

7 August 2017



Advice regarding a questionnaire about religion in state schools

In late July 2017, it appears that a number of primary and intermediate schools have received a request to complete a survey about religion in state schools. A similar survey was conducted in 2013 and caused some confusion as to whether or not the school was obliged to answer it.

The survey is in fact a request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the "OIA").

All state and integrated schools are subject to the OIA through their Board of Trustees.

Under the OIA:

- Anyone is entitled to ask for any information held by the school (section 12).
- The school must decide whether to grant the request. It must tell whoever has asked for the information as soon as possible and within 20 working days (section 15).
- The grounds for refusing a request are limited. These are set out in sections 6, 9 or 18 of the OIA as applicable (section 18).
- The school must give the reasons for that refusal by quoting the relevant paragraph of section 6, 9 or 18 (section 19).

If the survey was received by a school on 29 July 2017, a response is required by no later than 25 August 2017 (unless the timeframe for responding is extended).

There are resources available to help schools with their decision-making. The Ombudsman's office has prepared a guide for boards of trustees on their OIA obligations:

[READ MORE...](#)

The Ombudsman's office has also produced a useful guide on complaints handling and the Ombudsmen's role under the Ombudsmen Act 1975:

[READ MORE...](#)

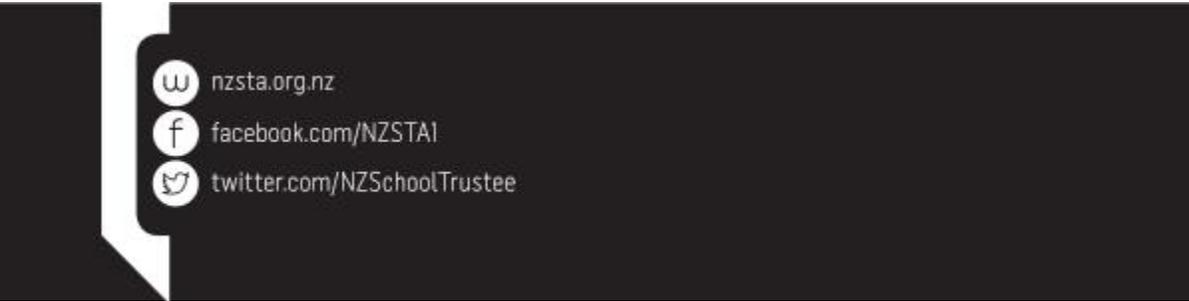
If your school did not receive this request, you may wish to consider checking your junk or spam folders to ensure it wasn't inadvertently routed into one of them. Even where this has occurred, there will be an obligation under the OIA to respond.

If you have any questions about the request, you should contact us via our Advisory and Support Centre (0800) STA HELP (0800 782 435), option 1 or govadvice@nzsta.org.nz.

Kind regards,

Rob Gold

Acting Manager, Operations



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