burnham	136	-9	60%	\$3.27	7	\$25,038	\$6,917
Belfast	Ouruhia	100	-8	80%	\$0.59	5	\$5,310	\$4,071

Table 1 identifies a number of other small rural schools with a similar profile to Greenpark School; low rolls, operating below capacity, with proximity to other schools. We strongly support all schools in Table 1, but question why Greenpark is the only school shown that is facing closure. The cost/capacity/ proximity factor is within an expected variance range of these schools. The data does not support the Ministry's proposal for closure of Greenpark School.

¹ Capacity calculated by assuming all classrooms can hold 25 students, thus providing a "per student" school capacity. The 2012 roll as a percentage of the current school capacity is displayed.

² Data is only available for those schools that were proposed to close in September 2012.

³ Distance is calculated using Kiwimaps Street Directory

Detailed analysis

Issue #1. "The low roll justifies closure"

The Ministry report in s3 (Casey 2013) identifies the primary justification for their closure proposal is Greenpark School's historically low roll. This rationale is inconsistent with the data presented by the Ministry for all schools in the Greater Christchurch area (Ministry of Education 2013). It is a reality of rural communities that they will have small rolls, as shown in the Ministry data (Table 2). It is clear from Table 2 that a low roll is not a justification for closure of a rural community school. Indeed, the Ministry decided not to close two schools with smaller rolls than Greenpark, in the interim decisions announced on 18th February 2013. A number of other schools with a low roll were also not included in the original school closure proposals by the Ministry in September 2012.

Prior to the Ministry's closure proposal announcement in September 2012 our school had a strong rate of growth, increasing by 41% over the two years from 2010 to 2012. This was the highest rate of growth of the schools with a similar profile in Table 1, in contrast with most of the other schools which actually showed a roll decline.

The Greenpark School community does not understand the logic of the Ministry decision to close our school, while all other schools with similar profiles in the rural outer plains zone are not facing closure. We are strongly supportive of all our rural school 'cousins' staying open as we identify with the value they add to their communities and the agricultural industry.

After reviewing the data on the Ministry's website (Ministry of Education 2013) it is clear that the primary justification of a low school roll is inconsistent with the rationale applied across the Greater Christchurch area, and therefore cannot be used as a reason to close Greenpark School.

Issue #2. "It is operating well below its capacity"

This rationale is inconsistent with the data presented by the Ministry for all schools in the Greater Christchurch area (Ministry of Education 2013). Table 2 shows that a school operating below capacity was not a consistent reason for school closure in the initial Ministry proposals of September 2012. This is also evident in the February 2013 interim decisions, where the Ministry withdrew its closure proposal for a number of schools that have spare classroom capacity. Operating capacity cannot be used as a reason to close Greenpark School.

Issue #3. "Proximity to other Schools".

According to the Ministry's data there are a number of other schools with a similar profile to Greenpark that have a small roll, and are located close to other schools with capacity (Table 2). This fact has not been used as a reason to close these schools. In the case of the Lincoln / Rolleston area most schools are within 5km of at least one neighbouring school. Given the projected growth in this area, and the existing and projected full capacity issues of these schools,

the proximity is a significant advantage for the Ministry to maximise the use of the existing schooling resources. Greenpark is ideally placed to take the capacity pressure off Tai Tapu, Springston, and Lincoln Schools. Proximity to other schools cannot be used as a reason to close Greenpark School.

Issue #4 “Future growth is best met by investment in other schools in the wider Lincoln area”

The schools in the wider Lincoln area are currently at capacity (Table 2). There are issues with classroom and recreational space at Springston and Tai Tapu^{4,5}, which will require significant investment to accommodate growth. Springston is growing rapidly, and even the school library had to be used as a classroom in 2012⁵. Tai Tapu is also near capacity, with the Ministry stating one building with two classrooms is not considered cost effective to repair (Ministry of Education 2013c). This removes any spare capacity at the school. Both Tai Tapu and Ladbroke Schools have communicated to the Greenpark community that they do not want to grow bigger⁶. In s39 (Casey 2013) the Ministry acknowledges that most Greenpark students are expected to enrol at Tai Tapu School, but in s36 states this will require a temporary classroom to accommodate the Greenpark students. The Ministry acknowledges that Lincoln township is experiencing rapid housing expansion⁷, and that Lincoln Primary School will struggle to accommodate this growth, and in s39 (Casey 2013) will need to restrict enrolments by limiting the zone to Lincoln township. Currently Lincoln Primary has stated that it will not be accepting any out of zone applications for at least the next two years⁸. The Ministry has also claimed that it will need to build an additional school within the decade in Lincoln⁹. We note that s10 (Casey 2013) estimates there will be 1000 additional households in Lincoln by 2021, yet six weeks later the release of the draft land-use recovery plan estimates 4036 sections will be available in Lincoln by 2016 (ECan 2013). Clearly the Lincoln and Rolleston areas are in the midst of an unprecedented growth burst¹⁰.

Greenpark School is essential to sustainably manage growth in the wider Lincoln area. The Ministry has communicated directly to Greenpark that the purpose of school zones is to control roll growth in schools that are close to capacity¹¹. Currently for Greenpark School the zones are working in reverse, stifling our growth, whilst pushing adjacent schools to capacity. Following the Ministry’s support of Ouruhia School remaining open, the same rationale for encouraging

⁴ Telephone enquiry by Ms Hill with Springston and Tai Tapu Primary office 21/3/13

⁵ Springston School PTA. Article in the Central Canterbury News p5, March 6, 2013.

⁶ Telephone enquiry by Ms Bell and Mrs Carrick with the School Principal’s early March 2013.

⁷ <http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/business/your-property/8457890/Chch-needs-over-36-000-new-houses>

⁸ Telephone enquiry by Ms Bell with Lincoln Primary office 22/3/13

⁹ <http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/central-canterbury-news/8286825/Parata-New-schools-in-Lincoln-and-Rolleston> [accessed 22/3/13]

¹⁰ In our December 2012 proposal we have already identified that in December 2012 Lincoln had 510 consented residential lots, with 295 building consents issued for residential dwellings (Kelvin Coe, SDC mayor, pers. Comm).

¹¹ Ministry of Education official at Greenpark School meeting on 11 March 2013

roll growth can be applied to Greenpark by recalculating the enrolment zones in the Lincoln cluster. This will direct more children to Greenpark School and allow sustainable growth in the adjacent schools which are currently stressed for capacity.

Because of the capacity issues in the wider Lincoln area, the Ministry and the schools need to adhere to zones, and closely administer out of zone placements, to ensure sustainable growth and optimisation of the existing schooling resources. Historically this has not been the case, exacerbating the capacity issues of these schools. This has been at the cost of Greenpark School and now the Ministry, who are expected to provide more investment to alleviate this inflated growth. Both Springston and Lincoln Schools have shown that they want to grow, but this should not be at the expense of Greenpark School. Given the prudent financial strategy of the Government, the most efficient investment strategy for schooling provision in the Lincoln / Rolleston area is undoubtedly to optimise the use of the existing schooling resources. This can be achieved by recalculating the enrolment zones to optimise the use of the existing Greenpark School resources.

Issue #5. “Investment is required to bring the school up to modern learning environment standards and to earthquake strengthen”

This is not an isolated case, all schools in the outer plains and the majority in Selwyn and Christchurch are facing these same issues. Table 2 shows this has not been used as a reason to close other schools with a similar profile. Table 2 also shows that the cost per learner of upgrading the Greenpark classrooms is considerably less (e.g. Burnham), or similar (e.g. Ouruhia, Yaldhurst, Gilberthorpe, Duvauchelle’s and Okains Bay) to other schools which the Ministry has decided to keep open. The cost of upgrading our current facilities at Greenpark, which includes three classrooms, is the same as building the one new room at Tai Tapu which the Ministry states it will need to accommodate our children. Therefore, as with Ouruhia School, property savings associated with closing would be negligible, and cannot be used as a reason to close Greenpark School. On a per classroom basis it is 300% more costly to the Ministry to close Greenpark School, than to keep the school open and optimise the schooling resources of the Lincoln cluster to accommodate the anticipated future growth.

The Greenpark School community has assessed the capability of our school to meet modern learning environment standards, using the toolbox provided (Ministry of Education 2013b). We are not aware if the Ministry has commissioned its own independent assessment, prior to using this as a reason to justify closure of Greenpark School. The assessment by the Greenpark School community shows that the school already meets almost all of the modern learning environment standards, and any upgrades are readily achievable. We already had some of these upgrades budgeted in the school 5 year plan¹², but these were put on hold following the September 2010 earthquake. Our school community is highly motivated with a range of trade skills, business

¹² Geoff McMillan, Chairperson Greenpark School Board of Trustees.

contacts, and a strong record of fund-raising. This is shown in the solid financial position of the school, as well as the immaculate and well maintained existing condition of the school. We can assure the Ministry that the school community will pull out all stops to minimise the investment cost to the Ministry, and therefore provide the Ministry with one of the best returns on investment that it will spend on upgrading New Zealand schools to meet these standards.

Issue #6. "The ministry does not support the 'School of the Land' proposal"

The Greenpark School community are strongly supportive of the Minister's vision for co-operative school clusters, as we enthusiastically discussed with the Minister during her school visit. Our whole approach was based on defining a distinct role that Greenpark School could play within our Cluster, and how the strengths of our school could be used to support other schools in the Cluster. This was clearly communicated when we presented our 'School of the Land' proposal to other Lincoln Cluster Principals on the 12th November 2012.

The Ministry has argued that the "School of the Land" vision could be executed equally successfully by Springston, Lincoln or Tai Tapu Schools, and therefore it is debatable when considering which schools should remain open (s28, (Casey 2013). Teachers and the community at large are busier than ever, and a top down directive to initiate a "School of the Land" at a school that does not have the passion or vision for it is likely to be less effective. Greenpark has a unique community and a strong connection with the land and we believe that we can deliver this vision to a higher standard and in a shorter timeframe than other schools in our Cluster, and that the whole Cluster can benefit from this. The lack of interest in our 'School of the Land' proposal when presented to the other Cluster Principals in November 2012, reinforces our argument.

We are appreciative of the underlying vision of the rationale for change¹³, which states:

"Education renewal for Christchurch is about meeting the needs and aspirations of children and young people...Innovative, cost effective, and sustainable options must be explored to provide for diversity and choice in an economically viable way"

We also note that the electronic signature of the programme director when communicating to Greenpark School highlighted the phrase "*Opportunity plus innovation to enhance education across Greater Christchurch*"¹⁴.

Greenpark School whole heartedly embraced the Minister's vision by developing our 'School of the Land' proposal. The school community was encouraged by your enthusiasm¹⁵ towards our proposal during your visit to our school on 9 November 2012, and your positive views on the

¹³ Page 1 of the Greenpark School – Rationale for change. Contained as an appendix in Casey (2013).

¹⁴ Coralanne Child. Email to Greenpark School, 12 November 2012.

¹⁵ Handwritten by the Minister on the 13th November 2012 letter to Greenpark School sent following the Minister's school visit.

alignment with the vision of the rationale for change. Ministry officials have also communicated to Greenpark School that our proposal was one of the most innovative put forward^{16,17}. We have critically reviewed a number of proposals by other schools that were originally proposed to close, but subsequently kept open, and agree that they did not show the vision and innovation which the Ministry said it was looking for in its rationale for change. We encourage the Minister to read our 'School of the Land' proposal again, as we are sure you will see how strongly it aligns with all aspects of the rationale for change quoted above.

The Ministry has mis-interpreted the purpose of our School of the Land proposal, in the report released on 18 February 2013. The driving logic behind our proposal was not to develop a local curriculum, but to develop a high quality agri-business focussed curriculum. Our vision was to meet a clear need identified in briefings to the Government¹⁸, and further highlighted in the strong support we received from both top educators and the agri-business industry for our 'School of the Land' proposal. Our proposal is clear that we do not see this as a local initiative, but rather we viewed ourselves as a pilot school for a much needed curriculum¹⁹ that could be rolled out across the country.

Issue #7. "The risk to the Ministry of making a pre-determined decision"

The interim decision announced on 18 February 2013 acknowledges the key risk to your decision is that our reasons to stay open have not been properly considered, or that the Ministry case presented to you has been influenced by a predetermined closure agenda (s56, (Casey 2013). The detailed analysis in the section above clearly shows that the rationale to keep Greenpark School open has not been properly considered. For the reasons stated below, we also provide evidence to you that our case has been influenced by a predetermined closure agenda.

1. Notifying Springston School immediately prior to the 13 September 2012 announcement that they were getting four new classrooms rather than the two they had requested. Springston School has said they were very surprised at this, and could not see the reason, until the Ministry's announcement the following week to close Greenpark School²⁰.
2. The Ministry acknowledges that it is unclear whether an additional primary school will be required in Lincoln to accommodate long-term demand (s12, (Casey 2013). Yet in the week before announcing the Greenpark closure interim decision the Minister held a public announcement stating that a new primary school would be built in Lincoln⁹. We question the purpose of the new school announcement at this time, when the Ministry's

¹⁶ Tom Scollard. Feedback to Board members from conversations with Ministry staff immediately following submission of the proposal in December 2012.

¹⁷ Tom Scollard and [redacted] communicated to Greenpark School meeting on 11 March 2013.

¹⁸ refer to http://www.parliament.nz/NR/rdonlyres/6B17DC88-EDCB-4ACB-BAEA-31D89E8689AE/94066/DBSCH_SCR_4230_6343.pdf

¹⁹ Refer to <http://www.stuff.co.nz/waikato-times/farming/6452095/Crisis-looms-for-agriculture-sector-expert>

²⁰ Telephone enquiry by Mrs Carrick with the School Principal 18 March 2013.

own report is unclear on whether the school is needed (s12, (Casey 2013)). It is clear that the timing of this announcement served to undermine support for Greenpark School.

3. The initial proposal to close Greenpark School had us in the Lincoln Cluster, not in the Tai Tapu Cluster. Yet the Ministry states (s36 & s39, (Casey 2013)) that if Greenpark closes the majority of students will be expected to enrol at Tai Tapu School. We agree that Greenpark School is best aligned to the Tai Tapu Cluster, and this should have occurred at the start. We question why Greenpark School was put into the Lincoln Cluster, other than to strengthen a pre-determined decision to close Greenpark School, by linking it to Lincoln Primary, which the Ministry at that time claimed had significant excess capacity (they have since acknowledged Lincoln Primary capacity will fill in the near future). If Greenpark had been correctly put into the Tai Tapu Cluster the small extra capacity at Greenpark would have been seen as a strength to this Cluster, as Tai Tapu is currently at capacity (as the Ministry acknowledges that two of its existing classrooms are not cost effective to repair (Ministry of Education 2013c)).
4. Ministry officials have been actively working with other schools to find solutions to accommodate existing Greenpark students, prior to the closure decision being confirmed. Planning has also begun with these schools to define the future zones and bus routes.
5. We are aware of Ministry officials working to help some Greenpark School families find out of zone places in nearby capacity stressed schools, prior to the Minister's final decision. This is a conflict of interest, and shows the 'predetermined closure' mind-set of the Ministry.
6. The poor quality and inconsistencies of the Ministry's rationale to close Greenpark School, in comparison to decisions to keep other schools open, is either due to poorly informed officials, or their response has been influenced by a predetermined decision that Greenpark School will close.
7. The poor support over the last six months by the Lincoln Cluster to Greenpark School's plight is reflective of the view that the Greenpark School closure is a done deal. The lack of interest in our 'School of the Land' proposal when presented to the other Cluster Principals in November 2012 was indicative of this attitude, as well as their lack of response to our facilitators direct requests for letters of support in early December 2012²¹. This is reflected in the Lincoln BOT writing to the Ministry to say they support Greenpark closure, but never consulting with us over their concerns, or on our reasons why we should stay open. The Lincoln Principal freely stated that she had never been to Greenpark School at our proposal presentation to the Cluster on 12 November 2012²². It appears that the Lincoln Cluster has been strongly influenced by the Ministry's promise of significant investment in new schooling resources. We ask why these promises are necessary before the fate of Greenpark School has been decided, unless it is a predetermined decision.

²¹ Tom Scollard. Personal comm. in the week prior to the December 2012 submission.

²² Mr Carrick and Mrs Klassen. Personal comm. following meeting attendance.

Table 2 Data for predominantly rural Schools with a similar profile to Greenpark School that are included in the renewal plan for the Greater Christchurch area (Ministry of Education 2013)

Cluster		Roll			Classroom Capacity			Building capacity			Proximity to Other Schools ² (km)			Ministry proposal cost	
		2010	2012	2 year % growth	Current	Required	Operating capacity ¹ %	No of buildings	No requiring EQ strengthening	Repair \$M	Nearest	2nd	3rd	Cost / learner (Open)	Cost / learner (Close)
Akaroa	Duvauchelle	28	23	-18	3	2	31%	9	3	\$0.27	10	15	n/a	\$10,732	\$10,732
	Okains	17	18	6	2	1	36%	7	1	\$0.17	15	17	n/a	\$10,732	\$10,732
Darfield	Glentunnel	71	109	54	4	5	109%	7	2		10	13	18		
	Greendale	24	24	0	2	1	48%	3	0		11	14	17		
	Kirwee	123	119	-3	5	5	95%	11	3		9	13	17		
	Sheffield	51	71	39	4	3	71%	3	1		8	14	n/a		
	Springfield	34	30	-12	2	2	60%	7	3		8	22	n/a		
	Darfield	244	203	-17	12	8	68%	14	5		9	8	11		
	West Melton	241	269	12	15	11	72%	19	1		6	10	13		
	Hororata	87	59	-32	4	3	59%	7	2		10	14	21		
Hororata	Windwhistle	19	25	32	2	1	50%	4	1		18	23	n/a		
Oxford	Viewhill	39	36	-8	2	2	72%	6	1		10	24	27		
Rolleston	Burnham	150	136	-9	9	6	60%	8	3	\$3.27	7	8	8	\$25,038	\$6,917
Prebbleton	Broadfields	107	100	-7	5	4	80%	8	0		5	6	6		
Tai Tapu	Tai Tapu	273	264	-3	12	11	88%	13	4		5	6	7		
Lincoln	Greenpark	27	38	41	3	2	51%	7	3	\$0.23	6	7	11	\$8,529	\$6,765
	Springston	156	192	23	8	8	96%	13	4		5	7	8		
	Ladbrooks	94	95	1	4	4	95%	6	1		5	5	6		
	LincolnPrimary	424	363	-14	30	15	48%	32	4		5	6	7		
Hornby	Yaldhurst Model	109	115	6	6	5	77%	11	5	\$1.28	2	3	4	\$16,180	\$14,196
	Gilberthorpe	86	97	13	7	4	55%	7	3	\$2.49	2	2	3		
Belfast	Ouruhua	109	100	-8	5	4	80%	9	3	\$0.59	4.5	7	7	\$5,310	\$4,071

Note 1: Capacity calculated by assuming all classrooms can hold 25 students, thus providing a "per student" school capacity. The 2012 roll as a percentage of the current school capacity is displayed. **Note 2:** Distance is to the three closest state schools, using Kiwimaps Street Directory. **Yellow coloured** Schools were identified for closure in September 2012, but decision reversed on 18 February 2013. All data from www.shapingeducation.govt.nz unless otherwise stated. **Green coloured** cells show those schools with positive growth prior to the 'shaping education' announcement in September 2012. **Blue colour** shows Greenpark is the only remaining school slated for closure following the 18 February announcements.

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