Education Report: Request to reduce the number of half-days Lepperton School (2182) is required to be open for instruction in 2019 under section 65A

<table>
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<tr>
<th>To:</th>
<th>Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>9 April 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Priority:</td>
<td>High</td>
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<td>Security Level:</td>
<td>In Confidence</td>
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<td>METIS No:</td>
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<td>Drafter:</td>
<td>Hans Konlechner</td>
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<td>Key Contact:</td>
<td>Rae Karipa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Messaging seen by Communications team:</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Round Robin:</td>
<td>No</td>
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11 APR 2019

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

Note that Lepperton School (2182) has requested your approval under Section 65D of the Education Act to be open for fewer than the required number of half days in 2019.

Agree that Lepperton School may reduce, by four half-days, the number of half-days that it is required to be open for instruction in 2019.

Summary

1 Under section 65A(1) of the Education Act 1989 (the Act) you prescribe the number of half-days schools must be open during any year. Every board of trustees must ensure its school is open for the required number of half-days (section 65A(2)).

2 Section 65D(1) of the Act allows you to authorise a board to open for fewer half-days in any year than required by section 65A(2).

3 Lepperton School (2182) has requested a reduction in the number of half-days that it is required to be open for instruction in 2019, due to an unplanned delay of its new build, receiving a Certificate of Public Use. This meant the school could not open until the 11th February 2019.

4 The request is a reduction from 390 to 386 half-days open for instruction.
Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

a. note that Lepperton School (2182) has requested your approval under Section 65D of the Education Act to be open for fewer than the required number of half days in 2019; Noted

b. agree that Lepperton School may reduce, by four half-days, the number of half-days that it is required to be open for instruction in 2019; Agree / Disagree

c. sign the attached letter to the Board of Trustees Chairperson advising him of your decision under section 65C(5) of the Education Act 1989; and

d. proactively release this Education Report as part of the next publication. Release / Not release

Katrina Casey
Deputy Secretary
Sector Enablement and Support
8/4/2019

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education
10/4/19
Background

1 Under section 65A(1) of the Education Act 1989 (the Act) you prescribe the number of half-days schools must be open during any year. Every board of trustees must ensure its school is open for the required number of half-days (section 65A(2)).

2 Section 65D(1) of the Act allows you to authorise a board to open for fewer half-days in any year than required by section 65A(2).

3 In 2019, primary schools are required to be open for 390 half-days. This is the upper end of the range of required days usually required of primary schools.

Lepperton School

4 Lepperton School is a year 1-6, decile 9, state, co-educational, primary school in Lepperton, New Plymouth. Its 1 July 2018 roll was 162, which included 120 (74.1%) European, 28 (17.3%) Māori, 9 (5.6%) Asian, 3 (1.9%) Other and 2 (1.2 %) Pasifika students.

5 Lepperton School has completed a complete school rebuild on its existing site. The school originally planned to open on 31 January 2019 however this was changed to 7 February due to building delays. This change met the prescribed start dates which for 2019 are “on / or before 7 February”.

6 On 31 January contractors were still on site, the Council’s Certificate of Public Use (CPU) had not been issued and required a hazard to be rectified. This was only issued on the afternoon of Tuesday 5 February. This did not allow the school sufficient time to be ready for the start of school.

7 The school advised the community that they would not open until Monday 11 February.

Request to reduce half-days of instruction

8 The Principal, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, has requested that Lepperton School reduce, by four, the number of half-days that it is required to be open for instruction in 2019. This would require the school to be open for 386 half-days rather than the prescribed 390.

9 The school has used all of the flexibility available to vary 2019 opening and closing dates. As their start date is later than the allowed, there is no further room to accommodate the required days within the set holidays. Taranaki Anniversary day fell on Monday 11 March 2019 and thus further reduced the available days.

10 Local Ministry staff confirm that the school did not have full access to their new buildings prior to the afternoon of Tuesday 5 February.

Risks

Loss of classroom time

11 The loss of four half-days of classroom teaching time may raise concerns from parents and students.

12 The Principal is confident that teachers can sustain learning for the four half-days with no significant impact on student learning.
13 The school offered parents a babysitting service for students as a token of goodwill for the inconvenience of the change of start dates for the year.

14 The school has also adjusted their teacher only days, to call back days in school holidays to minimise further impact to student learning.

**Staff workload management**

15 Staff have responded to the changes to the start of year and given extra time to ensure as smooth a start as possible given the circumstances. School staff worked on Waitangi Day, Thursday 8th and Friday 9th of February to ensure learning spaces were organised and resources were available for students on the following Monday.

16 Staff are also moving to an innovative learning environment this year. The Board feels strongly about supporting their wellbeing during the overall transition, noting that staff have also had to cope with the noise and interruptions of the building works last year.

17 Therefore it would not be appropriate to ask staff to make up any further days.

**Precedent**

18 There is a risk that granting the school’s request will create a precedent for other schools in similar circumstances.

19 All requests are considered on a case by case basis. The Ministry will always explore all possible options to avoid a Board having to close a school for instruction.

**Conclusion**

20 The Ministry considers that the Board’s request to close the school for up to four half-days this school year is reasonable in all the circumstances.

21 We are confident that the Board and Principal will have plans in place to mitigate any risks arising from this.

**Proactive Release**

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

**Annexes**

Annex 1: Request to reduce the number of half-days for Lepperton School – Board Letter
Annex 2: Letter to the Board of Trustees
Annex 1: Request to reduce the number of half-days for Lepperton School – Board Letter
Dear Jan Marshall, Director of Education

Lepperton School would like to apply for a reduction in the number of days we are required to be open for instruction in 2019, from 390 half days to 366 half days (two full days less).

Lepperton School is a complete new build on the existing school site. Since June 2018 we were promised multiple take over dates, however due to issues beyond our control these dates were continually pushed out. This meant we spent the last 12 months preparing and planning for a move that didn’t happen, juggling new enrolments and managing student and staff wellbeing, with the constant noise and interruptions of a building site.

We were finally given Monday 21st January 2019 as our move date and spent the last term of 2018 packing up our existing school, minimising interruptions to student learning programmes, and constantly answering questions from our community. Our staff worked additional days at the end of December in order to be prepared for an early return in January. As a leadership team we had planned teacher only days to coincide with this.

We advertised this date to our community, asking them for their help with the move. We also advertised an orientation day for Wednesday 30th January 2019 in order to best support the transition for our students and community. We have a number of special needs students for whom change can be very disruptive. Our official start date at this point was the 31st January 2019.

Very late in Term 4 2018 we were notified that the building would not be ready on the 21st January 2019. We were then given permission to move our classrooms into the new learning hubs on Wednesday 30th January 2019, but were not able to organise or unpack until take over date on Friday 1st February 2019. We were advised that we could not move the administration area until that Friday. We had to re-advertise start dates to our community with Tuesday 5th February 2019 becoming the orientation day, and an official start on Thursday 7th February 2019.

On Thursday 31st January 2019 we met with the contractors and project manager. MOE capital works and project manager It became very apparent that the building was not going to be ready or safe for students on Tuesday 5th February. There were a number of contractors still working on site and there was some concern over whether or not the council would issue a CPU. Staff were unable to organise any learning resources for students, furniture or equipment due to unfinished areas including paint, plumbing and electrical works. There was also no storage or shelving installed. We were forced to make the decision to delay our start yet again until Monday 11th February 2019. The CPU was not received until late Tuesday 5th February 2019 after a fall hazard was rectified.

The decision to start school late was not taken lightly and at the time we did not have any other choice given that the building was unsafe for our students and not conducive to positive transitions and learning. The events leading up to this have been outside of the schools control and decisions have been made with the best interests of our students in mind. Given the inconvenience this caused our community we offered a baby-sitting service for students on Thursday 7th February 2019 and Friday 8th February 2019 as a token of goodwill. Our staff worked tirelessly to organise the learning hubs for students and learning, in the midst of a building site. This included working on Waitangi day. Amongst the frustration, they have been professional, obliging and very patient.

Therefore, the Board, as a good employer, feels very strongly that school should not have to make up the 4 half days (2 full days). In no way was the school ready to take on students, as learning spaces were not organised, resources were not available and there were safety issues given the construction that was still taking place. Staff and the community have a ready put in additional hours, preparing for learning and students, and it would be unfair to ask them to come back during the holiday period when the timing has been completely out of their control. This includes
our students. Given the move to innovative learning environments with collaborative teaching, the extra work and pressure this alone has created, we as a board are very conscious of the need to look after our communities wellbeing. While we were not open for instruction we asked our staff and community to go above and beyond their duties. Packing and moving a school is no easy feat.

Also, one of our Professional Learning focuses for this term is appraisal and teacher as inquiry. To this end we are making sacrifices to come as close as practical to meeting the required days open by cancelling two planned professional learning days (teacher only days) throughout 2019 under the guidance of s 3(2)(a) from s 3(2)(a). These will become callback days, so long as we can reschedule the services of Interlead.

Therefore, Lepperton School would like to apply for a reduction in the number of days we are required to be open for instruction in 2019, from 390 half days to 386 half days (two full days less).

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

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<td>7th &amp; 6th February</td>
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Yours faithfully

Ian McCault
Board Chair
Lepperton School
Taranaki

Andrew Retallick
Principal
Lepperton School
Taranaki
Annex 2: Letter to the Board of Trustees
11 APR 2019

Ian McCaul
Board of Trustees Chairperson
cl- Post Office
Lepperton
New Plymouth 4339

Dear Ian,

Lepperton School – request for reduction in number of half-days required in 2019 school year

I have considered your request to reduce the number of half-days your school is required to be open and authorise your Board to be open for 386 half-days in 2019.

I understand that the delays that you experienced were not within the control of the Board, and that where possible you mitigated the impact for students, and your community.

I appreciate that you were proactive and thoughtful about supporting your parents by offering babysitting services on Thursday 7th and February 8th 2019 as a token of goodwill, to those parents who were unable to make other arrangements.

I wish to acknowledge the staff for working hard at the beginning of the school year to get it ready for the beginning of term and acknowledge the additional time and effort that has been demanded of you and your staff.

I wish you all the best for the remainder of your year in new school buildings.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education