

Hon Chris Hipkins

MP for Remutaka

Minister for COVID-19 Response

Minister of Education

Minister for the Public Service

Leader of the House



12 December 2021

Ref: OIA0404

J Turner

fyi-request-17333-e39b69b0@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear J Turner

Thank you for your email of 25 October 2021 requesting the following information:

- *Information on who from the education sector was consulted on as part of the decision to allow students from years 11- 13 to return to Auckland schools prior to widespread vaccination.*
- *I am particularly interested in how teachers were consulted, as well as principals.*
- *May I also have the name of the Health Experts who recommended this move.*

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

The reopening of learning onsite to all students is critical for their learning and therefore the country's future and is based on advice from Public Health experts.

As well as supporting our senior students with NCEA, there are considerable wellbeing benefits to having rangatahi learning face to face. We know that many of our ākonga have found distance learning very difficult, and in some cases impossible to maintain.

Senior secondary students returning to schools and kura are already well practiced in following the public health requirements and understanding why that is important, not only for themselves but also for their whanau and friends.

This decision was made in line with public health advice. Director of Public Health Dr Caroline McElroy has made a statement supporting the return of students to learning on site. The statement is publicly available here: [COVID-19 update – 10 November \(mailchi.mp\)](#)

Consultation on the decision to allow students from years 11-13 to return to Auckland schools

During the first lockdown in 2020 the Ministry of Education established regular virtual meetings with members of the schooling peak bodies, including national principals' associations and teacher unions. During the ongoing Auckland lockdown, the Ministry has also had regular contact with Auckland Primary and Secondary Principals' Associations. These are informal engagements and the participants are not expected to represent the views of their organisations in these conversations.

I'm told these meetings provide a useful and timely way to share information and insights, and identify and manage emerging issues. They are also an opportunity to test ideas and approaches from an on the ground/operational perspective.

I am advised that the Ministry discussed approaches to safely increasing access to face-to-face learning through these networks, in order to gain ideas and views about how this could be managed.

Thank you again for your email. You have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review this decision. You can do this by writing to info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Yours sincerely



Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education