



2023 Attendance Turnaround Package

Attendance officer initiative

Role description

Background

Attendance and engagement in school has been declining since 2015 and was further impacted by COVID-19. This decline in school attendance has been experienced by every ethnicity, decile, year level and region. The declines are slightly larger among younger ākonga and lower deciles, with the largest decline seen across primary and intermediate schools (Years 1-8) and ākonga Māori and Pacific learners. Alongside parents, schools and kura are responsible for ensuring all ākonga attend school every day it is open for instruction. However rising absences, particularly moderate and chronic absence continues to put pressure on the system's capacity to respond to improve attendance.

The Attendance and Engagement Strategy¹ sets out expectations of ākonga and whānau, schools, kura, communities and government agencies in addressing this complex problem. The introduction of attendance officers is intended to support schools, kura and learning communities to turn around irregular and moderate attendance rates, by providing direct and immediate support to understand and address attendance patterns before they become frequent, persistent and entrenched.

The Government has announced The School Attendance Turnaround Package to complement initiatives already underway to assist kura and schools in supporting ākonga to re-engage with their learning. The package will focus on irregular attendance through to chronic absence and non-enrolment. It consists of:

- \$37.6 million over five years for 82 FTE to support new attendance officer roles who will work with schools in supporting students who are irregularly or moderately absent
- \$28.4 million over five years to increase capacity and address cost pressures of the Attendance Service
- \$7.73 million over three years to develop an improved and standardised system for attendance data collection and analysis

This role description sets out the core purpose, focus and functions of the new attendance officer role.

Guiding principles and strategies

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga | The Ministry of Education is committed to shaping an inclusive education system that supports ākonga to be present, participate and progress in their learning. This vision is reflected in:

- [The National Attendance and Engagement Strategy](#)
- [Ka Hikitia – Ka Hāpaitia](#)
- [The Action Plan for Pacific Education](#)
- [The Learning Support Action Plan](#)
- [Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities \(NELP\)](#)

¹ <https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/overall-strategies-and-policies/attendance-and-engagement-strategy/>

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Regional Attendance and Engagement Strategies and Action Plans

Sector leadership, communities, iwi, hapū and Te Mahau takiwā have worked together to develop regional strategies and action plans to support attendance and engagement. There are a range of identified actions underway that reflect the local context, needs, priorities and opportunities within each takiwā. Supporting learning environments to be safe, inclusive, free from racism and responsive to the needs of ākonga Māori, Pacific learners, their whānau and aiga.

The attendance officer role is positioned within this environment to complement and contribute to a broad range of responses, with a specific focus on irregular and moderate absence. Regional flexibility and adaptability may be required, in order to align with existing responses within the community, while maintaining the overall purpose and functions of the role.

Purpose of the Role

The purpose of this role is to support schools and kura to turn around irregular and moderate absence patterns before they become entrenched and persistent. The attendance officer role will work across schools, kura and communities to improve the attendance of ākonga who are irregularly and moderately absent. They provide support for schools, kura and communities to analyse and identify patterns of attendance, to develop consistent processes and effective practice, ensuring those practices effectively engage and support ākonga Māori and their whānau, Pacific learners and aiga, thereby reducing the number of ākonga falling into chronically absent patterns of attendance.

Working with key stakeholders including parent communities, the Attendance Service (tasked with supporting chronically absent and non-enrolled ākonga) and existing attendance and engagement governance groups, the role contributes to and complements attendance responses within the community. Supporting the use of data and information, to inform system improvements and connections between ākonga, whānau and school, recognising the need to consider ākonga Māori in the context of their whānau, hapū and iwi, the role establishes effective and sustainable shifts to reduce barriers to attendance and support improved attendance.

The role is specifically focussed on universal and targeted attendance responses that address irregular, moderate and declining absence patterns of ākonga in Years 1-12 across schools, kura and communities. Case management for ākonga with chronic absence and non-enrolment is undertaken by the Attendance Service.

Role Scope

In scope	Out of scope
<p>The role is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• focussed on schools and kura with ākonga from Years 1-12 who are irregularly or moderately absent from school.• a facilitation function supporting universal and targeted attendance responses with tailored support as an exception.• about supporting and connecting across the community to lift regular school attendance.	<p>The role is not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• focussed on supporting responses for ākonga who are chronically absent and require individualised support.• a case management function.• about utilising Section 48 of the Education and Training Act 2020.

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Role Design

The 82 FTE are intended to be dedicated roles and, in most cases will be full time. However, there may be some instances where a school community may be supported by part-time FTE or where smaller communities can be supported by one shared FTE.

While the name of this role is 'attendance officer', the position may be given a different name to best reflect the community the position works with and within.

Role Functions

The attendance officer role will work with a broad range of stakeholders supporting them to identify, examine, and respond to irregular and moderate school absence. The core functions of the role are set out in the table below, but the delivery of these functions will be flexible to ensure alignment with local attendance and engagement priorities and actions, and what makes sense in each community.

Functions	In practice this may include:
Identify irregular and moderate absence within the community and attendance related actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>working across the school/kura community to identify irregular and moderate absence data, trends and patterns</i><i>working with hapū and iwi, Māori and Pacific community leaders, key stakeholders and attendance and engagement governance groups to identify attendance data and actions in place across the community</i><i>working with whānau, hapū, iwi, Māori and Pacific community leaders to better understand the drivers of absence for their ākonga including the impact of racism, discrimination and bias on attendance</i>
Support data and information analysis to inform understanding and decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>working with parent communities, whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori and Pacific communities to understand their experiences, recognising the importance of identity, language and culture</i><i>supporting schools, kura and school communities to analyse and understand irregular and moderate absence data and information</i><i>utilising data and information to identify where attitudes, behaviours, systems and processes affect engagement and attendance</i>
Provide information to communities and schools on effective options to turn irregular and moderate absence around	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>identifying actions and responses that increase attendance and share practice across the community</i><i>promoting attendance practices that are culturally sustaining, mana enhancing, and build inclusiveness</i><i>supporting a range of responses that effect change particularly for ākonga Māori and their whānau, Pacific learners and aiga</i>
Support communities and schools to put effective processes and systems in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><i>supporting the implementation of effective process and system improvements across the schools and community</i>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>supporting conditions that promote collaborative understanding and decision making, recognising Māori agency and authority at every level of decision making.</i>
Establish and sustain effective connections with iwi, schools, community leaders and parent communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>supporting connectedness and trust across the community with sustainable and effective ways of working</i>• <i>supporting enduring changes and improvements</i>• <i>understanding and responding to emerging patterns, building on responsive processes within the community.</i>

Knowledge, Skills and Experience

Attendance officers are likely to:

- know their local community, iwi and schools
- have a deep understanding of the importance of regular school attendance for children and young people
- an understanding of Māori rights and interests, a clear understanding of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and the rights and obligations established by Te Tiriti
- demonstrate an understanding, knowledge and experience of tikanga and te ao Māori
- have a strong understanding of the drivers of irregular and moderate absence and leading practice approaches to support engagement and attendance
- be skilled at working collaboratively with others to deliver shared objectives
- be confident in analysing and using data to provide insights and support decision making
- have strong interpersonal and communication skills including the ability to support and/or influence a wide range of stakeholders
- have an ability to build trusting relationships and partnerships to achieve shared outcomes.