Education Report: Proposed Closure of Mapiu School (1805)

To: Hon. Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education

Date: 5 November 2018

Priority: High

Security Level: In Confidence

METIS No: 1161888

Drafter: Freda Wilson

Key contact and number: Katrina Casey

Messaging seen by Communications team: No

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is for you to consider whether to close Mapiu School. On 5 October 2018 you agreed to initiate consultation on the possible closure of the School following a request from its Board of Trustees. The boards of affected schools have now been consulted and have responded stating they have no concerns.

Summary

1 The roll at Mapiu School has steadily declined from 29 students in July 2009, to three students as at 1 July 2018, one of whom moved to Piopic School before the end of September, leaving two brothers currently attending the School. The Board of Trustees believes the long-term viability of the school is poor with few predicted future students in the area and an inability to provide social and cultural activities for students.

2 The Board wrote to the Ministry on 2 August 2018 asking for the voluntary closure of the School at the end of 2018. The School would stop being operational at this time and would officially close on 27 January 2019.

3 Consultation under section 157 of the Education Act (the Act) was initiated with affected schools and no concerns were received.

4 Closure of the school, should it be approved, would be under section 154 of the Act.

5 If you decide to close Mapiu School, the first year savings to the Crown are estimated to be $82,000. Each year after this will see estimated savings to the Crown of $173,000, with an estimated saving of $1.639 million over a 10 year period.

6 Education Development Initiative (EDI) enhancements of $30,000 would apply if the closure proceeds, based on the March 2018 roll of 3 students. This funding is primarily to help students transition to their next school and to raise achievement.
We recommend that you:

a. **agree** to close Mapiu School under section 154 of the Education Act 1989, with effect from 27 January 2019;

b. **sign** the attached *New Zealand Gazette* notice gazetting the closure;

c. **sign** the attached letters to the Board of Trustees Chairperson and the local Members of Parliament informing them of your decision;

d. **agree** that this Education Report be proactively released as per your expectation that information be released proactively. Any information that might need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

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Katrina Casey  
Deputy Secretary  
Sector Enablement and Support  
5/11/2018

Hon Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  
29/11/18
Background

1. Mapiu School is a decile 5, full primary school 42 kilometres south of Te Kuiti in the King Country, an area of population decline. The School is located 25 kilometres from Ongarue School, 25 kilometres from Aria School and 33 kilometres from Piopio Primary School and Piopio College.

2. The school is currently on a three year Education Review Office (ERO) cycle. Education provision at the school has been variable. For example, in 2016 testing showed that all nine students were below expected achievement in Reading and Writing and 50% were below in Maths.

3. Mapiu School was governed by a Commissioner from 2011 to 2014 after the resignation of the Board of Trustees. In 2011 the roll was 21. By 2012 the roll had fallen to 12 students. The Commissioner appointed a new principal after the resignation of the previous principal and a new Board of Trustees was subsequently elected. A Limited Statutory Manager (LSM) was then appointed to provide guidance, training and support. Following good progress, the LSM was withdrawn in November 2014. Community support for the school has not fully been restored and roll numbers have continued to decline.

4. The roll at Mapiu School has steadily declined from 29 students in July 2009 to its current roll of two students.

5. The Board of Trustees wrote to the Ministry on 2 August 2018 asking for a voluntary closure of its school [METIS 1146029 refers].

6. The Ministry met with the Board on 24 September 2018. Information was provided about the closure process, asset distribution and the Education Development Initiative (EDI) policy.

Education in the Local Area

7. There are two local schools that have traditionally enrolled students from the Mapiu area. Both Ongarue School and Aria School are approximately 25 kilometres from Mapiu School. The Board has been advised that the current (two) students are likely to enrol in Piopio Primary School and College, 33 kilometres from Mapiu School.

Consultation under Sections 154 and 157 of the Education Act 1989

8. Before making a decision about closing a school, consultation must be undertaken with the Board of the school concerned and with the boards of state schools whose rolls might be affected.

9. Consultation under section 157 of the Education Act (the Act) was initiated with affected schools and no concerns were received.

Assessment

10. The Ministry considers that Mapiu School is no longer viable and is being considered for closure for the following reasons:
• There are currently only two students enrolled at the School. Both students have new schooling options arranged for Term 1, 2019.

• As at March 2017, there were 25 Year 1-8 students living within the Mapiu School Transport Entitlement Zone. Only 2 of these students were enrolled at Mapiu School. This situation has continued.

• The Ministry’s view is that despite the support provided to the school over the last eight years there has not been sustained change. The community has lost confidence in the school and this, coupled with a declining population in the area, means that it is no longer viable. We consider that Mapiu School should therefore close.

• The community is aware of the lack of opportunities for social interaction available to students as a result of the low numbers, as well as the lack of opportunity for meeting the sporting and cultural needs of students.

Risks

11. We consider this to be a low risk decision, as the community supports closure of the School.

Financial Implications

12. Mapiu School has performed adequately financially. It has generally operated in surplus ($19,484 in 2017). The last deficit was recorded in 2016 (of $25,848). The low roll has affected its operational grant. The working capital position remains positive at $259,691 as at 31 December 2017. The School’s equity has begun to decline over the last 4 years moving from 94% to 92%. The loss of the transport grant will have a negative impact on the School’s finances as it was greater than the School’s operational grant.

13. If you decide to close Mapiu School, the first year savings to the Crown are estimated to be $82,000. Each year after this will see estimated savings to the Crown of $173,000, with an estimated saving of $1.639 million over a 10 year period.

14. EDI enhancements, based on the March 2018 roll of 3 students, of $30,000 would apply if the closure proceeds. This funding is primarily to help students transition to their next school and to raise achievement.

Property Implications

15. The property at Mapiu School is Crown-owned. If the school closes, as it is not required for educational purposes the property would be disposed of in accordance with section 40 of the Public Works Act 1981, related local authority legislation and the protection mechanisms in respect of Māori land claims. The school house on-site would also be included in this process.

Transport Implications

16. Should you decide to close the school, the School Transport team is able to assess and advise eligibility for school transport assistance, both for current students of Mapiu
School, and Mapiu children attending either Ongarue School or Aria School, depending on whichever will be the closest school at which they can enrol. This assistance may be provided in the form of a conveyance allowance or a place on a school bus.

17. The transport entitlement zones of the neighbouring schools would be altered to reflect the closure of Mapiu School.

Next Steps

18. Under section 154(2A) of the Education Act 1989, if the Board agrees with or does not oppose the closure of its school, the Minister had the discretion as to whether or not to continue the consultation with the Board and whether to give the Board 28 days to provide arguments in favour of the school remaining open.

19. In this case, as the Board has requested closure and there is support for this from the community, we consider that a further 28 day period for provision of further arguments in favour of keeping the school open is not necessary.

20. If, after considering the information in this report, you decide you are satisfied the school should close, a draft letter (Annex 1) and Gazette Notice (Annex 3) are attached for you to inform the board and gazette the closure.

21. If you agree to this request for closure, a Memorandum of Agreement itemising the EDI funds and the process for accessing them, as well as details of the distribution of assets from Mapiu School, will be negotiated with the Board and other relevant boards.

Conclusion

22. The Ministry considers that Mapiu School is no longer viable, and closure is appropriate for the following reasons:

- The Board of Trustees has considered the future of the school, but because it is isolated, it considers there are limited options, and has requested closure.

- There are currently only two students, from one family, enrolled at the School. They have already arranged to attend another school in 2019.

- There is no significant pre-school-aged population in the area.

- The majority of learners in the Mapiu Transport Entitlement Zone are enrolled in neighbouring schools.

- The community is aware of the lack of opportunities for social interaction available to students as a result of the low numbers, as well as the lack of opportunity for meeting the sporting and cultural needs of students.
Proactive Release

23. It is intended that this Education Report be proactively released as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible. Any information that might need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

Annexes

Annex 1: Letter to Board Chair
Annex 2: Letter to MPs
Annex 3: New Zealand Gazette Notice
Annex 1: Letter to Board Chair
Dear David

Thank you for your letter dated 4 July 2018, received 2 August 2018, advising that you are requesting the voluntary closure of Mapiu School. I note that over the past years the roll at Mapiu School has declined from 29 in 2009 to the present roll of two students. I am also informed that the predicted roll for 2019 is two students and that there are several primary schools within 25 kilometres of Mapiu School.

The Ministry of Education has consulted on my behalf with your Board and with the boards of schools whose rolls might be affected if the school closes. This consultation fulfils the requirements of sections 154 and 157 of the Education Act 1989.

After considering all the information provided to me, I am satisfied that Mapiu School should close. The closure will be gazetted shortly to take effect on 27 January 2019.

Please ensure you follow the surplus staffing processes regarding school closure that are outlined in the relevant collective agreements.

Even though there is agreement to Mapiu School closing, I realise that it is not an easy matter for a board and a school community to take these actions. I would like to take this opportunity to record my appreciation of the service that the Board, its previous members and the school staff have given to Mapiu School and its students.

Yours sincerely

Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education
Barbara Kuriger  
Member of Parliament  
PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Dear Barbara

On 2 August 2018 the Board of Trustees of Mapiu School wrote to me requesting the closure of the school.

The Ministry of Education has consulted on my behalf with the Board and with the boards of schools whose rolls might be affected if the school closes. The consultation fulfils the requirements of sections 154 and 157 of the Education Act 1989.

After considering all the information provided to me I am satisfied that Mapiu School should close. The closure will be gazetted shortly to take effect on 27 January 2019.

For your information I have attached a copy of the letter to the Board of Trustees.

Yours sincerely

Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education

Encl
Hon Chris Hipkins
MP for Rimutaka
Minister of Education
Leader of the House
Minister of State Services
Minister Responsible for Ministerial Services

Adrian Rurawhe
Member of Parliament
PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Dear Adrian

On 2 August 2018 the Board of Trustees of Mapiu School wrote to me requesting the closure of the school.

The Ministry of Education has consulted on my behalf with the Board and with the boards of schools whose rolls might be affected if the school closes. The consultation fulfils the requirements of sections 154 and 157 of the Education Act 1989.

After considering all the information provided to me I am satisfied that Mapiu School should close. The closure will be gazetted shortly to take effect on 27 January 2019.

For your information I have attached a copy of the letter to the Board of Trustees.

Yours sincerely

Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

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Annex 3: New Zealand Gazette Notice
NEW ZEALAND GAZETTE NOTICE

Education Act 1989

Mapiu School (1805) Closure Notice

Pursuant to section 154 of the Education Act 1989 I hereby declare that Mapiu School (1805) will close on 27 January 2019 and will cease to be established on that day.

Dated at Wellington this 20th day of November 2018.

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education