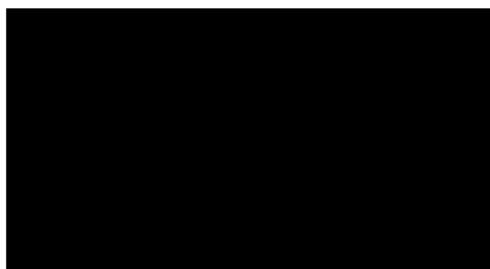




27 OCT 2017



Thank you for your email to the Ministry of Education requesting information about schools at or below 51% of their classroom capacity. We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 and have responded below.

Classroom utilisation rates are a measure we use to illustrate how a school is using their allocated teaching space. We use this information to inform our strategic planning for the wider schooling network. This information is used alongside demographic and population projections to indicate which regions are likely to grow and where additional support may be required.

In **Appendix A**, we have attached a table detailing all schools at or below 51% of their classroom capacity. This data is based on March 2017 rolls. We have also provided you with a column alongside each school which outlines the particular situation at each school and how the Ministry is supporting them.

There are a number of reasons why a school may have a low utilisation rate. Generally these schools are either rural or isolated, have recently been rebuilt in a network where population growth is predicted or was built at a time when there was a larger regional schooling population to service.

Historically rural primary schools were built with two classrooms. This meant one classroom could be used for junior students and the other for senior students. This has generally remained the minimum size for a rural primary school. Because of this, and the fact rural schools tend to have small rolls, their utilisation rates are often low. In Appendix A, all of the rural schools listed, have less than 100 students. Of these, more than 88% have less than 50.

We have also recently built new schools or provided additional teaching spaces for existing schools in anticipation for an increase in populations for particular areas, especially Auckland. For example, Hobsonville Point Secondary School was opened as part of the planned response for the Hobsonville area and additional teaching spaces have been built at Waterview School as a response to the development of the Waterview Tunnel and future Unitec site.

Where a school has a significant surplus of teaching space and the roll is unlikely to increase in future, we consider rationalisation or removal of surplus crown-owned property. This is done at the request of the school as holding surplus property places an unnecessary burden on their maintenance and operating budgets. In regions where population is declining, we work with schools and the community to consider the best provision for learning overall.

Another thing we must consider, is the distance between schools. In some instances, the dispersed and large catchment of a school means if we were to close or merge a school, travel times would be greatly increased, making education less accessible. School buildings such as halls or libraries may also be used by the community so we must also consider the impact any changes to facilities will have on the wider network.

You will notice, most of the schools in Appendix A are state schools. Designated character schools (including kura kaupapa Māori) are state schools that have a particular character which sets them apart from ordinary state schools. The only students who may enrol at a designated character school are those whose parents accept the particular character of the school. This means that they often target a particular minority of the whole student population in the area and they also rely on a wider catchment to provide their roll. The combination of these two factors can make them vulnerable to roll change, which results in lower utilisation.

The remaining 16% of schools are state integrated. Property at state integrated schools is managed by a proprietor who owns the school land and buildings and is responsible for ensuring the integrated part of the school meets Ministry standards. State integrated schools have a maximum roll, which we have used as their capacity. The maximum roll is negotiated at the time of integration and may be future focussed with a view to growing the school. The proprietor is required to provide property for the maximum roll. Some of these schools have maximum rolls which are historic. This has meant as population growth in the region stalled or declined the school now has surplus teaching spaces.

The table below shows a summary of the information you have requested:

**Table 1: Summary of Ministry data – schools at 51% or less of their classroom capacity**

There are 2430 state and state integrated schools in New Zealand providing education to 749,980 students.

Our data shows that as at March 2017 there were 334 schools that used 51% or less of their classroom capacity. These schools provided education to 21,956 students and account for 13.74% of all schools in New Zealand.

Of the 334 schools:

- 54 are state integrated schools. This is 16% of the schools listed. As at 1 March 2017 these state integrated schools provided education to 3,699 students.
- 280 are state schools. This is 84% of the schools listed. As at 1 March 2017 these state schools provided education to 18,257 students.
- 102 school are rural or isolated areas, 44 of these schools have two teaching spaces despite a small roll.
- 7 are new schools with growing rolls (4 in Auckland, 1 in Hamilton and 2 in Christchurch).

Further information about how we manage schooling networks, as well as details of area strategies for particular regions, can be found on our website at: <https://education.govt.nz/school/running-a-school/managing-the-network-of-schools/>.

Please note, the Ministry now proactively publishes OIA responses on our website. As such we may publish this response on our website after five working days. Your name and contact details will be removed.



If you have further questions please feel free to contact our media team in the first instance at [media.team@education.govt.nz](mailto:media.team@education.govt.nz).

If you are unsatisfied with my response, you have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review it. You can do this by writing to [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz) or Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Yours sincerely



Katrina Casey  
**Deputy Secretary**  
**Sector Enablement and Support**