Recording School Closed-Day Reasons

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga
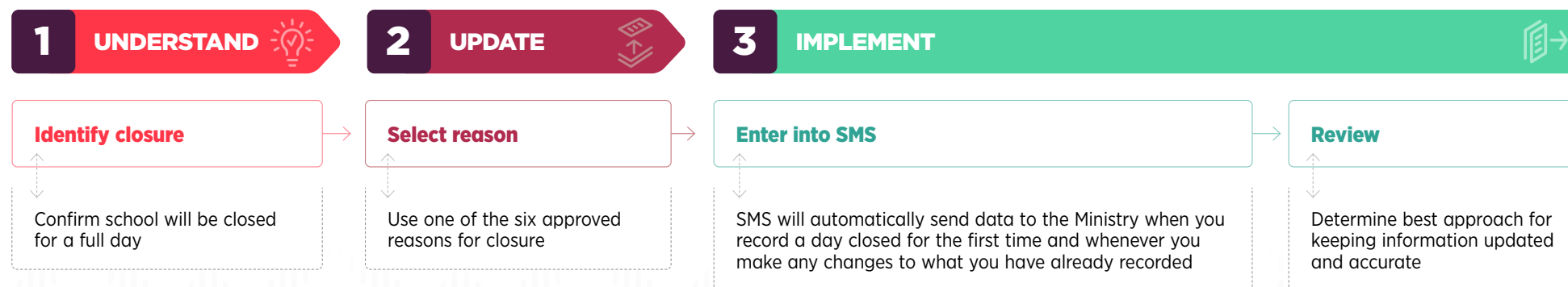Ministry of Education

Background

From 2026, schools must record reasons for full school closed days during term time in their Student Management System (SMS). This change will make attendance data more accurate and provide better insight into attendance trends.

This guidance is structured to support schools to step through the process of recording schools closed information.

1 **Understanding** school closed-day reasons

2 **Updating** your 2026 closed days

3 **Implementing** school closed-day reasons

The Ministry considers a school open for instruction when compulsory, organised teaching and learning is taking place for all student year levels. This can include online learning and school trips outside the classroom.

See Education (When State Schools Must Be Open and Closed) Regulations 2024 for more details.

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1 UNDERSTAND

Identify closure

Confirm school will be closed for a full day

2 UPDATE

Select reason

Use one of the six approved reasons for closure

3 IMPLEMENT

Enter into SMS

SMS will automatically send data to the Ministry when you record a day closed for the first time and whenever you make any changes to what you have already recorded

Review

Determine best approach for keeping information updated and accurate

1 **Understanding** school closed-day reasons

This year, you will need to enter reason options for any full-day closure in your SMS calendar. There are six possible reasons for closure during term time:

- **Curriculum and Assessment PLD** – Closed for professional learning and development as approved by the Minister. (Up to 4 half-days per year in 2026 and 2027)
- **Discretionary (Board approved)** – Board-approved closed days. (Up to 4 half-days per year)
- **Additional Discretionary (Minister approved)** – Minister-approved closed days
- **Emergency** – e.g. Closed due to earthquake, flood, severe weather, power outage, health reasons
- **Strike** – Closed due to industrial action
- **Regional Anniversary** – Regional anniversary holiday observed by the school

Only one reason can be selected per closure. If you have more than one reason the school is closed, use the main reason for the closure. If you have a reason that doesn't match these, check the Open and closing for instruction - public guidance in the first instance, or contact your Regional Office for advice.

2 **Updating** your 2026 closed days

If you have existing Board-approved days, these are likely to be your Curriculum and Board-approved Teacher Only Days that you have already decided upon for 2026, you can enter them into SMS now with the relevant reasons.

For any future closed dates for the 2026 year, enter as required in your SMS with the relevant reasons. You are encouraged to update and adjust these as often as you need throughout the year. Your SMS provider will advise on when and how you can do this in the system.

Only full-day closures need to be recorded in this way. If you are open for a half-day, you need to use the Attendance codes - Ministry of Education for each student for the half-day you are open and removing the timetable for the closed half-day as per the current process.

Example: If your school closes at midday for staff professional learning, students would be marked with the appropriate attendance codes for the morning session. The afternoon timetable would then be removed to reflect the half-day closure.

3 **Implementing** school closed-day reasons

Once you have updated your school SMS calendar with closed dates and reasons, you can determine the best approach for keeping this information updated and accurate.

For more details on the required number of half-days schools must be open for instruction, or to calculate compliance for 2026, use the half-day calculator here: School opening and closing for instruction - Ministry of Education