Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga
Ministry of Education

Attendance Service Provider Newsletter

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Introduction

Fakalofa lahi atu

As we enter the final quarter of 2026 and looking towards the holiday season, I want to acknowledge the significant progress being made across the attendance service network and thank you for your ongoing commitment to supporting tamariki, rangatahi and whānau.

Our final Quarter 3 results are encouraging and reflect the hard work taking place across the country. All five national service measures improved compared with Quarter 2, with strong gains across referral engagement measures and Not Enrolled re-enrolment continuing to exceed target for the second consecutive quarter. These results demonstrate the positive impact of stronger case management, improved referral practices, and your dedication working every day to support learners back into education.

Alongside this progress, we continue to focus on strengthening national consistency and supporting you to manage complex cases. Recent work has included updated guidance for Not Located and Not Sighted cases, national and regional case reviews, and the development of a clearer escalation pathway for high-risk cases to help ensure children and young people receive the right support when concerns extend beyond attendance alone.

Thank you for the difference you continue to make.

Kia monuina

Mel Harrington, Manager Attendance Service Delivery

Not Located/Not Sighted Ākonga

Updated guidance now includes a Not Sighted category for cases where whānau contact has been established but the child or young person has not been directly sighted or engaged.

For cases approaching 30 days without recorded activity, providers must refresh enquiries, including:

- checking current enrolment and attendance information with the school
- renewing contact attempts with whānau and emergency contacts
- completing further home visits where appropriate
- verifying available information through AS-CMS
- fully documenting actions, outcomes and barriers
- completing a final case review
- seeking advice from the Contract Relationship Manager.

Where all necessary steps have been taken as outlined in the guidance, only high-risk Not Located cases should be escalated to the Attendance Service mailbox. Escalation must be supported by recent activity and may be appropriate where significant or multiple barriers exist, or cross-government coordination is required. Providers should continue to undertake case management activities during any further investigation.

The updated guidance can be found HERE

Q3 Performance Snapshot

- Final Q3 results show continued improvement across all five national Attendance Service measures, reflecting the strong work being undertaken by providers across the country.
- Compared with Q2, national performance improved across every measure. The largest gains were achieved in student and whānau engagement timeframes, with student/whānau meetings completed within 10 business days increasing by 12.3 percentage points to 75%, and meetings completed within 15 business days increasing by 13.4 percentage points to 80%.

- Performance also improved for school engagement measures, with school meetings completed within 5 business days reaching 77% (up 11.2 percentage points) and school meetings completed within 10 business days increasing to 83% (up 10.5 percentage points).
- Not Enrolled student outcomes also strengthened, with 63% of students re-enrolled within 50 business days, exceeding the national target of 60%. While further improvement is required to achieve all Green performance targets nationally.
- The Q3 results demonstrate positive momentum across the Attendance Service network and highlight the impact of providers continued focus on timely engagement and support for students, whānau and schools.

Te Kura update

As part of the new Attendance Services model, consideration has been given to how Chronically Absent (CA) support for Te Kura learners could be brought into scope for Attendance Services over time. Currently, Te Kura cannot refer enrolled learners to Attendance Services. Referrals can only be made where a learner is no longer enrolled and meets the usual non-enrolled referral requirements.

The Attendance Service Delivery Team has commenced discussions with Te Kura to better understand what would be required to support referrals from Te Kura into Attendance Services in the future. While this work is still in the discovery phase, the intention is to explore a referral pathway that will be established during 2027.

A key consideration is that Te Kura operates within a learner engagement framework rather than a traditional attendance framework. The Government has legislated that distance schools have an Engagement Management Plan (EMP) in place from Term 3 2026 (October 2026), recognising that distance schools monitor learner engagement rather than attendance. The EMP provides the framework for identifying, monitoring and responding to learner non-engagement in a distance learning environment. As Te Kura continues to implement and embed its EMP, further work will be needed to understand how any future Attendance Services referral pathway could align with these engagement management processes and complement, rather than duplicate, existing supports.

This year there are no immediate changes planned, and no implementation activity will occur before Christmas. Discussions with Te Kura remain at an early stage, and no decisions have been made regarding timing or approach. We are currently exploring what a future referral pathway would look like and what is required to implement it successfully. We will inform you of any future developments.

Recently published and updated guidance

- Manual Non-Enrolment (NE) Form Guidance is now available on the Managing Attendance Cases webpage, providing guidance on when and how to use Manual NE forms.
- Guidance on ASP interactions with caregivers exploring home education exemptions has been developed and is currently being tested with a sample of providers before publication. This guidance expands on the caregiver conduct guidance shared in a previous newsletter edition. Keep an eye on the website next week, as we expect it to be available soon.
- A new In-School Provision (ISP) webpage has also been published. If you'd like to learn more about the ISP role and how it supports attendance outcomes, we encourage you to take a look.

Coming next: We are currently developing further guidance on managing non-engagement, including refreshed escalation letter templates and clearer direction on when each should be used. As these pieces are closely linked, we intend to release them as a package, supported by a webinar to walk providers through the updates.

Providing Attendance Services to Private and Charter Schools

Scope of Ministry-funded Attendance Services

The Ministry of Education's Attendance Service funding model supports services for State and State-integrated schools. This means that Private and Charter schools are not eligible to access Ministry-funded Attendance Service support.

Private schools are not part of the state-funded school system and generally receive only limited government funding compared with state, state-integrated, and charter schools. Attendance-related legislative requirements such as mandatory Attendance Management Plans do not apply to Private schools.

Charter schools are funded by the Crown through a bespoke funding model that includes operational, staffing, services and property-based funding. This funding model includes an amount that has been paid directly to the school for provision of attendance support.

What to do if a Private School or Charter School asks for your support

Private Schools and Charter Schools can choose to engage attendance support services directly with an Attendance Service Provider (ASP). It is at the ASP's discretion whether or not to enter into an agreement, and any agreement will be between the school and the provider with no involvement from the Ministry.

As a courtesy, please advise the Ministry if you are intending to enter into a contract with a Private or Charter school, or if you are already providing services to one of these schools.

How to manage attendance support arrangements

For both Private and Charter schools, it is up to the school and ASP to establish and manage their own service arrangements. This includes determining referral processes, case management responsibilities, service expectations, and reporting requirements.

Private and Charter schools cannot access Ministry attendance systems or referral processes. Specifically, these schools

- cannot use the Attendance Service School Portal.
- cannot submit referrals through the Ministry-provided Chronic Absence Support Request Form.
- Cases cannot be created or managed within the Attendance Service Case Management System (ASCMS).

Any case management, record-keeping, and reporting arrangements must be managed directly between the school and the ASP outside Ministry systems. Schools and providers should ensure that any collection, storage, use, and sharing of student information complies with applicable privacy and information management requirements, including the Privacy Act 2020.

Where to find lists of Private and Charter Schools

The most comprehensive source is the Education Counts New Zealand Schools Directory, which allows you to filter schools by School Authority (including private schools).

https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/directories/list-of-nz-schools

The official list of charter schools is available through the Charter School Agency website.

https://www.charterschools.govt.nz/charter-schools/

Information shared with schools

The following content will be added to the next School Bulletin:

Thank you for the work you are doing to support attendance in your school. The Attendance Service works collaboratively with schools to support students who are non-enrolled or experiencing chronic absence. As part of this support, your Attendance Service Provider is required to meet with the school's nominated contact to discuss attendance barriers and risks, gather relevant background information, and prepare for engagement with the student's caregivers. Please ensure your school's nominated contact is available to be contacted and meet with the Attendance Service, either in person, virtually, or by phone, within five working days of a Non-enrolment Notification or Chronic Absence support request being submitted. Please note that school holidays are counted as working days.

Other attendance-related updates

Attendance Multi-Agency Forums (AMAFs)

The Attendance Service Delivery team is continuing preparations for the national rollout of Attendance Multi-Agency Forums (AMAFs). Key implementation resources are being developed, including readiness guidance, information-sharing protocols, terms of reference and supporting materials for regional teams and ASPs. These resources will support a nationally consistent approach to establishing and operating AMAFs, with all forums expected to be operational by Term 3, 2027.

Reallocating ISP cases

An AS-CMS bug has recently been identified that prevents an ISP from reallocating a case once a learner has withdrawn from the school roll. This meant that some cases for non-enrolled students were not followed up for some time.

A new daily process has been implemented to identify ISP cases for students who have left the school roll. These cases are not automatically reallocated to CIT so they can be sent to the correct catchment.

Updated Monthly Systems Check

The Ministry runs a monthly systems check to identify students who are not enrolled, have no exemptions and are not out of the country, so that attendance cases can be created for them if one does not already exist.

We have recently implemented changes to this system check to identify more of these young people who have previously fallen through the cracks. The key changes are

- Previously, only students who were confirmed to be IN the country were included. Now it includes students who are IN or UNMATCHED
- Students with Alt Ed approvals are now included
- Students who have never enrolled in a school are now included, if they have had an attendance case in the past
- Students who have had recent attendance data submitted by a school are no longer included

The updated report was run for the first time earlier this month. As a result of these changes, we have identified more than 1,300 students who are not enrolled and do not have an attendance case. These cases are currently allocated to CIT who are working through them to check for any underlying data issues and find address details where possible. You will start to see these cases coming through as they work through the backlog.

Changes coming in 2027

New attendance exemption rules and updated attendance codes will come into effect from Term 1, 2027. Schools and kura will receive further information through upcoming sector communications, webinars and regional briefings. While these changes do not affect current Attendance Service processes, they represent an important part of the

wider attendance system improvements being implemented nationally. Schools and kura will continue to follow current attendance policies and guidance for the remainder of 2026.

Supporting Attendance and Engagement

The Attendance Programme continues to support initiatives aimed at strengthening attendance and engagement outcomes for students. Upcoming webinars for schools include practical guidance on supporting students experiencing anxiety and understanding the changes being introduced from Term 1, 2027. If you would like to attend any of these – you can find the information and link here. These initiatives form part of the broader programme of work focused on improving attendance outcomes across the education system.

Coming up in our next newsletter

- Q4 timeline and holiday season guidance

We want these updates to be useful for you so please let us know if there is anything you'd like us to cover in future newsletters or our weekly webinars. Please email attendance.service@education.govt.nz.

You can find this and previous newsletters here