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Export date: Fri Oct 30 8:01:42 2026 / +0000 GMT

Families? relocation worries alleviated as UGDSB caps enrollment at Primrose Elementary School

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Students and families enrolled at Primrose Elementary School no longer need to worry about relocating to a different school for the 2024-2025 school year.

The Upper Grand District School Board (UGDSB) trustees voted last month to approve an enrollment cap for Primrose Elementary School starting the 2024-2025 school year to help alleviate enrolment pressure.

?By establishing an enrolment cap, current Primrose ES students will not be impacted by a boundary change. This option puts a control on the enrolment numbers at Primrose ES. It also allows staff to monitor the on-going growth at Centennial Hylands ES,? wrote the school board in the final report of the boundary review.

In October of 2023, the Upper Grand District School Board announced in a press release that they would conduct a boundary review to address the accommodation pressures at Primrose Elementary School in Mulmur.

The rural school, serviced by a private well and septic system, has an operating capacity of 377 pupil spaces. Primrose Elementary has experienced an increase in enrollment in recent years, and the current number of students in the school sits at approximately 580. As of the 2023-24 school year, Primrose has 23 classes and 17 classrooms in the school building as well as six portables on site.

According to the final report, an additional one or two classrooms would be required to accommodate the enrolment for the upcoming school year if no action was taken to lessen enrollment.

The proposed school to accommodate the boundary review was Centennial Hylands Elementary School, which has an enrollment of 413 students and the capacity to accommodate a total of 541 students.

According to the school board, Primrose Elementary has had an enrollment increase of almost 25 per cent, from about 470 students to 590 students, between October 2020 and September of 2023, without any significant residential development.

?Our current projections show enrollment to Primrose will continue to increase if no changes are made. At the same time, the enrollment at Centennial Highlands and Hyland Heights has not increased as much as we expected,? Ralk Mesenbrink, chair of the board, told County Council in January.

The initial boundary review report presented different options for Primrose Elementary School to implement starting September 2024, which included sticking with the status quo, shifting Grade 7/8 students to Centennial Hylands Elementary School, and reassigning students between JK and Grade 8 through a boundary shift in Melancthon Township.

Families of students at Primrose Elementary raised concerns about their children having to relocate schools throughout the boundary review process.

?They don't want to see another boundary review that separates their kids from their friends only seven years after the last one, where they were forced to move from Centennial Hylands to Primrose,? said James McLean, Deputy Mayor of Melancthon, at the January County Council meeting.

McLean also recommended starting Kindergarten students at another school before moving them as a cohort to Primrose Elementary

in Grade 1, as a ?less disruptive option that doesn't separate cohorts?.

After conducting three meetings to discuss the enrolment pressures as well as receiving feedback from those impacted by the boundary review, the UGDSB considered and voted to cap the number of students at Primrose starting with Kindergarten enrollment.

?The Committee has changed its recommendation based on a review of all updated information and input recweived throughout the boundary review process. The Staff Committee is recommending a new Option 5 with the implementation of an enrollment cap at Primrose ES starting in 2024-25 as an interim accommodation measure and remaining in place until a longer-term solution is in place. It is recommended that Primrose ES enrolment be capped at its current 23 classes to not put additional enrollment pressure on the existing infrastructure,? reads the final report trustees voted for approval.

For JK students with older siblings attending Primrose Elementary School, the school boards said they will be given preference in order to ?keep families together?. In cases where preference is unable to be given, families will have the option to shift their older child to Centennial Hylands ES.

Busing will be provided to all students being redirected to Centennial Hylands Elementary School.