



21/02/2024

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

OIA: 1323197– Attendance Officers

Thank you for your email of 23 January 2024 to the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) requesting the following information:

It has been nearly a year since the Ministry announced a \$74m package for more attendance officers in schools. Under the OIA, please may I have the following information:

- 1. A breakdown of how the \$74m has been spent*
- 2. The number of attendance officers hired*
- 3. Any data, analysis or advice within the Ministry that assessed the impact on attendance that this package specifically made*
- 4. If there is not any available infor for (3) them I request: any data, analysis or advice within the Ministry that assessed the issue and statistics of school attendance since October 2023*

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

Schools and kura, boards along with parents and caregivers, are legally responsible for making sure students attend school every day. To support these obligations, the Ministry invests in a number of initiatives to ensure that students attend school regularly and remain engaged at school.

This response provides an overview of how the \$74 million School Attendance Turnaround Package is tackling the issue of irregular and moderate attendance and outlines how the package fits in a larger effort to get more students back to school.

In response to **part one** of your request, the \$74 million School Attendance Turnaround Package, which was announced as a pre-commitment for Budget 2023 by the previous Minister of Education in February 2023, is being used in the following ways:

- \$37.6 million over five years for 82 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) attendance officer roles to work with schools and kura in supporting students who are irregularly or moderately



absent (further information below).

- \$28.4 million over five years to increase capacity and address cost pressures in the Attendance Service. The Attendance Service works with students who are chronically (unjustifiably) absent, or not enrolled at all. The Ministry has locally contracted attendance service providers, over two thirds of which are run by schools. The rest are run by iwi and non-Government community organisations, with strong local connections. The list of providers can be found here:
<https://www.education.govt.nz/school/managing-and-supporting-students/managing-student-attendance/attendance-services/>
- \$7.73 million over three years to develop an improved and standardised system for attendance data collection and analysis. The Attendance Data Improvement Project is focussed on:
 - Modernising our data collection and storage capability, by moving all recent data (since 2019) to a modernised system of data collection and storage.
 - Implementing additional attendance indicators
<https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/overall-strategies-and-policies/attendance-and-engagement-strategy/additional-attendance-indicators/>.
 - Improving the range and quality of support available to Te Mahau takiwā (regional) staff and schools working with attendance data, for example e-learning
<https://training.education.govt.nz/pages/mediacontent.jsf?mediaId=2255578&catalogId=849811&menuId=112475&client=external>.
 - Improving the suite of termly attendance indicator reports:
<https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/attendance>.

The table below shows how this funding is allocated across financial years. Note that this funding included a pre-budget allocation, and a portion of the funding (shown in the 2022/23 column) was provided before Budget 2023 to help start implementation.

Operating expense category	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27 & outyears*	Total
Regional Attendance Officers to turn around irregular attendance	1.503	9.020	9.020	9.020	9.020	37.583
Attendance Service Uplift Package	2.372	7.117	6.301	6.301	6.301	28.392
Attendance Data Improvement programme	1.533	4.600	1.600	-	-	7.733
Total (\$m)	5.408	20.737	16.921	15.321	15.321	73.708

In response to **part two** of your request, Budget 2023 provided funding for 82 full-time equivalent (FTE) attendance officers across Aotearoa. Please note that these attendance officers are not

employees of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry provided support and funding to the Attendance Services (AS) providers who employ and manage these officers.

The Ministry has contracts with 64 existing AS providers for the employment of 76 FTE attendance officers throughout the country. Of the 76 FTE roles allocated to existing AS providers, 74.3 FTEs (93 people) had been appointed by 29 January 2024. Funding for the equivalent of a further 6 FTE roles has been set aside for Kura Kaupapa Māori.

In most cases the attendance officer role does not work with individual students but helps schools to develop strategies to address issues contributing to high levels of moderate and irregular absence. There is currently flexibility to allow individual providers to adjust the way in which the attendance officers work: <https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/overall-strategies-and-policies/attendance-and-engagement-strategy/new-attendance-officers/>.

In response to **part three** of your request, no data, analysis or advice has been prepared within the Ministry to assess the impact on attendance of this specific package, therefore I am refusing your request under section 18(e) of the Act, as the information requested does not exist.

In response to **part four** of your request, I am refusing this part of your request under section 18(d) of the Act as the information requested is already or soon to be publicly available as outlined below.

A Briefing 'Challenges and Opportunities for addressing and responding to school attendance (METIS 1319474)' was provided to the Minister of Education in November 2023 that provides analysis and advice on attendance. It is the Ministry's intention to release this paper on the 'Advice Seen by our Ministers' page of our website: <https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/information-releases/advice-seen-by-our-ministers/>. Some information may be redacted in line with the Act.

The overall measure of attendance is defined as regular attendance. This is measured by the number of students achieving regular attendance (90% or more) which means missing less than 5 days of school per standard 10-week term. The latest data on attendance (Term 3 2023) was released 20 December 2023 and reported 45.9% of students achieved regular attendance. Term 4 2023 data is scheduled to be released on 12 April 2024. Attendance data is published regularly on the Education Counts website: <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/attendance>.

Please note, we may publish this response on our website after five working days. Your name and contact details will be removed.

You have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review decision on your request, in accordance with section 28 of the Act. You can do this by writing to info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or to Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Thank you again for your email. If you have further questions, please feel free to contact our media team in the first instance at media.team@education.govt.nz.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pamela Cohen', with a stylized, cursive script.

Pamela Cohen
General Manager, Sector Change and Implementation
Te Mahau | Te Pae Aronui (Operations and Integration)