



NZSTA
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Governance support resources

Proactive release

Proactive release is the publishing of information (usually on the school's website) without being asked for it.

Why – what are the benefits?

Proactive release can:

- Help to promote openness, transparency, trust and confidence
- Assist with community engagement and participation in board decision making
- Inform community understanding of board decisions
- Strengthen accountability of the board around its decisions
- Ensure that information reaches a wider audience
- Enable more consistent messaging
- Give boards greater flexibility to decide when and how information is released, and what additional context to put around it to give readers greater meaning
- Help with responding to individual requests made to the board by:
 - reducing the need for some requests altogether
 - directing requesters to information that has already been published
 - managing expectations about when information will become available
 - helping requesters narrow what they are asking for

How, what and when to release

Proactive release, by definition is not reactive, it is less of an afterthought and more something that is anticipated and planned for at the beginning of any process. Whether or not something will be released can be considered even before it is drafted and written accordingly.

The board should consider how it will make information on its website accessible to everyone, including people who use assistive technologies to read or access information.

Some information, such as the school's annual report, is already required to be published on the school's website. Other information that the board might like to consider releasing proactively could include:

- Strategic plans and goals
- Board policies, and the procedures that under-pin them – perhaps only those most useful to/requested by the school's community, for example:
 - Health and Safety policy
 - Managing challenging behaviour and physical restraint policy
 - Concerns and complaints policy
 - Child protection policy
- ERO review reports
- Board meeting agendas, minutes and papers of board meetings open to the public
- Any strategic issues that the board is considering – encouraging community input and feedback
- Any governance areas that the board is required to consult its community on e.g. the health curriculum, new or reviewed by-laws

There may also be occasions when the board is able to proactively release information requested under the Official Information Act that may be of use or interest to other people. However, the board would need to set itself strict criteria around such releases to ensure that it does not publish anything that it would be inappropriate to release to anyone other than the requester.

The timing of publication is at the board's discretion. Known proactive releases could become part of the board's communications plan.

Release 'as soon as reasonably practicable' is a good aim, particularly in cases of high community interest. Release information at a time when people can make best use of it. If the timing of release appears cynical, this is more likely to undermine public trust and confidence than promote it.

Boards should also plan to regularly review published information to check that it is still relevant, up to date and accurate, and to remove or archive outdated material.

Proactive release policy

The board would be wise to have a governance policy in place establishing:

- The types of information it will release proactively
- Delegations (similar to those around who can talk to media) – who may create, authorise, publish proactive releases
- Expectations around how staff/board members will identify opportunities for proactive release
- Expectations around monitoring emerging issues and trends to identify opportunities for proactive release
- Limitations – clear criteria around what may/may not be released

Useful links:

Guidance on accessibility <https://www.digital.govt.nz/standards-and-guidance/design-and-ux/accessibility/>

Office of the Ombudsman – Proactive release, Good practices for proactive release of official information <https://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/resources/proactive-release-good-practices-proactive-release-official-information>



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For further advice please contact the *Advisory and Support Centre* on

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