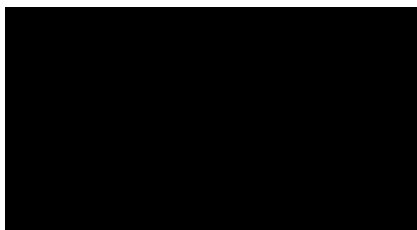



Our Ref: OIA21 - 14

6 May 2021



Tēnā koe 

Official Information Act 1982 Request – A copy of all tsunami evacuation reviews conducted by ERO over the past five years.

I refer to your email dated 13 April 2021 to the Education Review Office requesting official information which I have listed as follows:

- (i) Please provide a digital copy of all of tsunami evacuation reviews conducted by the Education Review Office over the past five years for pre-schools and schools in medium to high-risk areas around New Zealand.*
- (ii) Please also advise how ERO holds schools accountable for the Board Assurance documents, particularly for Section 3, points 18, 19 and 23 as per the Board Assurance documents available on the ERO website: <https://www.ero.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/BAS-Self-Audit-Checklists-January-2020-final5.pdf>.*
- (iii) Does ERO review school emergency evacuation plans, and if so, against what standards does it use to review these plans?*
- (iv) If it does not, who or which agency would ERO consider responsible for ensuring the quality of the emergency evacuation plans in schools?*
- (v) Please also outline what role or oversight function, if any, that ERO has in ensuring school evacuation plans are robust.*

In relation to your request under paragraph (i), ERO does not hold the specific information requested for the reasons set out below.

In relation to your questions under paragraphs (ii), (iii) and (v), the role of the Education Review Office is to review and report on the performance of schools and early learning services in the delivery of education. This is set out in section 463 of the Education and Training Act 2020.

ERO does not specifically review school emergency evacuation plans, and does not have the powers to hold schools accountable.

A school board is a body corporate under the Education and Training Act, and early learning services are independent entities or governed by such entities. The area you have asked about are part of the legislative responsibilities of schools and early learning services as body corporates and independent

entities. As you have noted, our work in this area is framed by the Board Assurance Statement for schools and Māori immersion kura. We have a similar set of assurance documents for early learning services with variations to match the different regulatory requirements for early learning services including kōhanga reo. These are based on the minimum standards for compliance set in licensing criteria issued by the Ministry of Education.

In these documents schools and services attest that they have taken all reasonable steps to meet their legislative obligations. For schools this is related to: board administration, curriculum, management of health, safety and welfare, personnel, financial and asset management. The BAS is a tool devised by ERO for school boards as a self-audit checklist on compliance matters. The guidelines to the BAS include reference to guidelines/circulars issued by the Ministry of Education, WorkSafe New Zealand, the New Zealand Fire Service, and the New Zealand School Trustees Association, among others, to assist school boards. The use of the BAS by ERO is very much based on a 'trust' approach to statutory (and best practice) compliance by school boards.

We also look at whether the school or early learning service has policies and procedures in relation to health and safety issues. You will note that questions 18 and 19, Section 3 of the BAS have links to the Ministry of Education website to assist school boards and principals.

ERO is guided by Ministry of Education advice to schools in what we check and what we report in the area of emergency preparedness. Review officers will recommend that the school or service refer to the appropriate guidelines where the latter indicate that they are uncertain.

ERO does not create the framework within which schools operate. With particular reference to your area of inquiry, emergency preparedness, we check that schools conduct regular evacuation practice drills and are aware of the available Ministry advice – refer to [Health and Safety Practical Guide for school boards and school leaders](#)

The Ministry has recently issued specific advice for parents which you can access through the following links:

- Early learning - [Emergency Guide | Parents.education.govt.nz](#)
- Primary - [Emergency Guide | Parents.education.govt.nz](#)
- Secondary - [Emergency Guide | Parents.education.govt.nz](#)

In relation to your question under (iv), you may wish to contact the Ministry of Education for further information on emergency planning and preparedness and clarify its role for ensuring the quality of the emergency evacuation plans in schools.

Under section 18(g) of the OIA, I am refusing your specific request for the information under paragraph (i) as they are not held by ERO for the reasons mentioned earlier.

You have a right under the OIA to complain to the Ombudsman and seek a review of my decision to refuse your request for the specific information.

Ngā mihi

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. France', with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

Jeremy France
Deputy Chief Executive Corporate Services
Education Review Office | Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga
National Office | Tari Matua