

Preparing for Attendance Management Plans

Information for School Leaders

Background

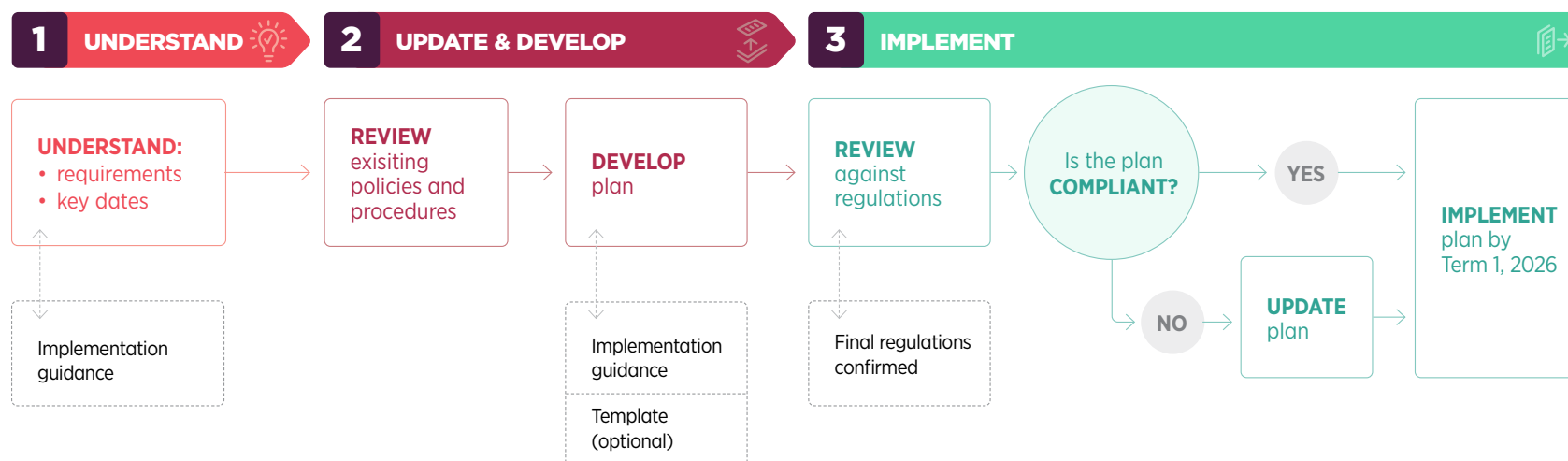
Starting from Term 1, 2026, all state and state-integrated school boards will be required to implement Attendance Management Plans.

This information supports schools to work through the steps to develop and implement an Attendance Management Plan.

- 1 Understanding what will be required for your plan**
- 2 Updating or developing your plan**
- 3 Implementing your plan**

KEY DATES:

Term 2, 2025	Begin to understand the requirements for Attendance Management Plans
Term 3, 2025	Update or develop a plan
Term 4, 2025	Review plan against new regulations
Term 1, 2026	Attendance Management Plan implemented



1 Understanding what is required for your plan



School boards are already required to take all reasonable steps to ensure students attend school.

Attendance Management Plans aim to improve student attendance by providing clear pathways to identify and address absences.

What school boards will need to do

- **Develop and implement** an Attendance Management Plan including publishing it online by the **start of Term 1, 2026**.
- Have regard to **attendance guidelines** from the Ministry of Education (like the Stepped Attendance Response), when developing your plan.
- Periodically **review** your plan.

What plans will need to include

- A clear process to **identify and respond** to student absences.
- **Strategies or interventions** at different attendance 'thresholds' (based on numbers of days absent in a term).

You are encouraged to include other relevant details about how your school manages attendance, such as:

- **Attendance goals or targets** for your school.
- Any relevant information from your school's strategic or annual planning documents.

Later this year, new regulations will provide more detail about:

- Attendance thresholds that schools must have in their plans.
- How schools must identify and respond to attendance barriers.
- How often plans must be reviewed.

Existing guidance on attendance

The Stepped Attendance Response (STAR) sets expectations for school, student, parent/guardian, Ministry of Education and broader system responses to student absence.

Using the STAR, or components of it, will help to strengthen your attendance policies and procedures.

You can find more details and guidance for school leaders on the Ministry of Education's website: [Stepped Attendance Response \(STAR\)](#).

How the STAR can improve your school's attendance policies and procedures

The STAR

Establishes clear expectations, emphasising attendance as a top priority.

Introduces a stepped approach to managing attendance, with defined escalation thresholds based on days absent per term.

Provides a clear process for accessing further support when needed.

Outlines recommended actions and responses for each stage.

Clarifies roles and responsibilities for parents, schools, and the Ministry of Education.

2 Updating or developing your plan



Using your current attendance policies and procedures

If your school already has strong policies and procedures in place, you may be able to adapt them into an Attendance Management Plan.

Developing a new plan

If your school decides to develop a new plan there is an optional template available.

Review your current attendance policies and procedures

Before updating or developing your new Attendance Management Plan, it is important to reflect on your current policies and procedures. This helps identify what's working well and where changes need to be made.

Reflect on your existing policies

Note when your attendance policies were created and last updated. What changes were made at the time, and why? Check whether your policies still reflect your school's values, strategic priorities, and community needs.

Compare policies and procedures with daily routines

Review your day-to-day attendance routines. Do they align with your written procedures? If there are discrepancies, determine whether your routines or your documentation need updating.

Gather and use data

Use your attendance data to identify patterns and trends and engage with staff, students, and whānau to understand what supports regular attendance and what barriers may be present.

Consider the actions set out in the Stepped Attendance Response

Schools are encouraged to use the STAR as a framework or to integrate key elements into their current attendance policies and procedures. Consider how you might use this direction to develop your own school specific response to attendance.

Identify strengths and areas for improvement

Highlight what's working well and how you know it's effective. Then, focus on areas where improvements can be made to support student attendance.

Involve the right people

Developing an effective Attendance Management Plan requires input from the right people. Involving your wider school community and external partners ensures your plan is well-informed and supported.

Involve your school community

Gather insights from those directly affected by attendance policies and procedures. Include voices from:

- **School staff** – teachers, support staff, and leadership.
- **Students** – across different year levels and backgrounds.
- **Whānau (families)** – to understand home and community perspectives.

Connect with external support

Engage with people and organisations outside your school who can offer expertise and assistance. Depending on your school this could include Ministry of Education advisers, social services, youth workers and attendance service providers.

Identifying key groups

For help identifying key groups in your school community, check out the [Te Whakangārahu Ngātahi | Planning Together](#) planning and reporting toolkit.

- [Attendance Management Plan template](#)
- [NZSBA](#)

3 Implementing your plan



Once your Attendance Management Plan is finalised you can start using it.



When the regulations are released, you'll need to update your plan to make sure it meets the new requirements.

Finalising Your Plan

Your plan must be **approved by your school board**.

It must then be **published online** so your school community can access it.

If your school doesn't have a website contact your local Ministry of Education office for help.

Implementation activities

Schools can determine the best approach to implementing their plan.

You're encouraged to:

- Set a clear date for when your plan will take effect and when you will first review it.
- Communicate this with your school community, students, and whānau.
- Make sure everyone follows the actions and activities set out in your plan.
- Stay consistent to build trust and effectiveness.
- Plan for how you'll handle issues or concerns as they arise.
- Set up ways for staff and students to give feedback if something isn't working.
- Set clear attendance targets and regularly review your attendance data against these targets to see whether your plan is working.
- If attendance isn't improving, consider what changes might be needed.

When you can expect more detail around the requirements

Later this year, new regulations will be introduced to clarify expectations around:

- **Absence thresholds**
- **How schools identify and respond to barriers to attendance**
- **Review periods for attendance plans**

We will let you know when they're finalised so you can update your plan.

Further information and support

Updates and further resources will be communicated through a School Leaders Bulletin and on education.govt.nz.

Your **Ministry of Education regional office** will be available to provide further support.