Education Report: Temporary maximum day student number increase during dormitory rebuild at Solway College

To: Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education

Date: 26 April 2019

Security Level: In Confidence

Drifter: Mark Atkin

Key Contact: Erika Ross, Director of Education, Wellington

Messaging seen by Communications team: N/A

Purpose of Report

This paper seeks your approval of a temporary increase in the number of day students at Solway College for 2019 and 2020 while one of the College’s dormitories undergoes an urgent rebuild.

Summary

- Solway College has had to bring forward the rebuild of one of its dormitories following an engineer’s report, and needs to reduce the number of boarding students it can accommodate during 2019 and 2020.

- All but one of the affected students are living at home in the interim. The remaining girl is boarding with a local family.

- A corresponding increase in the number of day students specified in the College’s integration agreement is needed for 2019 and 2020, from the current 45 students to 70 students.

- This temporary change requires a supplementary agreement, which must be approved by you in the absence of a current delegation.
Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

a. note that Solway College has had to bring forward the rebuild of one of its dormitories, following an engineer’s report, reducing the number of boarding students it can accommodate during 2019 and 2020;
   Noted

b. agree to increase the maximum number of day students from 45 to 70 for 2019 and 2020 to address this situation;
   Agree / Disagree

c. sign the attached letter to the proprietor of Solway College, The Solway College Board of Governors Incorporated;

d. note that we will arrange the supplementary agreement to give effect to your decision, and arrange notification through the New Zealand Gazette.
   Noted

e. agree that this report be proactively released in line with your expectations that information be released as quickly as possible. Any information that might need to be withheld will be redacted in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.
   Release / Not release

Susan Howan
Acting Deputy Secretary
Sector Enablement and Support

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

26/4/19

3/8/19
Background

1. Solway College is a state integrated Year 7 – 15 single sex (girls') school in Masterton enrolling both boarding and day students. Its July 2018 roll was 147 students.

2. The College's integration agreement currently provides for a maximum roll of 175 students, with a maximum of 45 day students.

3. The Solway College Board of Governors closed one of the College's dormitories for reconstruction some time ago, and had resolved to upgrade one further dormitory over the 2018 summer break.

4. In December 2018 the proprietor was informed by its structural engineer that the latter dormitory required far more extensive work than anticipated and should no longer be used as dormitory accommodation.

5. On 21 December 2018, the Board advised us of this and that it would need a temporary increase to its day student roll to accommodate those students who would have been classified as boarders but who were not able to stay in the dormitory. On 20 March 2019, we received a formal application to temporarily increase the day student numbers.

Impact on boarding student capacity

6. The Board has had to bring forward its plan to build a new dormitory, and initial enquiries indicate that this could take up to 18 months to complete. The Board has had to move 19 boarders to day student enrolments for the interim period. It is the Board's intention to have this situation resolved before the start of Term 3, 2020.

7. The 19 students enrolling as day students during 2019 and 2020 will retain a connection with boarding pupils. All but one of the students affected are living at home in the interim. The remaining girl is boarding with a local family. The proposed temporary change will not compromise the College's ability to manage its roll within the limitations that will again apply from 2021. No day student places have yet been offered for 2020.

8. To future proof for the next 18 months, the proprietor has requested a total increase of 25 places. This is to cover the 19, but also allow six places for any new boarder applications it receives between now and 2021.

9. This will take the total number of day students that can be enrolled at the College to 70.

10. To allow for any possible delays in the build project, we are recommending the integration agreement is changed for 2019 and all of 2020.

Legal requirements

11. The change, even though temporary, requires a supplementary agreement, as the maximum number of day students is specified in the integration agreement. There is no current delegation from you to approve this type of change.

12. The standard process to alter a school's day/boards ratio is to consult with the boards of neighbouring schools. As this is for a temporary increase only, due to the temporary
unavailability of the hostel, we do not consider it necessary to consult with other boards in this instance.

Implications

13. There are no financial, property, transport or staffing implications from this temporary change.

Risks

14. Any risk to the ongoing management of the College’s roll in relation to boarding student and day student numbers has been addressed by the College through this request for a supplementary agreement.

Next Steps

15. If you agree to the proposal, please sign the letter to the proprietor (Annex 1), and return it to the Ministry. We will forward it to the proprietor.

16. The proprietor will arrange the necessary supplementary agreement through the Association of Proprietors’ of Integrated Schools. The Ministry will countersign this agreement under delegated authority.

17. We will arrange publication of the required notice in the New Zealand Gazette.

Proactive Release of this Report

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

Annexes

Annex 1: Letter to the proprietor
Jodie Somerville  
Chairperson  
Solway College Board of Governors Incorporated  

§ 9(2)(a)  

- 7 MAY 2019  

Dear Jodie  

Thank you for Elizabeth Rogerson’s email of 21 December 2018 to the Ministry of Education advising of the situation with one of Solway College’s hostel dormitories and the resulting impact on the number of boarding students that can be accommodated during 2019 and 2020.  

In light of the unexpected circumstance the Board finds itself in regarding the hostel, I have decided to approve an increase of 25 day students that can be enrolled at the College for the 2019 and 2020 school years, taking the College to a maximum of 70 day students for these years. The limitation of 45 day students will be reinstated from 2021. The maximum roll of 175 will continue to apply.  

I note that the students enrolling as day students during 2019 and 2020 will retain a connection with boarding students, and that the interim arrangement will not compromise the College’s ability to manage its roll within the limitations that will again apply from 2021.  

Please arrange a supplementary agreement with the Association of Proprietors of Integrated Schools (APIS) to give effect to this approval. Please forward two signed copies to the Ministry of Education for countersigning.  

I hope that the rebuild of the hostel dormitory progresses according to plan. If you have any further questions, please contact [REDACTED] or at § 9(2)(a).  

Yours sincerely,  

Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education