



Education Report: Request to reduce the number of half-days Kawerau Putauaki School (655) is required to be open for instruction in 2020 under section 65A

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	14 July 2020	Priority:	Low
Security Level:	In Confidence	METIS No:	1222404
Drafter:	Jon Dimock	DDI:	07 349 7386
Key Contact:	Anna Hayward	DDI:	07 306 2509
Messaging seen by Communications team:	No	Round Robin:	No

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

Note that Kawerau Putauaki School (655) has requested your approval under Section 65D of the Education Act to be open for fewer than the required number of half days in 2020.

Agree that Kawerau Putauaki School may reduce, by four half-days, the number of half-days that it is required to be open for instruction in 2020.

Summary

- Under section 65A(1) of the Education Act 1989 (the Act) you prescribe the number of half-days schools must be open during any year. Every board of trustees must ensure its school is open for the required number of half-days (section 65A(2)).
- Section 65D(1) of the Act allows you to authorise a board to open for fewer half-days in any year than required by section 65A(2).
- Kawerau Putauaki School (655) has requested a reduction in the number of half-days that it is required to be open for instruction in 2020 by a total of eight half-days.
- Four half-days were requested due to a delay in having new classrooms which meant that there was insufficient teaching space to accommodate all of the students. This meant the school could not open until Monday 10 February 2020.
- A further four half-days reduction was requested to close for the year on 15 December similarly to the other primary school in Kawerau because of the high summer temperatures experienced in Kawerau.

- 6 We support the Board's request to close the school for up to four half-days due to the delay in classroom construction. We do not support the Board's request to reduce the number of half-days by four due to high temperatures experienced in Kawerau in December.

Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

- a. **note** that Kawerau Putauaki School (655) has requested your approval under Section 65D of the Education Act to be open for fewer than the required number of half days in 2019;

Noted

- b. **agree** that Kawerau Putauaki School may reduce, by four half-days, the number of half-days that it is required to be open for instruction in 2020;

Agree / Disagree

- c. **sign the** attached letter to the Board of Trustees Chairperson advising her of your decision under section 65C(5) of the Education Act 1989; and

- d. **proactively release** this Education Report as part of the next publication.

Release / Not release



Katrina Casey
Deputy Secretary
Sector Enablement and Support

14/7/2020



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

29/8/2020

Background

1. Under section 65A(1) of the Education Act 1989 (the Act) you prescribe the number of half-days schools must be open during any year. Every board of trustees must ensure its school is open for the required number of half-days (section 65A(2)).
2. Section 65D(1) of the Act allows you to authorise a board to open for fewer half-days in any year than required by section 65A(2).
3. In 2020, primary schools are required to be open for 380 half-days. In response to Covid-19 the number of half days a school is required to be open in 2020 was reduced from 384 to 380. This was because the movement of the school holidays in relation to Easter resulted in schools losing four half-days of instruction.
4. The last possible day of instruction in 2020 is Friday 18 December.

Kawerau Putauaki School

5. Kawerau Putauaki School is a year 1-6, decile 1, state, co-educational, primary school in Kawerau, Eastern Bay of Plenty. Its 1 July 2019 roll was 201, which included 171 (85.1%) Māori, 23 (11.49%) European and 7 (3.5%) Asian.
6. Kawerau Putauaki School had a significant building programme take place over the last 18 months. This has included the removal of a number of surplus and not fit for purpose buildings and replacing these with seven modular classrooms. The final four teaching spaces were scheduled to be delivered prior to the end of 2019. Due to unforeseen circumstances there was a significant delay which resulted in teaching and learning spaces not being ready for school use prior to the planned start date for 2020.
7. The school intended to open on 3 February 2020 however due to the building delays the school was not able to open until Monday 10 February. The prescribed start date was on or before 7 February 2020.

Request to reduce half-days of instruction

8. The Board of Trustees has requested that Kawerau Putauaki School reduce, by eight, the number of half-days that it is required to be open for instruction in 2020. This would require the school to be open for 372 half-days rather than the prescribed 380.
9. The first four half-days are a result of building delays which meant that there was insufficient teaching space to accommodate all of the students and the second set of four half-day reduction at the end of the year due to the high temperatures experienced in Kawerau.
10. The school has also requested they close on the same date as the other schools in this relatively small community. For this year the other Kawerau primary school is finishing on 15 December. Kawerau Putauaki School consider that, given the high summer temperatures experienced in Kawerau prior to Christmas, finishing on 15 December is highly desirable.
11. The school has used all of the flexibility available to vary their 2020 opening date. With their start date later than prescribed, there is no further room to accommodate the required days within the school year.

12. We can confirm the school did not have full access to their new buildings prior to the morning of Monday 10 February 2020.

Risks

Loss of classroom time

13. The school has managed the later start to the school year to ensure there is no significant impact on student learning. The school runs additional evening events where the school is open until 7.30 – 8.00pm. These events include twilight athletics and celebrating learning.

Staff workload management

14. Staff have responded to the changes to the start of year and given extra time to ensure as smooth a start as possible given the circumstances. The teachers started school with call back days from 28 January and held a teacher only day 7 February.

Precedent

15. There is a risk that this response to the school's request will create a precedent for other schools in similar circumstances. All requests are considered on a case by case basis.

Conclusion

16. We support the first part of this request to reduce the number of half-days by four, due to the building delays.
17. We do not support the second part of this request to reduce the number of half-days by four due to high temperatures experienced in Kawerau. Hot summers present challenges for many schools in New Zealand and it is not justification to reduce the number of half-days open for instruction
18. We are confident that the Board and Principal will have plans in place to mitigate any risks arising from this.

Proactive Release

19. It is intended that this Education Report is proactively released as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

Annexes

Annex 1: Request to reduce the number of half-days for Kawerau Putauaki School – Board Letter

Annex 2: Letter to the Board of Trustees

Annex 1: Request to reduce the number of half-days for Kawerau Putauaki School – Board Letter

9th January 2020



Dear Ezra

The Kawerau Putauaki School Board of Trustees would like to request special dispensation to reduce the number of days that we are open for 2020 from 384 to 376.

We were to start our year on the 3rd February. However the new buildings will not be ready for students to move into at that time. The delays (which should have been completed in July 2019) were out of our control and were due to both the MOE and Interlink dropping the ball. Teaching is stressful enough without all of this being added to it.

We started 2019 in exactly the same situation due to the length of time it took to clear the site after asbestos removal in the demolition and it meant that the teachers started on the same day as the students on site and this has had a number of negative consequences that we have never recovered from. It also meant that we finished the year later than the other schools in Kawerau, which was a disaster; Kawerau is the hottest town in the country and so we have always started early and finished early to compensate. Our students (and teachers) struggled to cope with the heat at the end of the year and this led to major stress and increased issues with behavior and staff moral.

Because all the buildings won't be finished for the beginning of 2020, 4 teachers have made the decision to move to "easier" situations. They did let us know they were going to move if the buildings weren't finished, and I am aware that Rachel communicated this to you in October 2019.

The teachers will be starting school with call back days from the 28th January, as we have a lot of work to do to induct our new staff. With our DP on study leave, and another teacher on Maternity leave as well, it makes over half our teaching staff that are new. The year is already starting with more stress than most because of this. We do not want to add a number of class relocations on top of this.

We would like to officially start on the 7th Feb (but will be holding an official TOD) so that the students start on the 10th February. The builders are working really hard to speed up the schedule and are 2 weeks ahead, and are on track to having the buildings ready for occupancy on the 10th. This would mean the teachers have the week before to move into the new classes and be ready for the students. We finished last year on the 18th December and it was just too late. The other primary school in Kawerau is finishing on the 15th and we would like to finish on this date as well.

Our school run additional evening events where the school is open until 7.30-8pm. These include twilight athletics and 4 Celebration of Learning evenings, where parents come to school as learners to learn about a particular learning focus. We are happy to make up the time in this way if it is possible, we just know that our kids don't cope with the heat in December while they are already worn out.

Ngā mihi,

Lynsey Chase
BOT Chairperson



Annex 2: Letter to the Board of Trustees

Proactively Released

Lynsey Chasel
Chairperson
Board of Trustees
Kawerau Putauaki School
87 – 89 Fenton Mill Road
KAVERAU 3127

Dear Lynsey

Kawerau Putauaki School – request for reduction in the number of half-days required in 2020 school year

I have considered your request to reduce the number of half-days your school is required to be open and authorise your school to be open for 376 half-days in 2020, rather than the required 380 half-days.

You will be aware that in response to Covid-19 the number of half days a school is required to be open has now been reduced from 384 to 380. This was because the movement of the school holidays in relation to Easter resulting in schools losing four half-days of instruction.

I appreciate the building work at your school has caused disruption for both students and staff. I know both the board and school staff have been extremely proactive in ensuring student and staff wellbeing was paramount during this time. I understand the construction delays that you experienced were not within the control of the board.

It is important that students are able to attend school. While the hot summer is a consideration, it is not grounds for the loss of an additional four half-days of teaching time.

I wish to acknowledge the hard work undertaken by staff at the beginning of the school year to get it ready for students and their families, and the additional time and effort that has been demanded from you all.

Best wishes for the remainder of your year.

Yours sincerely

Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

From: C Hipkins (MIN)
Sent: 9 Sep 2020 16:27:35 +1300
To: 'admin@putauaki.school.nz'
Subject: C016812 Letter from Hon Chris Hipkins
Attachments: C016812 Letter to Lynsey Chasel.pdf

Dear Lynsey

On behalf of Hon Chris Hipkins please see attached letter in regards to Kawerau Putauaki schools request for reduction in the number of half-days required in 2020 school year.

Kind regards,

Mele

Mele Tasola | Private Secretary (Administration) | Office of Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education | Minister of Health | Minister of State Services | Minister Responsible for
Ministerial Services | Leader of the House
Parliament Buildings, Private Bag 18041, Wellington 6160, New Zealand



9 September 2020

Lynsey Chasel
Chairperson
Board of Trustees
Kawerau Putauaki School
87 – 89 Fenton Mill Road
KAWERAU 3127
admin@putauaki.school.nz

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Best wishes for the remainder of your year.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'CH'.

Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education