



## Education Report: Initiating consultation on the possible closure of Linton Country School (2387)

<b>To:</b>	Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education (School Operations)		
<b>Cc:</b>	Hon Chris Hipkins, Associate Minister of Education		
<b>Date:</b>	14 July 2022	<b>Priority:</b>	Medium
<b>Security Level:</b>	In Confidence	<b>METIS No:</b>	1285811
<b>Drafter:</b>	Darryl Leath, Lead Advisor Network, Taranaki, Whanganui, Manawatū	<b>DDI:</b>	06 757 6477
<b>Key Contact:</b>	Marlene Clarkson, Director of Education for Taranaki, Whanganui, Manawatū	<b>DDI:</b>	9(2)(a) [REDACTED]
<b>Messaging seen by Communications team:</b>	No	<b>Round Robin:</b>	No

### Purpose

This report seeks your approval to initiate consultation on the possible closure of Linton Country School (2387) under sections 199 and 209 of the Education and Training Act 2020.

### Summary

1. Linton Country School is a decile 6, Year 1 – 8 full primary state school located 14 km south of Palmerston North.
2. In the last five years, the average length of student enrolment has been less than two years. In the same period 42 students have enrolled, and 40 students have left the school before finishing their primary education.
3. There are currently nine students enrolled at the school with students predominantly coming to the school from outside the transport entitlement zone.
4. The Ministry has had ongoing concerns around board stability, governance and school operations. The board has had 12 different members in the last three years.
5. The school has a history of statutory intervention. A Limited Statutory Manager (LSM) was appointed from October 2015 to November 2018 with the board's powers of curriculum management, employment, and finance.

6. In September 2021 a Commissioner was appointed at the board's request under section 181(1) of the Education and Training Act 2020 (the Act).
7. The Commissioner has now requested that the school is considered for closure for the following reasons:
  - An inability to fill board positions and to maintain stable governance
  - The small size and instability of the roll
  - Staffing difficulties
  - Strained financial viability.
8. The proposed school closure is not expected to negatively impact on the rolls of other schools in the area however we will monitor this throughout the consultation process and any risks will be identified in further reports.
9. Before you may close a school under section 199 of the Education and Training Act, under section 209 of the Act you must first consult with the boards of all state and state integrated schools whose rolls might be affected.
10. We are seeking your approval to initiate consultation and agreement for the Ministry to conduct this consultation on your behalf. If you agree, once the consultation has been completed, we will provide you with another report providing the consultation feedback so you can consider any issues raised and seeking your decision on the school's closure.

### Recommended actions

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The Ministry of Education recommends that you:

- a) **note** that the Commissioner of Linton Country School has requested that the school is considered for closure; and

**Noted**

- b) **agree** that we will consult, on your behalf, with the boards of all state and state integrated schools whose rolls might be affected by the closure of Linton Country School, and with iwi and other affected parties.

**Agree** / Disagree

If you agree to consult, you are asked to:

- c) **note** that a further report will be provided to you containing the consultation feedback and seeking a decision on the proposed closure of the school; and

**Noted**

- d) **sign** the letters to the Commissioner of Linton Country School and local Members of Parliament (attached as Annex 1) informing them of your decision to consult on the proposed closure of the school.

We also recommend that you:

- e) **agree** that this Education Report be proactively released in line with your expectations. Any information that might need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

☒ Release ☐ Not release



Jocelyn Mikaere  
Hautū | Deputy Secretary  
Te Mahau | Te Tai Whenua (Central)

14/07/2022



Hon Jan Tinetti  
Associate Minister of Education  
School Operations

17/07/2022

## Background

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1. Linton Country School is a state, decile 6, Year 1 – 8 full primary school located 14 km south of Palmerston North on the southern side of the Manawātū river.
2. In July 2017 there were five students enrolled at the school. Since then, the highest roll has been 18 students (July 2021).
3. The March 2022 roll was nine students. There are two students enrolled at Year 1 and no students enrolled at Years 4, 5, 7 and 8.
4. Since 2015, we have had on-going concerns around board stability, governance and school operations.
5. The school board has had 12 different members in the last three years, which indicates a very high level of turnover during the term of office between elections.
6. From early 2015, targeted governance training for the board was related to student achievement and progress, self-review, strategic planning, and charter development. This was provided by the New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA).
7. In October 2015, the Ministry appointed a Limited Statutory Manager (LSM) to the board with the board's powers of curriculum management and employment. In November 2016, this was amended to include the board's powers of financial management because the:
  - Board had expressed their inability to effectively manage finances.
  - Recently appointed Acting Principal had discovered the school was not in a financially sound position and asked the LSM to provide advice and guidance.
8. In 2016 the Board requested we consider closure due to a falling student roll. At that stage they had 11 students on the roll and were expecting this number to fall to seven students at the start of 2017. The board considered that the school was not financially viable as it believed funding for seven students was not enough to sustain the school.
9. In December 2016, following the resignation of the Principal and considerable media attention, the community expressed a wish to continue supporting the school. Therefore, they retracted their request to consider closure of the school.
10. The LSM was revoked on 6 November 2018.
11. Since 2019, the board's understanding of board operations, roles, and responsibilities, has not been strong. The board has received support from both the Ministry and the New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) during this time.
12. On 6 November 2019 the school board reduced the number of elected parent representatives from five to four due to difficulties in recruiting and retaining board members.
13. In May 2021 a meeting was held between the school board, the Ministry, and NZSTA. The board advised that they considered a quality (committed, available, capable, and active) board could not be formed from their school community as the school's pool of parents was small and they did not have the inclination to commit to school governance and training, despite NZSTA being available to support. Past elected members had sometimes only stayed for two to three meetings before resigning.

14. In August 2021, after considering options and recommendations from the Ministry and NZSTA, we were advised that the board would resign.
15. On 7 September 2021 the Ministry appointed a Commissioner under section 181(1) of the Education and Training Act 2020.
16. On 7 October 2021 a scoping report from the Commissioner was presented to the Ministry (Annex 2). This report highlighted that the Commissioner had engaged with:
  - New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA).
  - New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI).
  - The school accountant.
17. On 14 October 2021 the Commissioner requested that the school be considered for closure (Annex 3) for the following reasons:
  - An inability to fill board positions and to maintain stable governance.
  - The small size and instability of the roll.
  - Staffing difficulties.
  - Strained financial viability.

#### Educational considerations

18. The student roll over the last six years was as follows:

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>Year 1</b>	0	2	1	4	4	2
<b>Year 2</b>	2	0		2	6	2
<b>Year 3</b>	0	3	3	2	3	3
<b>Year 4</b>	1	2	2	1	2	0
<b>Year 5</b>	0	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Year 6</b>	0	1	1	3	2	0
<b>Year 7</b>	0	1	1	1	1	0
<b>Year 8</b>	0	0	0	0	2	0
<b>Total</b>	3	11	10	15	22	9

19. There has been a high turn-over of students and the school has low enrolment numbers. Over the last five years the average length of enrolment has been shorter than two years. There has been little to no progression of students through year levels at the school.
20. The Commissioner's Scoping Report (Annex 2) noted reasons for students leaving as:
  - needing to relocate due to family circumstances or employment
  - wishing to attend a closer school
  - a desire to attend a school that enabled socialisation in larger class sizes
  - a desire to attend a local intermediate school.

21. The Scoping Report (Annex 2) also noted staffing concerns, especially in the role of principal. It is known that the current Principal is seeking other employment and there is difficulty in recruiting U1 teaching principals.
22. The Commissioner noted that the Principal's release teacher is only staying on at the school as no replacement has been identified. The role requires travel and for the Teacher to take sole charge as acting principal when the Principal is off-site, so they need to be an experienced senior teacher.
23. The Commissioner has also noted that *"there is little budget for teacher aides and other support staff when the school's current roll has both high health and learning needs. To attract teacher aides for essentially a few hours work, here and there, is difficult. The school at the end of 2021 tried to recruit for a teacher aide but the position ended up being temporarily filled."*
24. A large percentage of the operations grant is allocated to support staff. To allow for the Principal to concentrate on teaching when in class, and for health and safety reasons, the school administrator is employed to handle any non-teaching interruptions. This requires more time than would normally be allocated to administration in a small school and requires a larger percentage of the operations grant.
25. Caretaking, usual grounds maintenance, and cleaning is done by the teaching staff or volunteer labour.
26. The Education Review Office (ERO) reviewed the school in 2013 and returned a one-to-two years review cycle. The July 2013 report identified significant areas for review and development:
  - the school curriculum
  - the use of assessment information to plan, implement and evaluate meaningful learning programmes
  - leadership
  - performance management
  - professional development
  - self-review.
27. A Senior Advisor from the Ministry regularly worked with the school during 2014 and 2015 by providing advice and guidance for the principal.
28. The Ministry allocated funding for an external provider to deliver Professional Learning Development (PLD) in Leadership and Assessment for teaching staff.
29. The above initiatives did not result in the school making the changes required. Action planning was not effective, and changes to board membership made curriculum planning, implementation, and assessment difficult to track.
30. The most recent ERO report, dated January 2018, noted:
  - *"...The LSM, principal and trustees have responded well to the areas for development identified in the 2015 ERO report. Students are enthusiastic and successful learners. A foundation of values, leadership, relationships and tone have been established that are likely to sustain and continue to improve student learning..."*

- The board and principal have developed their capacity to use achievement information to reflect, plan, and implement programmes that support positive student outcomes. Systems are in place that should support effective decision making and sustainability; and
- The board are well positioned to govern the school with the planned withdrawal of the LSM.

31. The Scoping Report (Annex 2) notes the school “attracts enrolments from students out of the area who seek alternatives to the school they are at for behaviour, health or learning reasons, or whose parents perceive there are benefits of being in a small class...”

### Access to other schools

32. Linton Camp School (5km north), Tokomaru School (8km south), Turitea School (7.5km northeast), Ōpiki School (11km southwest), Palmerston North Intermediate (13km northeast) and Aokautere School (14km northeast) are neighbouring schools.
33. The rolls and capacities of these neighbouring schools are as follows:

School	School Type	Roll (1 July 2021)	Estimated capacity (No. of students)	Surplus Capacity	In-zone Utilisation
Aokautere School (2332)	Y1 - 6	146	125	-21	25.3%
Linton Camp School (2386)	Y1 - 8	156	213	57	no scheme
Ōpiki School (2937)	Y1 - 8	138	150	12	43.4%
Tokomaru School (3046)	Y1 - 8	103	100	-3	34.0%
Turitea School (2467)	Y1 - 6	148	125	-23	62.8%
Palmerston North Intermediate (2419)	Y7 - 8	723	685	-38	88.0%

34. There is capacity at Linton Camp School for the two students who live locally. The remaining students could attend local schools in Palmerston North.
35. There is a total of 43 Year 1 – 8 students geo-coded within the Linton Country School Transport Entitlement Zone (TEZ). These students attend the following schools:

School	Number of students at each year level								Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Carncott Independent School				1					1
Aokautere School	1	3							4
College Street Normal School			1						1
Turitea School	2			1	1	1			5



Winchester School	1		1						2
Linton Camp School		1	1	1	2		1		6
Linton Country School		1		1	1			1	4
Ōpiki School		2		2					4
TKKM o Manawatu					1		1		2
Tokomaru School						2			2
Monrad – Te Kura Waenga o Tirohanga							1		1
Palmerston North Intermediate							6	1	7
Cornerstone Christian School				1		1		1	3
St Peter's College							1		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>43</b>

36. Geo-located data, provided by the school, indicates students are travelling from Levin, Shannon, and Palmerston North City to Linton Country School.
37. Linton Country School is part of the Te Ora Karaka Rua Kāhui Ako. There are three contributing schools (Year 1 – 6), six full primary schools (Year 1 – 8) and one intermediate school (Year 7 and 8) in this Kāhui Ako.

### Financial implications

38. In 2020 the school had an increase in operations grant from \$65,000 to \$115,000. This increase was mainly due to a roll increase from 2019 to 2020, and 2020 COVID funding of \$18,397.
39. The school ran at a \$58,000 deficit in 2020 and budgeted for a \$18,278 deficit in 2021.
40. The Commissioner summarised the 2020/2021 income and expenditure as follows:

	2020	August 2021	Year End 2021 (Budget)
Income	120,000	84,000	99,000
Expenditure	178,000	62,000	117,000
Nett Profit	(58,000)	22,000	(18,000)
Working Capital	21,000	53,000	(5,000)
Public Equity	52,000	74,000	34,000

41. As of 28 February 2022, the school has a year-to-date operating surplus of \$10,491, and a full year 2022 operating budget surplus of \$2,581.



42. There were no capital items or capital works budgeted for 2021 however \$3,000 has been budgeted for in the 2022 budget.
43. The board has cash and cash equivalents of \$213,053 and a working capital of \$81,743.
44. The school's reserves are slightly ahead of the usual guideline for working capital and funds dedicated to specific property projects not yet completed. This has been achieved by skimping on board funded maintenance like playgrounds, sunshades, furnishings and fittings, learning programme enhancements, professional development and using volunteer labour to complete what should be paid roles.
45. Cash reserves are being held specifically for property projects that have yet to be completed as the school considered its future viability.
46. If the consultation on closure proceeds, the Ministry will prepare a further report for you outlining costs and savings if the school were to be closed.

### Property implications

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47. The property is Crown owned. If the school were to close, as it is not required for educational purposes, the property would be disposed of in accordance with section 40 of the Public Works Act 1981, related local authority legislation, and the protection mechanisms in respect of Māori land claims.
48. The property advisor for the school reports that the buildings are in poor condition. However, there are no health and safety risks that are not being attended to.
49. The school has had ongoing issues with both its water and septic tanks. As the school is operational the issues with the septic tank are currently being resolved.

### Risks and Mitigations

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50. At present, to accommodate localised new growth, we are requesting approval from the Minister to consult on the establishment of a proposed new primary school in the Summerhill area of Palmerston North. Whilst it has been identified as outside the area of convenience for the new growth, Linton Country School is within the same catchment as the proposed new school. There is a risk that the possible opening of a new school may be seen as contradictory to the closing of another school in the catchment. We plan to mitigate this through clear and accurate communication to the community. Communications will highlight future growth areas and the dominant travel routes of those residing in those areas.

### Next steps

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51. If you agree, we will develop a communications strategy with the commissioner about the process that is being undertaken to consider the future of the school and its possible closure.
52. We will then consult with the boards of all state schools whose rolls might be affected by the school's closure. We will also continue consultation with the Commissioner of Linton Country School, sector bodies, local iwi and hapū, and community groups as appropriate.

53. Following consultation, we will prepare another report with the feedback from the consultation for your consideration. As the school has a commissioner, we will seek your agreement to a second round of consultation before seeking a final decision on the possible closure.

#### Proactive release

54. It is intended that this education report be proactively released. Any information that might need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

#### Annexes

- Annex 1: Letters to the Commissioner and local Members of Parliament
- Annex 2: The Commissioner's Scoping Report
- Annex 3: Letter requesting the closure of the school

Proactively Released

## Hon Jan Tinetti

Minister of Internal Affairs  
Minister for Women  
Associate Minister of Education



Andrew Murray  
Commissioner  
Linton Country School  
77 Akers Road  
R D 2  
Palmerston North 4472

Tēnā koe Andrew

Thank you for your letter on the possible closure of Linton Country School which has been passed on to me.

I note that you have requested that the school is considered for closure for the following reasons:

- an inability to maintain stable governance
- a declining roll
- a majority of students reside outside of the local community
- risk to future financial viability.

Before a decision is made regarding a school's closure, I must consult with you and with the boards of all state schools whose rolls might be affected if the school were to close. The Ministry of Education will undertake this consultation on my behalf. The Ministry will also consult with relevant sector bodies, local iwi and hapū, and community groups as appropriate. I have enclosed a fact sheet outlining the closure process.

As your school has now formally entered a process of consultation over closure you should be aware that Linton Country School should:

- not make permanent appointments (teaching or non-teaching)
- discuss the appointment of fixed term employees with Ministry staff before any such positions are advertised
- undertake only health and safety property projects
- be particularly prudent with expenditure of operational / school funding.

As you hold the governance role as a Commissioner, in place of a board, it is usual for you to input into the consultation process by gathering the views of parents, staff, and other stakeholders. The Ministry can help support this process with key messages and a communications plan if you wish.

Can you please contact Darryl Leath, Lead Advisor Network, at [darryl.leath@education.govt.nz](mailto:darryl.leath@education.govt.nz) to discuss the timeframe for your consultation feedback.

I wish you well with this work.

Nāku noa, nā



Hon Jan Tinetti  
**Associate Minister of Education (School Operations)**

cc: Marlene Clarkson, Director of Education, Taranaki, Whanganui, Manawatū  
Jocelyn Mikaere, Hautū | Deputy Secretary, Te Mahau | Te Tai Whenua

## Hon Jan Tinetti

Minister of Internal Affairs  
Minister for Women  
Associate Minister of Education



Ian McKelvie  
MP for Rangitikei  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington

Tēnā koe Mr McKelvie

Following a request from the Commissioner of Linton Country School in Palmerston North, I have recently agreed to begin consultation on its possible closure.

Under section 209 of the Education and Training Act 2020 I am required to undertake consultation with the boards of all state schools whose rolls might be affected by the school's closure before making a decision on the proposal. I also intend to consult with relevant sector bodies, local iwi and hapū, and community groups as appropriate.

The Ministry of Education will conduct this consultation on my behalf. Once consultation is completed, I will consider a detailed report containing all the consultation feedback. Once I have done so, I will then be in a position to determine the next steps to be taken in the process.

Nāku noa, nā

Hon Jan Tinetti  
**Associate Minister of Education (School Operations)**

## Hon Jan Tinetti

Minister of Internal Affairs  
Minister for Women  
Associate Minister of Education



Adrian Rurawhe  
MP for Te Tai Hauāuru  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington

Tēnā koe Adrian

Following a request from the Commissioner of Linton Country School in Palmerston North, I have recently agreed to begin consultation on its possible closure.

Under section 209 of the Education and Training Act 2020 I am required to undertake consultation with the boards of all state schools whose rolls might be affected by the school's closure before making a decision on the proposal. I also intend to consult with relevant sector bodies, local iwi and hapū, and community groups as appropriate.

The Ministry of Education will conduct this consultation on my behalf. Once consultation is completed, I will consider a detailed report containing all the consultation feedback. I will then be in a position to determine the next steps to be taken in the process.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jan Tinetti'.

Hon Jan Tinetti  
**Associate Minister of Education (School Operations)**



## Statutory Interventions Scoping Report

### Key Intervention Details

**Statutory Intervention:** Commissioner appointed under 78N(1)(2) Under section 180 of the Education and Training Act 2020

**Board of Trustees:** Linton Country School (2387) (the Board)

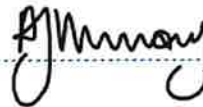
**Intervention Effective From:** 7 September 2021

**Name of Commissioner:** Andrew Murray

### Statutory Provider to Date and Sign

Physical signature or printed name: .....

Date: 7 October 2021



### Situation Background

Through the later part of 2016 the board, in association with the local community and the MoE, considered the future viability of the school. Increased community involvement contributed to the decision to keep the school open. Since then there have been significant changes to board membership and a new board chair elected. A new teaching principal began in Term 2 2017.

The Board of Trustees at Linton Country School gave written notification from the presiding member that the entire Board are resigning from their position effective on the day the Commissioner takes office (specific date amended due to COVID lockdown). The school has had a history of difficulty recruiting and retaining Board members.

### The Evidence for this Scoping

#### 1. Board interactions

The Commissioner has met with previous Boards presiding member and other board members individually.

#### 2. Staff interactions

The Commissioner and Principal meet at a minimum weekly and at other times when needed. The principal has been supportive in the supply of information and documentation through meetings, phone calls and emails.

The Commissioner was introduced to and took questions from all staff over a lunch. All staff have been invited to contact with the Commissioner if they have any queries or comments around the appointment and/or matters pertaining to their employment. The staff appear positive, cohesive and professional.

#### 3. Other professionals engaged in the school who the Commissioner has meet with

NZSTA – the governance advisor has been active in supporting the school board and continues this support to the Commissioner if required.

NZEI – lead organiser and field officer have been supporting the Principal and school. This has been positive and informing.

School Accountant – has supported the school as a contractor for some years.

Still to be contacted – local Principals and principal appraiser

#### 4. External Reports/information

ERO Report dated 15 January 2018 identifies;

ERO's report concluded that the LSM, principal and trustees have responded well to the areas for development identified in the 2015 ERO report. Students are enthusiastic and successful learners. A foundation of values, leadership, relationships and tone have been established that are likely to sustain and continue to improve student learning.

#### Education Counts enrolment and financial data

See roll information in Issues Analysis below.

In the last five years the school has received an operation grant of approximately \$65,000. This increased to \$116,000 in 2020.

#### 5. School documentation

Document / area	Brief assessment
Policy review	Sector standard policies and procedures
Delegation's review	Needing to be re-established.
Staff performance management and appraisals	Teaching staff appraisals are good standard practice. Support staff and other ancillary role performance management and appraisal processes could be improved on.
Employment agreements and terms, and registration and practicing certificates	Sector standard and in place as one would expect.
Complaints and concerns	No current formal complaints or concerns.
Communication	There are accurate, informative and regular communications with parents around school operations and activities.
Student Achievement	June 2021 reported achievement (unvalidated)  61% of children are achieving at or above their expected level in reading.

	<p>67% of children are achieving at or above their expected level writing</p> <p>Maths TBC</p>
Finance policy review	Financial planning and management policies allow for good planning and management information to run school.
Financial position - Statements	<p>Uncommitted funds of \$10,000 and public equity of \$52,000 at the end of 2020 make the schools financial position precarious. And this was on the back of an increase in operations grant from \$65,000 in previous years to \$115,000 in 2020.</p> <p>The budgeted operations grant for 2021 is \$95,000.</p> <p>YTD 2021 Actual data is easy to analyse and well presented with accurate regular monthly management reports being completed.</p> <p>The school is slightly ahead of its deficit budget and has a small, banked staffing overuse.</p>
Financial planning - Budgets	<p>2021 Budget is for an \$18,000 deficit. This after a \$57,000 deficit in 2020, last year.</p> <p>No capital items or works budget.</p>
Other (governance)	<p>The Board has been dissolved and a commissioner appointed.</p> <p>Previously in its recent history the school had been under limited statutory management for similar reasons.</p> <p>Board minutes do not reflect a level of enquiry that would be expected to guarantee successful outcomes for learners.</p>

6. **School community / students;** all parents in the school community have been advised of the Commissioner appointment and invited to make contact. Three parents and two community members have made contact during the scoping period.

## Identified Strengths & Issues Analysis



## Linton Country School

Issues	Evidence / commentary																																													
Instability and unsustainable governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>LSM appointed 2016. At conclusion of the intervention an external co-opted member was appointed Chair.</li></ul>																																													
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>12 trustees in last 3 years. This is reflective of the instability in the school roll.</li></ul>																																													
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>No one willing to take up Chair</li></ul>																																													
Minimal, declining and instability of role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Roll trends as at 1 July (2016-2020)</li></ul> <table><tr><th>Year</th><th>2016</th><th>2017</th><th>2018</th><th>2019</th><th>2020</th><th>2021</th><th>2022 *</th><th>Totals</th></tr><tr><td>Roll at 1 July</td><td>11</td><td>5</td><td>13</td><td>11</td><td>16</td><td>18</td><td>9*</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Enrolments</td><td></td><td>6</td><td>9</td><td>3</td><td>9</td><td>12</td><td>1*</td><td>40</td></tr><tr><td>Leavers</td><td></td><td>12</td><td>1</td><td>5</td><td>4</td><td>10</td><td>10</td><td>42</td></tr><tr><td>Nett gain/(loss)</td><td></td><td>(6)</td><td>8</td><td>(2)</td><td>5</td><td>2</td><td>(9)</td><td>(2)</td></tr></table>	Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022 *	Totals	Roll at 1 July	11	5	13	11	16	18	9*		Enrolments		6	9	3	9	12	1*	40	Leavers		12	1	5	4	10	10	42	Nett gain/(loss)		(6)	8	(2)	5	2	(9)	(2)
	Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022 *	Totals																																					
	Roll at 1 July	11	5	13	11	16	18	9*																																						
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Leavers		12	1	5	4	10	10	42																																						
Nett gain/(loss)		(6)	8	(2)	5	2	(9)	(2)																																						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Anticipate starting 2022 with 9 students. Of those 9 students,<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>4 have army parents and/or are army camp residents</li><li>2 travel out from Palmerston North and have high health needs</li><li>3 could be considered local residents, and possibility of 2 of these are relocating soon</li></ul></li></ul>																																													
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>It would appear on roll totals that the school roll has increased since 2017 from 5 to 18 currently,<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>However, while 40 students have enrolled in the school in the last 5 years</li><li>42 students have left the school in the last 5 years</li></ul></li><li>Average enrolment length<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>of those who have left is less than 1 year</li><li>of the current 13 students is only 2 years (despite being spread across the year group spectrum)</li></ul></li><li>Stated reasons for leaving</li></ul>																																													

Page 4

## Linton Country School

- o Relocation of home due to family circumstances or employment new postings
- o Place in nearer school
- o Socialisation in larger classes
- o Exit before year 8 for an intermediate school

- Most (80%) of the 40 enrolments in the last 5 years have been “non-local” (outside the TEZ, see below) to Linton Country.

- Eligible students who could easily get to Linton Country School are preferring to attend other schools. Linton Country School does not have an enrolment scheme. Considering the schools transport entitlement zone (TEZ is the area where students are entitled to a bus service to their local school) we can identify that there are currently 43, year 1 – 8 students residing within this area.
  - o 4 (9%) attend Linton Country School.
  - o 26 (60%) attend state primary schools, other than Linton Country (Mostly Linton Camp, Opiki, Tokomaru, Turitea)
  - o 8 (19%) attend state intermediates
  - o 4 (9%) attend integrated schools
  - o 1 (2%) private

- Linton Country School is close to other schools. It is easy for young parents to get to a local school or pass Linton Country and get to bigger nearby school or into Palmerston North

School	Roll	Distance (kms) from LCS	Time (mins) from LCS
Turitea	142	11.2	9
Linton Camp	146	4.2	3
Opiki	134	10.5	8
Tokomaru	108	7	6
City schools	Various	13	12

Page 5

## Linton Country School

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The school catchment area enrolment eligible population is not increasing. The school is surrounded by large, predominantly dairy, farms. These farms are unlikely to be subdivided for smaller lots and hence new homes and increased population. Many of the workers on the farms are from offshore and their families are still in their country of origin.</li></ul>																								
Staff instability and restaffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It is known that the principal is seeking other employment</li><li>• There has been difficulty in recruiting a principal release teacher</li><li>• The role of a U1 teaching principal is difficult, especially for a beginning principal.</li><li>• It is very difficult to recruit high performing experienced teaching principals to a U1 school.</li><li>• There is little budget for teacher aids and other human resources when the schools current roll has both high health and learning needs.</li></ul>																								
Financial Viability	<table><tr><th></th><th>2020</th><th>Aug 2021</th><th>YE 2021*</th></tr><tr><td>Income</td><td>120,000</td><td>84,000</td><td>99,000</td></tr><tr><td>Expenditure</td><td>178,000</td><td>62,000</td><td>117,000</td></tr><tr><td>NP</td><td>(58,000)</td><td>22,000</td><td>(18,000)</td></tr><tr><td>Working Capital</td><td>21,000</td><td>53,000</td><td>(5,000)</td></tr><tr><td>Public Equity</td><td>52,000</td><td>74,000</td><td>34,000</td></tr></table> <p>(*) 2021 YE Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2020 actual performance was;<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ \$58,000 deficit</li><li>◦ \$21,000 working capital, and</li><li>◦ \$52,000 public equity</li></ul></li></ul>		2020	Aug 2021	YE 2021*	Income	120,000	84,000	99,000	Expenditure	178,000	62,000	117,000	NP	(58,000)	22,000	(18,000)	Working Capital	21,000	53,000	(5,000)	Public Equity	52,000	74,000	34,000
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Page 6

## Linton Country School

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2021 budgets is; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>\$18,278 deficit</li> <li>negative working capital, and</li> <li>further declining public equity.</li> <li>There is currently a small overspend on banked staffing</li> </ul> </li> <li>The finances are tight with little in reserve.</li> </ul>
Quality of education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School attracts enrolments from students out of the area who seek alternatives to the school they are at for behaviour, health or learning needs reasons, or whose parents perceive there are benefits of being in a small class.</li> <li>Because the school is years 1-8, the roll is only 13 and the students are spread reasonably evenly across the year group spectrum it is difficult to ensure differentiated learning.</li> <li>Difficult to ensure broad socialisation at school amongst similarly aged children</li> <li>Many exit before year 8 for larger intermediate school to be better prepared for high school</li> <li>61% of children are achieving at or above their expected level in reading</li> <li>67% of children are achieving at or above their expected level writing</li> <li>Maths TBC</li> </ul>
Positive aspects of the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small class sizes are deemed by some to be advantageous</li> <li>Rural location, localised curriculum</li> <li>Students appear happy and engaged</li> <li>Tidy older classroom buildings</li> <li>Community Hall and School Pool</li> <li>History in, and importance to, the Linton community</li> </ul>

Page 7

### Issues Not Apparent at Outset of Intervention

*Detail about any issues that were not apparent at the outset of intervention (as stated in the Ministry's Situation Background above), if applicable.*

Investigation as to the appropriateness of school closure must be considered urgently.

No other unexpected issues have been identified since intervention commenced.

### Overall Assessment of Risk Level

The previous school Boards efforts do not reflect a level of enquiry that would be expected to guarantee successful outcomes for learners. The school will need support with continuing giving effect to the implementation of the ERO report recommendations.

### Other Governance Activities (Commissioner Only)

*Please briefly outline any other significant governance activities that have been undertaken during the scoping period.*

Property improvements in situ.

### Any Further Comments

*Any further comments about the Scoping Report if/as applicable.*

The scoping period was during COVID lock down and restricted travel movements. As a result, the scoping was completed remotely more than is usual.

## Annex 3: Letter requesting the closure of the school

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14 October 2021

Ministry of Education, Taranaki Manawatu Whanganui region  
c/- Dianne Wilson, Education Manager  
1/3 Oxford Street  
Palmerston North 4410

Kia ora Dianne,

### Re: Request to close Linton Country School

On 7 September 2021, I was appointed as the Commissioner for Linton Country School, under section 181(2) of the Education and Training Act 2020. My appointment was made by the Ministry of Education following a request for support by the school Principal and the now dissolved Board of Trustees.

On appointment I have reviewed the recent history, current operations and scoped the issues that confront the school. In summary, the school has over the last five or more years been continually challenged by:

1. an inability to fill board positions and maintain stable governance,
2. the schools roll,
  - a. its small size, 2022 anticipated roll is 9, and declining nature, 7 leaving soon.
  - b. its instability, in the last 5 years 42 students enrolled 40 students left. Enrolled students stay only a short time, the average enrolment duration is 1 ½ years.
  - c. the lack of support by local families, 4 students attend the school out of an eligible 43 students who live in the schools' transport entitlement zone.
3. competition for students domiciled locally to Linton Country School from multiple nearby schools, four schools are within 10 minutes away by road transport.
4. sustained delivery of high-quality education to enrolled students.
5. staffing difficulties, and
6. strained financial viability.

A more detailed report of these matters is attached for your information.

As difficult as these sorts of requests are, it is appropriate to ask for Ministerial approval to investigate the possibility of closing the school. The primary focus being to ensure the sustained and best educational experiences for the current and prospective students of the school.

I am seeking the Ministers agreement to this request so we can commence a formal consultation process with (a) other schools that maybe impacted and (b) staff, parents and wider local community, before any decision about closing the school can be made.

I look forward to receiving the Ministers response as soon as possible.

Should you or anyone else have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

Andrew Murray  
Commissioner, Linton Country School  
[amurray@lintoncountry.school.nz](mailto:amurray@lintoncountry.school.nz)