

# Briefing report

## Education Review Office (ERO): ERO Reviews in COVID-19 Environment

Date	11 May 2020
Security Level	N/A
ERO Priority	High
ERO Reference	M20-15
Date requested	ERO initiated
Date due	ERO initiated
Proactive release	Recommended

Addressee	Action sought	Deadline
<b>Minister of Education</b>	<p>It is recommended that you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <b>agree</b> that ERO not undertake its regular school and ELS reviews for the next few months due to Covid 19</li> <li>b) <b>note</b> that we will be working with schools due to be reviewed, to independently evaluate the success of the range of responses, strategies and initiatives that contribute to learner success and reengagement in education</li> <li>c) <b>note</b> that evidence gathered through this approach will contribute to the wider programme of work to understand the learnings from Covid-19.</li> <li>d) <b>note</b> the interim findings from ERO's student Pulse check.</li> <li>e) <b>note</b> that with your agreement (M20-14) ERO would not return to its event based approach to school reviews but rather transition to a new school based operating model.</li> <li>f) <b>note</b> that depending on an assessment of the impact of the COVID response on ELS, ERO would move to the adoption of its new approach to the review of early childhood centres from late July.</li> <li>g) <b>note</b> that this briefing is recommended for proactive release</li> </ul>	



Attachments:

***Education Review Office (ERO):  
ERO Reviews in COVID-19  
Environment***



Comments:

Minister's Office to complete	
Noted	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seen	<input type="checkbox"/>
Approved	<input type="checkbox"/>
Referred to:	
Date signed by Minister:	

Our Ref: M20-15

11 May 2020

**Hon Chris Hipkins**  
**Minister of Education**

## **ERO Reviews in COVID-19 Environment**

### **Purpose**

1. This paper seeks your agreement for ERO to not carry out reviews of those schools and early learning services (ELS) who are currently scheduled for Review during Term 2. Further details of ERO's interim approach as we progress into Term 3 will be the subject of further advice and will be dependent on an assessment of the stage of readiness of the system, and an assessment of how ERO can best add value to the system.
2. As an interim focus, ERO aims to work with schools and early learning services to support the reestablishment of service and school-based teaching and learning and to more broadly capture insights into the experiences of the sector.
3. In this briefing we also share with you some initial insights from ERO's student pulse check which captures student perspectives on their learning engagement through the COVID Level 3 period. Similar data will shortly be available on the experiences of teachers.

### **Discontinuing ERO Reviews through the remainder of Term 2**

4. Early learning services and schools are currently working at pace and in very different ways to ensure the wellbeing of their staff, and Akonga and that Akonga remain engaged in learning.
5. The disruption of the past two months has meant that schools and services will not have attended to key activity such as medium to long term strategic planning, capability building of staff, curriculum development, student assessment or a range of other factors which are typically the focus of ERO's regular reviews. Many schools and staff will also be under significant pressure as we shift to Level 2 and they transition large numbers of students back into schooling and re-establish more formalised learning routines. As a consequence we do not believe it will be fruitful for ERO to rapidly return to its regular review cycle. It is unlikely to be welcomed by the sector and may not necessarily add value given the issues that the system is currently facing. There is a real risk that returning too quickly to institutionalised reviews exacerbates an already stretched system.
6. We propose that this decision be announced in the next Education Bulletin.

7. A critical focus for the sector over coming months will be to ensure that the disruptions to learning from the past two months do not disadvantage long term outcomes. This has three elements:
  - a. There is strong evidence around the so called “Summer Holiday” effects which see students’ development regress during breaks from formal teaching and learning programmes. There are particular concern for Pacific and Māori learners and those from poorer backgrounds where this effect has been shown to exacerbate gaps in comparison to other learners. Teachers may need to return to earlier concepts and re-establish critical foundations for learners in order to address these risks.
  - b. For older students there is the risk of early disengagement and some students not in fact returning to school.
  - c. There is also the potential for increased levels of mental health and anxiety among some learners, a situation which was observed amongst the Christchurch population following the disruptions caused by the 2011 Christchurch earthquakes.

### **Providing system insights and working with schools to address risks**

8. Effectively monitoring these and other emerging issues will be critical to ensure that we get in front of any potential risks. We therefore propose that ERO work with schools and early learning services to come to understand these factors at a system level and to support schools and services in identifying strategies which might ameliorate any potential negative long-term outcomes.
9. Part of this work will include monitoring closely the resilience and wellbeing of teachers and school leaders in supporting this transition and the reestablishment of quality engagement in teaching and learning. Many teachers have themselves had to support home learning of their own children, have been impacted by issues of technology availability for themselves and their students, and have had to rapidly upskill in the use of technology. At the same time some teachers will also be in circumstances where partners have lost jobs, or business and are now under severe financial pressure.
10. Capturing innovation and lessons of the past two months both internationally and from New Zealand will also be a core part of our work programme over the next few months. Over the recent period there has been rapid digital enablement on a mass scale: with teachers standing-up distance and remote teaching, developing digital and online resources and working with parents and students via phone and digital conferencing to ensure ongoing engagement in learning. It is important that we identify these experiences, come to understand what has worked and what initiatives could be taken to scale and become part of the core way we approach teaching and learning as a system going forward.

### **Student & Teacher Pulse Checks: Results under Level 3**

11. In developing some of the insights into the experiences of teachers and students over the past two months we have underway surveys trying to capture the experiences of students and of teachers.

12. Early findings from the student survey show:

- Students are missing school, their friends, sport, having teachers readily available and some subjects they find not as good online
- Primary students are watching Home Learning TV most (early indications are 25%) but we need the full results to be confident on these figures
- Some students are having issue with sharing devices (about 25% at primary and 15% at secondary) – again these figures are tentative
- Students overall do not seem to be enjoying learning at home
- The vast majority of students (primary and secondary) have been contacted by teachers to check on their wellbeing.

13. Results from the student study should be available for release over the next couple of days. Data from the teacher survey will be available in the coming week.

### **ERO approach to Reviews Term 3 and Beyond**

14. Details of ERO's review approach as we progress into Term 3 (late July) will be the subject of further advice and will be dependent on an assessment of the stage of readiness of the system and an assessment of how ERO can best add value to the system.

### **School Reviews**

15. In our paper to you on the "Proposed New Operating Model for School Reviews" (M20-14) we outline a dramatic shift in the way in which ERO proposes to work with schools. We have suggested that with your agreement we would commence a transition towards this new approach through the 2020/2021 financial year.

16. This approach essentially removes the single event, high stake review in the school system, shifting the emphasis to that of ongoing improvement. The interim approach to working with schools, described above, set ERO up for a transition to this new way of working and we would propose that we shift to this new operating model through the later half of 2020, although intensive work with schools around their practices would likely not occur until early 2021.

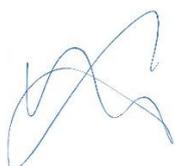
### **Reviews in Early Learning Services**

17. We also briefed you in August 2019 (Indicators of Quality for Early Childhood Education M19-33) of the adoption in the second half of this year of a new approach to the review of early learning services. The indicators which underpin our new ELS approach were publicly released in early April. Through Term 3 (and noting the assessment outlined in para. 14 above) we propose that we begin the shift to our new review approach for early learning services. This will include the return to Assurance Reviews which we piloted through 2019 for new services, and those that transition from a provisional to full licence. Other services will have the first of our new quality reviews, with a view to using these as an opportunity for them to come to understand the requirements of the new quality framework and embed ERO's new expectation in to their own quality improvement planning.

## Recommendations

18. It is recommended that you:

- |  |                       |
|--|-----------------------|
| a) <b>agree</b> that ERO not undertake its regular school and ELS reviews for the next few months due to Covid 19  | <b>agree</b> disagree |
| b) <b>note</b> that we will be working with schools due to be reviewed, to independently evaluate the success of the range of responses, strategies and initiatives that contribute to learner success and reengagement in education | <b>noted</b>          |
| c) <b>note</b> that evidence gathered through this approach will contribute to the wider programme of work to understand the learnings from Covid-19.  | <b>noted</b>          |
| d) <b>note</b> the interim findings from ERO's student Pulse check.  | <b>noted</b>          |
| e) <b>note</b> that with your agreement (M20-14) ERO would not return to is event based approach to school reviews but rather transition to a new school based operating model.  | <b>noted</b>          |
| f) <b>note</b> that depending on an assessment of the impact of the COVID response on ELS, ERO would move to the adoption of its new approach to the review of early childhood centres from late July.                               | <b>noted</b>          |
| g) <b>note</b> that this briefing is recommended for proactive release   | <b>noted</b>          |



Nicholas Pole  
**Chief Executive**

NOTED **APPROVED**



Chris Hipkins  
**Minister of Education**

17 / 6 / 2020