



Healthy School Lunches Programme Operational Policy

Withdrawing from Healthy School Lunches for Schools and Kura

Policy owner:	Director of Strategic Programmes
Policy is managed by:	Principal Advisor, Special Projects
Approval date:	10 November 2025
Next review:	December 2026

Purpose

1. This policy sets out the process for Ministry of Education ('the Ministry') staff to follow when a school indicates that they are considering withdrawing from Healthy School Lunches programme.
2. This policy provides clear guidance for Ministry staff when working with schools and kura. It outlines the process that schools will work through in their decision making. This is to be sure that the withdrawal decision is fully informed of the options, the potential impacts, and is required to consider the best interests of students | ākonga, schools, their communities, and programme stakeholders.

Background

3. Schools and Kura are governed by a Board of Trustees, who are responsible for representing the interests of whānau and community members in the governance of a school.
4. While complete withdrawals are rare, the removal of school lunches can significantly affect whānau and communities. It is important that any decision to withdraw is made in full consideration of the potential impacts to whānau and communities, supplier contracts, the wider network of local provision, and in consultation with all relevant stakeholders.

Scope

5. This policy provides guidance to all Ministry staff involved in supporting schools and kura participating in the programme. It outlines the processes and considerations required when a school or kura is exploring withdrawal from the programme. The policy also provides guidance to assist schools to ensure that their decisions are informed and reflect the interests of multiple parties within the wider school lunches ecosystem.

Policy Statements

6. Schools are invited to join Healthy School Lunches, based on their equity index rating, which identifies vulnerable students | ākonga experiencing the highest barriers to education. Healthy School Lunches, provides students | ākonga with healthy lunches to support their engagement with learning. Withdrawal should only be considered in exceptional circumstances, after all resolutions have been explored and potential impacts fully assessed.
7. If a school or kura is considering withdrawing from Healthy School Lunches, they are encouraged to stay withing the programme and resolve any issues with their lunch supplier or through the Ministry, in the first instance. This approach should recognise that it may take time for lunch providers to make improvements, and implement changes, but being transparent and open about the issues will strengthen the ongoing relationships between the supplier and school.
8. School boards are responsible for decision making relating to joining or withdrawing from the programme. The role of the Ministry is to support school boards and principals to ensure they have considered all options and impacts of their decision making. It is anticipated that there are only a small number of circumstances where withdrawal is the best option.
9. The Ministry must also consider any wider network stability impacts to existing supplier contracts and communities that may result from a school's withdrawal.

Process – School Withdrawal Notification

10. If a withdrawal notification is received through a generic email address (e.g. School Lunches mailbox or other Ministry Contact), the email must be sent to the assigned Ka Ora, Ka Ako Senior Advisor for acknowledgement and to open a dialogue with the school. The Service Delivery Manager should also be copied into the email, as they will be responsible for managing the request.
11. The Senior Advisor and Service Delivery Manager will investigate further and engage with the school and supplier to understand the reason behind the withdrawal request.
12. In the first instance, the Senior Advisor will assess whether the concerns raised can be addressed and will collaborate with both the school and supplier to seek resolution. It is recommended that a Ministry representative meet with the school board and principal to support their decision-making process and provide guidance.
13. Schools are required to engage with their Boards and communities and give them opportunities to express their views as part of the decision-making process.
14. It is encouraged that all Iwi/Hapū Kura engage in hui with their hapu or iwi partner as a part of their decision-making process.
15. If all avenues for ongoing provision have been exhausted, and the school and community still does not wish to participate in programme, the decision to completely withdraw needs to be confirmed at a School Board level and not just by the principal alone.
16. Community consultation is a critical step that school board are responsible for, which provides transparency and allows the community and whānau to provide input before a final decision is made. This could be evidenced by a survey of parents over potentially ceasing school lunches. It is expected that if any parent(s) signal they still want meals, they should continue – but with a revised number of lunches ordered - corresponding with the survey results and recorded trends in uptake and surplus.

17. If the School Board, with **more than 90% support** from the community (as evidenced by consultation or a survey¹) agrees to withdraw from Ka Ora, Ka Ako, the Board must submit an official letter confirming their intention to withdraw. This letter serves as formal notice to the Ministry and must include the confirmed final date on which the whole school will receive lunches.
18. Once a School Board has confirmed its decision to withdraw from the programme, the Senior Advisor will explore the decommissioning of the existing delivery model arrangements and/or any assistance with plans for supporting a subset of students that still request lunches.
19. To ensure due diligence, the Senior Advisor must inform the School Board that if it withdraws completely from the programme, it will allow the next school on the waiting list, to participate. Should the school wish to rejoin the programme in the future, the re-inclusion will be subject to the equity index rating and budget. In this circumstance, the school will be placed on the waiting list and will not be guaranteed immediate re-entry.
20. To maintain the viability of the programme, it is essential to encourage continuity of provision for students. Widespread movement away from the established delivery model will risk compromising the programmes overall operation and long-term sustainability. Given the significance of the withdrawal decision, these will be **noted at the General Manager level (Delegation Level 3 – Direct report to Deputy Secretary)**

Criteria Under Which a Delivery Model Variation May be Explored

21. A Delivery Model Variation (DMV) may be considered as an alternative prior to a school's withdrawal from the programme if the following conditions are met:
 - **Unresolved Issues:** The school and supplier have made genuine efforts to resolve identified issues, the Ministry has used the performance management tools to improve supplier performance and there has been sufficient time spent to achieve a resolution, but these attempts have not resulted in a satisfactory outcome for either party as determined by the Ministry.
 - **Intent to Withdraw has Community Support:** The school has decided to withdraw from the programme and is able to evidence both community and Board approval for the idea. This step is critical, as in some cases, if the school withdraws from their current provision, there may be no other viable lunch options (particularly for a reduced number of students available to the school).
22. If the two criteria outlined above can be evidenced (unsuccessful attempts have been made with the provider to resolve issues and there is evidence of community support for withdrawal), the school may be offered an alternative model to remain receiving school lunch support. Refer the operational policy for Changing Delivery Models and/or suppliers for schools and kura.
23. If an alternative model is suitable and the School Board agrees to change to it, the Senior Advisor should initiate a formal 'Delivery Model Variation' (DMV) citing among the reasons for the DMV, "*programme retention*".

¹ If parents indicate through either the survey or consultation that they still want meals for their children, then pragmatic decisions need to be made on how to respond to the signalled demand and the threshold for feasible provision. Actual consumption of delivered lunches will be monitored using supplier data and/or Ministry spot surplus count information.

24. The proposed DMV must be approved by the Programme Director, subject to confirmation that sufficient budget is available to support the change in the delivery model.
25. Once the DMV is approved, the Ka Ora, Ka Ako Senior Advisor should initiate the transition to the new delivery model. During this transition period, it is possible that the school may temporarily not receive lunches. During this interim status, the school's programme status should be updated to "Paused" until the new model is fully operational.

Ownership and Responsibilities

The below table outlines the roles that are required to apply this policy, and the responsibility of each role:

Role	Responsibilities
Schools and kura	Consulting community and whanau in their decision making. Quantifying support for withdrawal from the programme by community and whanau. Seeking formal board approval to withdraw.
School boards	Ensuring consultation and survey methods are robust, and evaluating the impact on the school, communities, whanau and students from withdrawing from the programme.
Ka Ora, Ka Ako Senior Advisors	Inform schools of the requirements relating to withdrawing from the programme. Responsible for ensuring schools have been supported to seek resolution to any issues they are facing.
Service Delivery Managers	Supporting Senior Advisors as needed. High level conversations with school Principals or Boards about community consultation and withdrawal.
Director, Special Projects	Approval of delivery model variations in the context of programme withdrawal Informed of school intentions to withdraw
General Manager	Clarity and awareness of the school withdrawal and the circumstances around it. Final approval of decision.

Appendix A

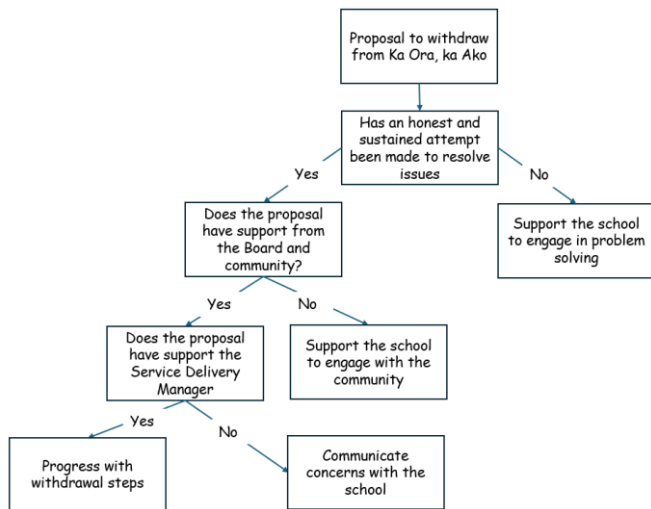
Process Guide - Schools Withdrawing

Criteria for exploring a withdrawal

Has a sustained attempt been made to resolve issues between the school and the lunch provider?

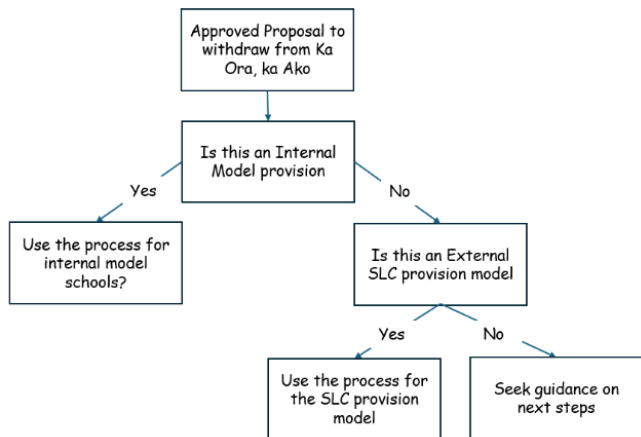
Has the proposal to withdraw demonstrated Board and community support for the realities of no longer being in the Ka Ora, Ka Ako | Healthy School Lunches programme?

Has the Service Delivery Manager agreed that it would be in the best interests of the students, school and network to progress a withdrawal from the programme?



Processes to progress a withdrawal

There are different contact points for the different Ka Ora, Ka Ako provision models and as such the process steps differ between models in the parties that need to be notified and the processes that need to be changed.



Senior Advisor Responsibilities

1. Notify Relevant Teams Immediately

Include details on who the supplier(s) is, and the final day lunches will be delivered.

- Service Delivery Manager (SDM)
- Commercial Team
- Programme Delivery Team (SchoolLunches.Invoices@education.govt.nz)
- Financial Manager (Tracey Young)

2. Documentation and Record Keeping

- a. Save all correspondence and the official withdrawal letter in the SPE record on Salesforce.
- b. Service Delivery Manager to save documents in the Stakeholder Management folder.
- c. Updates Salesforce "Ka Ora, Ka Ako Status" as:
 - Paused - if the decision-making process is temporarily on hold.
 - Withdrawn - if the decision has been approved to discontinue.
- d. Set the Status Effective Date – use the day after the final delivery date as the effective date.

Why This Matters: - If the status is not updated, the school may:

- continue to appear in reports as participating
 - receive communications intended only for active schools
 - be incorrectly included in external reporting, such as roll data to School Lunch Collective
- e. Distribution lists are pulled directly from Salesforce based on participation status. Inaccurate data can lead to:
 - Breach of trust with schools
 - Compliance risks
 - Misreporting to stakeholder

HANDY TIP: Viewing Status Change in History in Salesforce:

- (a) Go to the **Special Projects Extension** record.
- (b) Click the **Related** tab.
- (c) Scroll to **Special Projects Extension** History.
- (d) Select **View All** to see all updates

Result: A full list of field updates will display, including status changes in the Special Projects Extension record displays, to the **Ka Ora, Ka Ako Status** and **Status Effective Date** fields.

Commercial Team Responsibilities

Notify the Supplier

1. Send termination letter with notice period outlined.
2. Save termination letter to Salesforce.
3. Terminate contract in Salesforce noting reason and termination date.
4. Wait for confirmation from the Programme Delivery Team, that final invoice has been paid, and Purchase Order is closed in Oracle.
5. Terminate Contract in ProcurEd once final invoice has been paid and confirmed by the Programme Delivery Team.

Programme Delivery Team Responsibilities

Invoice Management

1. Confirm the final lunch delivery date for invoicing.
2. Invoices will be paid up to the agreed end date outlined in the termination notice sent by Commercial Team.
3. Programme Delivery Team preparer and requestor will be automatically notified by email when a contract status changes to 'terminated'.
4. Notify both the Commercial and Nutrition teams to ensure all stakeholders are informed and any follow-up actions can be taken, once the final invoice is paid.
5. Close applicable Purchase Orders in Oracle Mailbox so that the contracts can be closed in ProcurEd and the kitchen details can be updated. PDT close the applicable Purchase order(s) in Oracle.

Teams Channel Supplier Management

If a school is assigned with a Teams Channel Supplier, the Programme Delivery Team must: remove the school from the 'Teams Channel Invoice Template'

-record the final day of lunch service for that school

-check to see if the supplier delivers lunches to any other schools. If not, move the supplier's folder from the school lunches inbox to the 'Archive' folder.

6. The Programme Delivery Team (PDT) must update the lookup report for the Key Contact List, to ensure the school is no longer marked as 'participating' in the programme.
7. The report reflects the current data in Salesforce.
8. If Salesforce has not been correctly updated by the Senior Advisor, the report will not reflect the change, and the school may continue to receive programme communications.
9. These steps are important to ensure external reporting is accurate.

Process for Internal Model Schools

- 1. Notify the Programme Delivery Team**
 - Check that automated funding ceases by the agreed end date

2. Notify Key Stakeholders

If the school is an Internal Model School, the Senior Advisor must notify

- Lead Advisor – Internal Model,
- Senior Advisor – Food Safety
- School Lunches Nutrition Team.

3. Decommissioning Kitchen Checklist

Once notified, of a school's withdrawal:

- Check if the kitchen linked to the school serves only one school.
- If the kitchen is not linked to any other schools, proceed to decommission the kitchen.

4. Update Kitchen Services Tab

- If the supplying kitchen serves other schools, the withdrawn school must be removed from the kitchen services tab.

5. Update Menu Tracking

- The Programme Delivery Team will then remove them from the internal schools' menu tracking spreadsheet.

6. Food Control Plan (FCP) Deregistration.

- The Senior Advisor – Food Safety will deregister the school from the Ministry's Food Control Plan, if applicable.

7. Surplus Funding Review

- The Senior Advisor will review the funding situation of the internal school.
- Any surplus funds from *Ka Ora Ka Ako*, must be refunded to the Ministry.
- Surplus funds may be used to wind down the internal model programme including:
 - a. Paying outstanding committed costs
 - b. Covering redundancy payments for Ka Ora, Ka Ako staff

Process for External Suppliers

Once the Senior Advisor updates the Salesforce "Ka Ora, Ka Ako Status" to withdrawn, the school will no longer appear in any external supplier reporting. This includes the fortnightly maximum order reporting.

1. The Operations Manager for the external supplier should be kept informed at all points during this process.