



**Te Tāhuhu o
te Mātauranga**
Ministry of Education

APPENDIX 1

Frequently Asked Questions

Attendance Services Reform Programme
Attendance Services Provider RFA

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Why are attendance services being overhauled?

New Zealand has an attendance crisis. High levels of absence from school have a direct correlation to poorer life outcomes.

In 2024, Education Review Office (ERO) completed a report on attendance services¹. They concluded that the system that is set up to get these students back to school is not effective and that it needs substantial reform. They also stated that it will take parents and whānau, schools and Government agencies all working together to fix it.

Attendance services are currently variable across the country, and do not consistently achieve improvements in student attendance. Many are under-resourced, and some cannot meet current demand. Current services are not well supported by the Ministry and expectations are not clear. As a result, not all schools are actively engaged with their local attendance services.

Schools are expected to address poor attendance by students enrolled in their school. [The Stepped Attendance Response \(STAR\)](#) clearly sets out the roles, responsibilities and types of interventions that can be applied at different levels of absence.

Students who are chronically absent (i.e. attend school 70% or less of the) or who are non-enrolled (those who were, and still should be enrolled at school, but are not currently enrolled in any school) frequently need additional support to identify and address the barriers contributing to their poor attendance.

The overhaul of attendance services is designed to address these issues. As a first step, the funding currently allocated to Attendance Officers is being redistributed to current Attendance Service providers from 1 July 2025. This will reduce the variations in how much providers are funded for each case they manage.

The further reforms funded by Budget 25 will be implemented by early 2026.

What will the new attendance service model be?

Under the new model, schools will be able to refer more chronically absent students to Attendance Service providers for additional support. Schools with the highest numbers of chronically absent students will also be eligible to apply for additional funding to provide some of this support themselves. All non-enrolled students will be referred to an Attendance Service provider.

From early 2026, attendance services will include:

- Comprehensive services for chronically absent and non-enrolled students delivered via new Attendance Service contracts throughout the country.
- A scheme that enables some schools to be funded to deliver in-school provision for some chronically absent students.

What is meant by in-school provision?

Some schools with very high numbers of chronically absent students will be able to apply for funding to provide direct support for some of those students. This in-school provision will be delivered in accordance with a standard contract between the school and the Ministry.

When will more information about in-school provision be available?

Eligible schools will be notified, and invited to apply, in June/July 2025. Further information about the services offered and the application process will be shared at that time. We estimate that around 175 schools will be eligible for this funding.

We expect that funding will be available from October 2025, with full operation of the new service required from Term 1 2026.

What is meant by comprehensive Attendance Services?

Under the new contracts, Attendance Service providers will be funded to deliver a comprehensive range of services to all schools and eligible students within a defined catchment area. Key components will include:

- Case management services for eligible students.
- Addressing unmet basic needs that are impacting on a student's attendance.
- Establishing and maintaining strong local relationships including with schools, students and their whānau, other social agencies, and iwi.
- Providing targeted attendance advice and support to local schools.
- Working closely with local interagency forums to ensure that students get the appropriate support they need.

The new contracts will have a strong focus on outcomes and will encourage and support flexibility and innovation in service delivery.

The expectations of providers will be clear, and strong monitoring and contract management practices will ensure these expectations are met. Contracts will include clear service specifications, appropriate KPIs and reporting requirements, and relevant standard terms and conditions. They will be the same for all providers.

How will funding for Attendance Service providers be calculated?

Funding for each contract will be calculated based on estimated volumes of chronic absence and non-enrolment referrals within the catchment area.

The Ministry will initially estimate these volumes, using the most up to date information available. The Ministry will also monitor the actual volumes managed by each provider, and over time contract values may be adjusted to reflect differences between estimated and actual volumes.

Who will deliver the new Attendance Services?

Contracts to deliver the new comprehensive attendance services will be awarded following an application / tender process, which will open in June 2025. Our priority will be to award each contract to the best provider for that catchment.

Potential providers will be able to apply for one or more of the new contracts. There will be two parallel processes – an application process for school boards, and a procurement (tender) process for all other providers.

When will more information be available?

We expect to release application / tender documents in June 2025, and award contracts in October. This will give time for providers to build capacity to be fully operational from Term 1 2026, and for any transition of open cases that may be required before current contracts expire at the end of 2025.

Who will be eligible to receive the new services?

The new services will be available to chronically absent students referred by a school or kura, and to all non-enrolled students.

Chronically absent students are those attending school 70% or less of the term. This is the red 'Serious Concern' threshold in the [Stepped Attendance Response](#) (STAR).

Non-enrolled students are those who were and should still be attending school, but who are not currently enrolled in any school.

What does this mean for Kaupapa Māori and Māori medium kura?

New services will be available for ākonga in Kaupapa Māori and Māori medium kura. More information will be provided after discussions with key partners such as peak bodies.

Are current catchment areas for Attendance Services providers changing?

We are changing the catchments (boundaries) for some current services. This is to ensure that:

- The catchments make sense for the local community.
- All schools are included within a specified catchment.
- Contracts are large enough to be viable and small enough to be local.

We expect to be able to publish provisional new boundaries by late May.

Can current providers apply to deliver the new services?

Yes. All current service providers, including school-based services, NGOs and iwi providers, can apply to deliver the new services and will be assessed as part of the application / tender process.

When will more details about the new comprehensive services be available?

More information about the new services, and what will be required of providers in delivering these services, will be available as part of the tender process.

How will the application / tender process work?

There will be two parallel processes – an application process for school boards, and a procurement (tender) process for all other providers.

All application documents will be available online, and schools will be advised of the link to these via the School Bulletin. Information on that link will advise of the process to be used to submit applications.

All tender documents will be available through GETS (the Government Electronic Tender Service), and all tenders will be submitted through GETS.

All applications and tenders will be assessed against a common set of evaluation criteria. Our priority will be to award each contract to the best provider for that catchment.

For answers to any further questions please contact Attendance.service@education.govt.nz



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