



NZSTA
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Governance support resources

Cohort entry consultation

What constitutes adequate consultation?

Introduction of cohort entry: Schools are able, from 3 July 2017, to adopt and introduce a cohort entry policy allowing new entrant students to start school at the beginning of the school term closest to their fifth birthday. Before introducing this, boards of trustees will need to develop a policy, the Act states:

'boards must take all reasonable steps to discover and consider the views of the following persons about the policy and whether it is generally acceptable:

- *parents of students at the school;*
- *employees of the board at the school;*
- *early childhood services in the local community;*
- *parents of prospective students of the school.'*

There are no universal requirements as to the forms or duration of consultation, but it should be a process which actively seeks and responds to the views of interested parties that assists the decision making of the board of trustees. It should never be conducted simply to 'tick a box' and must be performed with fairness, and recognising tikanga and cultural factors.

Consultation does not necessarily mean a resolution through agreement; the board of trustees must consider the stakeholders' viewpoints but must still make decisions which best support the engagement, progress, achievement and welfare of the school's students.

In consultation for developing a *Cohort Entry Policy*, boards are required to take all reasonable steps to discover and consider the views of various stakeholders.

This means boards must:

- Prepare a consultative document that adequately outlines cohort entry provisions and their intended policy, and include an appropriate method of responding;
- Identify the stakeholders;
- Consider the best approach (considering tikanga and cultural aspects) in consultation to allow and gain the most feedback;
- Consult (as above) with reasonable time for response;
- Receive and deliberately consider all viewpoints;
- If necessary, contact particular responders for further information or clarification;
- Weigh the responses against what will benefit the school's students;
- Make decisions, and communicate them to all stakeholders.

Possible ways to communicate include:

- Letter and paper-based survey
- Electronic note and survey
- Letter and seek written submissions
- Hui with whānau, hāpū or iwi
- Fono with Pacifica community
- Community meeting, or
- A mixture of above as is appropriate to each party.



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Where do I get advice?

The *Governance advisory and support centre* advisers can also assist and are contacted on 0800 782 435, option 1 or govadvice@nzsta.org.nz