



Our Ref: OIA-26-415

21 May 2026

Dea [REDACTED]

Re: Official Information Act request regarding the development of ERO's new school reports

I refer to your email to the Education Review Office dated 19 April 2026 requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

1. *Consultation Hui – Operating Model Development*
 - a. *The number of hui, meetings, or consultation sessions held with the sector during the development of the revised ERO operating model.*
 - b. *The dates and locations of these hui.*
 - c. *The number of participants at each hui.*
 - d. *The roles of participants (e.g., principals, teachers, board members, whānau, other stakeholders).*
 - e. *Any notes, minutes, summaries, or reports generated from these hui.*
 - f. *Any analysis or synthesis of feedback gathered through these hui.*
2. *Feedback and Evidence from Consultation*
 - a. *All documented feedback collected from participants during these hui.*
 - b. *Any reports or summaries that identify themes, trends, or key findings from the consultation process.*
 - c. *Any evidence that participants requested or supported the introduction of a simplified or traffic light style reporting system.*
3. *Development of the Traffic Light Reporting System*
 - a. *All working papers, internal briefings, and discussion documents relating to the development of the traffic light reporting approach.*
 - b. *Any research or evidence base used to justify this reporting format.*
 - c. *Any comparisons with alternative reporting approaches that were considered.*
4. *Decision-Making Process*
 - a. *All advice provided to the Chief Executive, senior leadership, or the Minister regarding the adoption of the traffic light system.*
 - b. *Any recommendations, approvals, or decision documents relating to the adoption of this reporting model.*
 - c. *Any internal communications (including emails, memos, or aide-mémoires) that discuss the rationale for the change.*
5. *Alignment with Sector Voice*
 - a. *Any documentation that demonstrates how sector feedback (including from the hui) informed the final design of the reporting system.*
 - b. *Any evaluation of whether the final model reflects the views expressed during consultation.*

I will respond to each of your questions in turn.

1. Consultation Hui – Operating Model Development

2. Feedback and Evidence from Consultation

ERO consulted with parents, schools, and key stakeholders throughout the development of this work. Parents were first engaged through a company specialising in conducting focus groups in May 2025 on their views about what are now the old school reports. From 2 December 2025 to 4 March 2026, a group of 12 schools on our behalf engaged parents from their local community to discuss mock up versions of our now new school reports. In total, 111 parents were engaged with in face-to-face focus groups to develop these reports. The number of parents in each group ranged from 3 to 11 and was on average about six per a group.

Alongside this schools themselves were engaged to provide their professional opinion. This involved eight Principals, three Deputy Principals, one Presiding Member, and One Senior Leadership team consisting of a Principal, three Deputy Principals and an associate Principal.

The feedback we received from parents and schools has been made [publicly available on our website](#). I am therefore refusing it under section 18(d) of the OIA, as it is already available.

The schools and parents were engaged with from Northland, Auckland, Waikato, the Bay of Plenty, Wellington, Marlborough, and Christchurch. The EQI ratings of participating schools ranged from 350 to 525. Engagements included schools in both rural and urban settings and involved a Māori whānau group and a Pacific fono group.

Ten sector groups were also engaged prior to the reports release. The names of these organisations and their feedback is attached as **Appendix 1**. These are being provided to you as a summary, as per section 16(1)(e) of the OIA.

3. Development of the Traffic Light Reporting System

Changes to the reports were driven in part by feedback from parents that previous reports were unclear and relied too heavily on education jargon, limiting their ability to engage with their children's schools. The new reports are designed to be more accessible, enabling parents to better understand the quality of education their children are receiving, make informed choices, and effectively support and challenge their school. Across OECD systems, research synthesis shows that simplified or colour coded summaries improve accessibility and parent comprehension. The feedback we received from parents on the use of the colour coding was particularly positive.

4. Decision-Making Process

All the advice provided to the Minister on the school reports from development to launch is being made available on our website in the coming weeks. I am therefore refusing this part of your request under section 18(d) of the OIA, as the information will soon be made available.

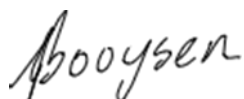
5. Alignment with Sector Voice

When you compare the feedback we received from sector groups and the final reports that were published, there are deliberate changes and efforts to address comments made in many areas. For example, you will notice that one group felt that putting the principals name should not be on the report, and that feedback was incorporated into the final version. While no formal evaluation and analysis was undertaken, every piece of feedback was read and considered.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. We do not publish requesters' personal information.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at <http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz> or freephone 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi,



Shelley Booyesen
DCE – Review and Improvement Services

Appendix 1: Collective feedback from education stakeholders in the development of ERO's new school reports format

Overall Summary

Sector stakeholders showed broad support for the direction of ERO's new school reporting format. Of particular note was the improved clarity of the review's findings and next steps for the school, structure of the report, and accessibility for parents and whānau. Stakeholders asked questions about timing, transparency of ERO's judgements, the balance between simplicity and nuance, and the importance of context and broader outcomes. All feedback received through the engagement process was considered, and many of the comments were incorporated into the final report format.

Key Themes

1. Timing and Implementation

ERO was asked about the timing of the new school reports alongside current curriculum reform.

2. Transparency and Consistency of Judgement

ERO was asked about how judgements are made during the review process. Stakeholders asked about how judgements and narratives would be linked, and how ERO identifies schools of serious concern.

3. Format and Accessibility

Stakeholders were generally positive about the report's refreshed format. The format was described as clean, simple, and accessible. Stakeholders raised concerns about the summary of judgements being oversimplified and potentially misleading without added context, and visual elements such as colour-coding may contribute to negative perceptions.

4. Tone and Approach

Stakeholders emphasised the importance of ERO continuing its strengths-based and improvement-focused approach, which is well regarded by the sector. Stakeholders wondered if the new report may be perceived as deficit-oriented for schools identified as needing additional support to bring about the necessary improvement.

5. School Context and Identity

Stakeholders asked ERO about how each school's individual context would be considered and presented in reports. Stakeholders expressed that the reports may not sufficiently capture school context, including community characteristics, school identity, and leadership context. This may limit reader understanding and lead to misinterpretation of findings.

6. Data and Interpretability

Stakeholders agreed that the plain language used in the new reports is more accessible and easier for readers to understand. Stakeholders suggested some further explanations may be required to unpack the report's evaluative terms and judgements.

7. Scope of Reporting

Stakeholders noted the report's focus on reading, writing, and mathematics, and asked if wellbeing, belonging, and broader curriculum areas were also a focus for reports. Stakeholders asked about reporting on Te Tiriti o Waitangi and cultural responsiveness.

8. Progress and Improvement

There is support for the inclusion of progress reporting, particularly as it reflects the work of review teams. Stakeholders suggested progress over time should be more explicitly presented.

9. Actionability

The report's actions and next steps for improvement are viewed as clear and useful for schools but may be less relevant for parents. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of actions being clearly aligned with the review's findings.

10. Audience Considerations

The report is intended for both parents and school professionals, but stakeholders noted tension between these audiences. Stakeholders would like to ensure the report is meaningful and accessible to both.

11. Privacy Considerations

Stakeholders raised concerns about the risk of identifying individual principals in the reports, particularly for smaller schools or communities. There is a need to ensure reporting does not compromise privacy or professional confidence.

12. Engagement Process

Some stakeholders expressed concern that consultation occurred under tight timeframes, limiting the opportunity for more meaningful input.

Stakeholders engaged with:

- New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF)
- New Zealand Educational Institute (Te Riu Roa) (NZEI)
- Secondary Principals' Association of New Zealand (SPANZ)
- New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association (Te Wehengarua) (PPTA)
- New Zealand School Boards Association (formerly NZSTA) (NZSBA)
- New Zealand Association of Intermediate and Middle Schools (Ngā Kura Takawaenga o Aotearoa) (NZAIMS)
- Rural and Area Schools

- New Zealand Catholic Education Office (NZCEO)
- Secondary Principals Council (SPC)
- Auckland Primary Principals' Association (APPA)