

Education Report: Support for kura, schools and early learning services during changes in the traffic light framework, including vaccine mandates

To	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	25 March 2022	Priority:	High
Security Level:	In Confidence	METIS No:	1284586
Drafter:	Richard Joblin	DDI:	9(2)(a)
Key Contact:	Alanna Sullivan Vaughan	DDI:	9(2)(a)
Messaging seen by Communications team:	No	Round Robin:	Yes / No

Purpose of Report

- Following your discussion with peak bodies on 23 March, this report provides options to support vaccination uptake in communities, schools and kura where vaccination rates are lower and provides advice on support for Māori who are disproportionately affected by COVID-19.
- We will continue to work with the Health sector to support vaccination in schooling. In addition, this report seeks your agreement to allow schools, kura and early learning services to close for up to two half-days at their discretion. This would be specifically to allow them to work with staff and their communities to build confidence in protective measures after the changes in the traffic light framework and removal of vaccine mandates.

Recommendations

We recommend that you:

- note** at your meeting with peak bodies on 23 March to discuss changes to the traffic light framework and vaccine mandates, additional support for Māori in communities, schools and kura where vaccination rates are lower was discussed.
- note** that the Ministry will:
 - continue to work with the Ministry of Health to encourage and support vaccination and emphasise its importance as a protective measure alongside other layers of protection;

Noted

- ii. work with the Ministry of Health and peak bodies to support schools and kura who want to establish school-based vaccination programmes, with a focus on vulnerable communities where there is lower vaccination uptake;
- c. **agree** to exercise your powers under Clause 4 (1) of Schedule 21 of the Education and Training Act 2020 to provide schools and kura with the discretion to close for up to 2 half-days to work with staff and their communities to build confidence about the protections in place as a result of the changes in the traffic light framework, including changes to vaccination requirements;.
- d. **agree** that we exercise the discretion under the 'Emergency Closure' rule to fund early learning services that choose to close for one day to support them to engage with staff and their communities to build confidence about the protections in place as a result of the changes in the traffic light framework, including changes to vaccination requirements.

Yes/No

Yes/No

Proactive Release

- e. **agree** that the Ministry of Education release this report once any agreed change to school, kura, and early learning service opening days have been announced and subject to any redactions in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

Agree / Disagree



Sean Teddy
Hautū
**Te Pae Aronui | Operations and
Integration**
25/03/2022



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

26/3/2022

Schools, Kura and ECEs have been closed enough in recent times. We need to get things back to a more normal setting. CH

Background

1. At your discussion with peak bodies on 23 March 2022, you were asked about the impact on communities with lower vaccination rates and what support would be provided specifically for Māori as we transition to new arrangements and vaccine mandates are removed. You reinforced that this is a good opportunity to reemphasise the importance of vaccination and continuing the push to get vaccination and booster rates up.
2. You also acknowledged the need for support from the Ministry, the New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) and Te Rūnanga Nui o Ngā Kura Kaupapa Māori o Aotearoa (TRN).

Support for vaccination including in school settings

3. The Ministry will continue to work with the Ministry of Health to encourage and support vaccination and emphasise its importance as a protection measure alongside other layers of protection.
4. Encouraging school based vaccination programmes, particularly in communities with lower vaccination rates amongst children and young people, is one way that additional protections can be realised. School boards can decide to offer vaccinations at their school or kura (a school-based programme), or on a school site if they consider this is in the best interests of their community. Schools and kura can be used as a 'community vaccination site' to vaccinate staff, students and whānau using a District Health Board (DHB) vaccination team or other team agreed by the DHB. There needs to be a consent process for children and young people receiving vaccinations and these depend on whether:
 - the vaccination is part of a school-based programme
 - the vaccination is part of a community-based programme (that might be held on a school site).
5. TRN has worked directly with the Ministry of Health about school based vaccination programmes in kura and the Ministry has worked directly with individual kura. We will work with the health sector and support schools and kura to encourage school-based programmes, with a focus on vulnerable communities where there are lower rates of vaccination uptake, including supporting TRN if requested.
6. As part of reviewing risk assessments and health and safety policies around COVID-19, kura, schools and early learning services may consider the level of risk for their community based on the rates of vaccination in the area. Te Mahau advisors, NZSTA and TRN are available to provide advice and support. We will also explore additional support that could be provided such as working with NZSTA about offering regional webinars on the health and safety risk assessments and plans required as a result of the changes to mandates. These webinars would use materials provided by the Ministry, the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment and Worksafe.

Additional teacher only day to support engagement with staff and communities about the transition

7. In addition to encouraging increased uptake of vaccination, we could also provide early learning, kura and schools with the option of a 'teacher only' day to allow time for school and early learning service leaders to work with staff and their

community to address any concerns as changes to the traffic light framework and vaccine mandates are implemented.

8. Clause 4 (1) of Schedule 21 of the Education and Training Act 2020 allows you to authorise a board to open any particular school it administers for fewer half-days than required. You can exercise this power in respect of all schools, schools of a particular classification or description, or specified schools. The decision cannot be delegated.
9. You could exercise this power to provide schools and kura with the discretion to close for up to 2 half-days to work with staff and their communities to address concerns and build confidence and reassurance about the protections in place as a result of the changes in the traffic light framework, including the changes to vaccination requirements. Your instruction to Boards can specify the purpose of this closure and its discretionary nature. The Ministry would provide guidance and support to Boards if they chose to exercise this discretion.
10. While schools and kura in communities with lower vaccination rates, including Māori communities, are likely to benefit most from this discretion, we recommend that it is provided for all schools and kura rather than limiting it to a particular classification or description of schools or a specified list of schools. This will avoid an approach that is either too narrow or too blunt.
11. For early learning services we could exercise the discretion to fund a service that isn't open for children to attend under the 'Emergency Closure' rule. This rule was used to allow services to have a 'set up' day during the move from alert level 4 to alert level 3 last year. Services could choose to close for one day, with agreement from the relevant Ministry regional office, to address concerns related to changes in the traffic light framework and vaccine mandate.