



30/01/2024

Arran Jones
Chief Executive, Aroturuki Tamariki

Tēnā koe e Arran,

Ngā mihi nui ki a koe i roto i ngā āhuatanga o te wā.

Thank you for providing the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) with your report, *Experiences of Care in Aotearoa, Agency Compliance with the National Care Standards, and related matters - 2022/23*.

All learners in the education system benefit when the Ministry of Education works collaboratively with other agencies to focus on what matters most. It is imperative that every child receive a high-quality education, where they experience success, achieve academically, and fulfil their potential. It is timely to receive the insights into the education experiences of children in care.

Your evaluation approach, our professional relationship, interactions, and discussions have allowed us to contribute meaningfully. Consequently, we have been intentional about the themes, priorities, and next steps. We will focus on:

- Collaboration and sharing.
- Support to be present, participate and progress.
- Access to responsive education.

We shall use the good practice identified within the report to influence how we proceed, as we plan and move toward achieving necessary changes.

Collaboration and sharing

We can improve how we share information across and beyond the system, by working collaboratively, and using confidential processes, to be assured that:

- children in care are enrolled in, and attend school, or an education environment that responds to their needs.
- advocates are well informed, active participants in the education journey of children in care.
- children in care, are understood and supported by their teachers.

The Ministry's regional offices work with and for children in care and have established good practice. We will define these and formalise them, so that we can create a model for wider use. Our focus is to benefit children in care through improvement.

We are establishing an Information Sharing Agreement (ISA) with Oranga Tamariki. The ISA includes details about what we share, to better support education experiences of children in care. *(Replacing the 2012 Memorandum of Understanding).*

Those working directly with these children, education providers and their whānau must have the right information, to enable full access to the suite of education supports available to them. Through fostering educationally powerful connections with those in care, and their carers, a better understanding of the importance attendance and engagement play in their educational achievement may be developed.

Support to be present, participate and progress

Children in care, who are present, and participate in education, will progress, and achieve. Attendance is identified as an ongoing concern. We need to gather data, respond to the issues, and establish a clear approach to resolution, whilst protecting the privacy rights of individuals.

Children in care are more likely to have additional learning support needs. The Ministry is currently reviewing how schools are resourced for teacher aides, and how it is used to respond to the varied levels of need. These roles can be important in providing the right additional level of support. Better information sharing, and drawing on inter-agency resources, will enable support options that respond more specifically to the learning needs of the child in care and contribute to attendance and achievement.

Access to responsive education

Alternative Education is experienced by high numbers of learners who are Māori, Pacific, ADHD, and have intellectual disabilities.

As part of a \$41.1 million package for alternative provision in Budget 2023, \$25.216 million was committed over four years for Alternative Education. A 30% increase per place rate is intended to address historic underfunding and existing cost pressures. It is envisaged that this will enhance learning experiences, such as improving access to quality teaching and learning resources, and enrichment activities.

The Ministry is in the process of supporting the new Government to determine their goals and priorities for Alternative Education. This includes discussions about the wider education system, inclusive education, better responding to unmet needs, improving cultural competency, and working in partnership with communities to develop supports that work for them.

The Ministry is also supporting cross-agency work (led by Oranga Tamariki) such as reviewing Gateway Assessments and Student Aide Support to improve the resourcing or provision of supports for children in care.

In conclusion, our focus moving forward will require commitment and dedicated action. We look forward to working with others to make the difference for the education of children in care.

Arran, I appreciate working with you to influence the change we seek. I hope this information is useful for you and your team at Aroturuki Tamariki. If you wish to discuss further or have any questions, my team and I welcome hearing from you.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynda Pura-Watson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'L'.

Lynda Pura-Watson
General Manager - Ākonga and Community Delivery
Te Pae Aronui

