



Briefing for the Incoming Minister

Haratua / May 2023



Welcome to your role as Minister with responsibility for the Education Review Office | Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga (ERO).

We are here to help, and to support you in your role.

A world class inclusive public education system is critical to achieving the government's vision that New Zealand is the best place in the world for children and young people.

ERO helps the government achieve this by reviewing and reporting on the performance of early learning services, kura, kōhanga reo, puna reo, immersion settings, and schools. Our ambition in doing this is to drive equity and excellence in outcomes for all learners. Our approach is driven by our whakataukī, Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa – The Child – the Heart of the Matter.

As your government continues to deliver on its education reform agenda ERO provides an independent voice that can provide intelligence, a sense check and evidence base against which to test and track your policy initiatives and let you know what is providing you with benefits proportionate to the time, energy and money being invested

At our core we are an evidence centre in terms of system insights, performance insights and growing and translating evidence to inform practice, and when in conversations with you, the Ministry of Education, and other education system partners, we can provide advice to you that is informative and constructive.

As Minister, you can also ask the Chief Review Officer to initiate a review into any element of the early childhood and school sectors, and we will keep you informed where urgent support is needed in the course of our work. This complements our work at a system level, where we investigate areas that are of national interest and importance in delivering improved educational outcomes.

We look forward to working with you, discussing our findings and insights and how you might use these to promote a stronger, more equitable system.

E ara nā Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga kia tautoko ai

How ERO supports you

ERO's role

Our independent insights into the quality of education provision at both service provider and system level is one of the keystones to ensuring New Zealanders can have confidence in the integrity and delivery of education. The structure and nature of our education policy settings, in particular the high level of autonomy afforded to schools and early childhood services, necessitates a robust accountability and assurance mechanism. ERO is established to perform this function at both the institutional and national level.

The Chief Review Officer is a statutory role established under the Education and Training Act (2020). Under Section 463 of the Act 2020, (Review of Educational Services), the Chief Review Officer has the power to administer reviews (either general or relating to particular matters) of the performance of early learning services and schools in relation to the quality of their programmes and to prepare reports on the results of such reviews. ERO does not have enforcement powers.

As Minister, you can ask the Chief Review Officer to initiate a review or investigation into a particular issue or element of the early childhood or school sectors. The Chief Review Officer can also initiate reviews on their own motion.

ERO's independence from schools and early childhood services, as well as from agencies that set policy, funding and standards, enables us to provide assurance to you as Minister, the Government, parents, whānau and the broader community on the quality of our system and of education provision within New Zealand.

ERO as Host of Aroturuki Tamariki | Independent Children's Monitor.

As of 1 May 2023, ERO became the host to Aroturuki Tamariki | Independent Children's Monitor (Aroturuki). Aroturuki is an independent Government Department. While Aroturuki will be an independent Government Department that ERO provides back office corporate services, there are significant potential synergies in terms of a shared focus in our joint commitment to successful outcomes for vulnerable and at-risk children and young people, our focus on system wide review and performance, and the development of highly specialist skills in evaluation, research and system monitoring. Minister Sepuloni is currently Minister with responsibility for Aroturuki Tamariki.

While ERO is responsible for administering Vote Education Review Office, the overall Vote covers both ERO and Aroturuki Tamariki. This means the Vote has two appropriation Ministers, with Minister Sepuloni responsible for Aroturuki Tamariki's one appropriation, while you have responsibility for all other appropriations. The Minister of Finance may at times require one appropriation Minister to sign off budget or baseline update documents on behalf of all Ministers within a Vote. Prior to this we will write to Minister Sepuloni and yourself and recommend a process for this.

Our aim in performing our responsibilities is to be a trusted partner in supporting equitable and excellent outcomes for all learners

At provider level - We carry out impartial and objective review and evaluation that aims to inform and facilitate continuous improvements in Māori-medium, English-medium and Pacific-medium contexts. Through review and evaluation, we report on the quality of education, wellbeing, and care, identifying issues and opportunities that supports continuous improvement in: kura; schools; early learning services; kōhanga reo and puna kōhungahunga. Our core intent is to drive improvement in provider performance and ultimately learner outcomes.

At a system level – We are your strategic leader with an enduring commitment to shining a light on critical issues as well as workable solutions aimed at improving education outcomes. We do this by building a knowledge base (through research and evaluation) and translating this knowledge for the sector, education practitioners, boards, and management of services.

ERO's operating model for improved outcomes in education

ERO has been on a journey of innovation and change over recent years to ensure we can best support you and your Ministerial colleagues in delivering on your priorities.

We have focused on delivering seven key changes to do this:

1. Driving improved school performance.
2. Driving up quality and tackling poor performance in early childhood education services.
3. Shining a light on the performance system, and growing the evidence base in support of decision making and practice.
4. Relentlessly focusing on equitable, responsive, and culturally relevant outcomes for Māori and Pacific learners.
5. Strengthening effective teaching and leadership.
6. Contributing to the growth of fluent speakers of Te Reo Māori.
7. Supporting Aroturuki Tamariki | Independent Children's Monitor.

Our people

We have 225 staff. Most of our staff are distributed across the country working with schools and services throughout New Zealand. In addition, we have a national office based in Wellington.

ERO's work is delivered through the following business units:

Review and Improvement Services

Designated Evaluation Partners and Review Officers, who have extensive sector backgrounds, undertake external evaluations in early learning services and schools.

They oversee ERO's work in English-medium and Pacific-medium services and schools, and the review of early learning governance organisations. In addition to these services, this group also has responsibility for the review of hostels, boarding arrangements for international student, home schooling and education provided by private schools.

Our approach with schools has moved from 'a one-off event' every three years to an evaluation partner having a long-term relationship with individual schools. Our methodologies and professional practice is guided by a separate unit which reports directly to the Chief Executive.

Te Ihuwaka (Education Evaluation Centre)

Te Ihuwaka evaluates the performance of the education system and will be able to provide you with information on the effectiveness of programmes and interventions; and shine a light on good practice.

Te Ihuwaka draws on research from here and abroad to build a stronger evidence base to better support decision makers such as yourself at all levels of our system including leaders and teachers.

Te Tāhū Whare (Evaluation, review and research Māori)

Reviews in Māori-medium settings are led by our dedicated Māori immersion review team. In the case of kura and wharekura, ERO's methodologies reflect the distinctive philosophies and approaches in Te Aho Matua Kura Kaupapa Māori, and Ngā Kura ā Iwi. The approaches have been developed with these respective groups and are considered world-leading in indigenous education evaluation.

Te Pou Mataaho conducts evaluation and research and is able to gather insights from Māori medium and Kaupapa Māori providers.

Te Pou Reo is the new te reo Māori team whose focus is working with schools to support the provision of high quality te reo Māori. This team is taking a strategic approach working alongside other education agencies to influence improvement.

As a whole, Te Tāhū Whare can inform you on Māori-medium and Kaupapa Māori education delivery and outcomes from a local to national level. National and individual reports provide you valuable insight about what works for Māori, what quality looks like and how improvement influences transformational change.

Corporate Services

The Corporate Services team play a direct role in our ability to support you. Corporate Services is home to our legal, Official Information Act, communications, and other functions that we use to support your office to uphold your legal obligations and public engagement.

The Corporate Services team also ensures our staff have access to the tools and infrastructure needed to achieve ERO's functions and your expectations of us as a government agency. They equally provide "backbone" support for Aroturuki Tamariki/

Through our extensive work programme in the sector we support you by providing Insights and advice on:

- Kura; schools; early learning services; kōhanga reo and puna kōhungahunga that are doing well; and those at risk of underperforming, along with advice on appropriate interventions.
- System performance and key issues based on an in-depth picture gained from our daily work in kura; schools; early learning services; kōhanga reo and puna kōhungahunga, and the international evidence base.
- Raising performance in early learning, school and kura through evaluation tools and shining a light on best practice.
- The performance of system-level education programmes, initiatives and reforms, advice which is grounded in our evidence base.

Forthcoming Briefings and ERO's upcoming Research and Evaluation Work Programme

Attached as Table 1 to this briefing we provide details of recently completed projects which may be useful to your portfolio, and may be the subject of ongoing commentary. Table 2 outlines further briefings which we propose to develop for you and a listing of forthcoming publications from ERO which we will share with you prior to their publication. Table 3 provides an outline of our current research and evaluation work programme through 2023 and into 2024. This has previously been shared with the Minister of Education.

ERO looks forward to supporting you through its roles as an independent reviewer of the quality of provision, a source of real time on-the-ground information, and as a provider of in-depth evaluations of system performance and the effectiveness of initiatives.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss this briefing with you and to provide more detail in regard to those areas where you would like to seek further detail.

ERO can support you to achieve outcomes for Pacific learners

Pacific learners in Aotearoa account for 13 percent (104,984) of all school aged students, although less than a third of these learners can use a language other than English. While Objective 1 of the National Education Learning Priorities (NELPS) commits to a system which will support, design, and deliver education (NELPS) which sustains learners in their identities, languages, and cultures, most Pacific learners are in English medium classrooms where there is often limited opportunity for them to use, learn or access teaching in a Pacific language or learn in a culturally responsive way.

ERO is deliberate in its support of Pacific learners. Our provider and system level staff across the organisation have both Pacific capabilities and experience, allowing us to make sure our insights and evidence to inform your agenda as you make decisions to achieve improved outcomes for Pacific learners. Our Pule Pasifika Director co-ordinates across ERO, ensuring our staff have line of sight on how their work can usefully inform your work programme. We ensure that a deliberate focus is placed on our Pacific learners to help build an effective education system and capabilities that meets their unique needs. We also make sure that our national reporting has dedicated Pacific population analysis, so that insights are captured specifically for these learners.

ERO also has developed a Pacific Strategy to ensure we remain focused and develop the right capability. It recognises the need to shift from a focus on participation towards a more rigorous drive for quality, and for education provision which emphasises culturally located success. It sets out our critical role in supporting improvement of Pacific students' outcomes and ensuring that Pacific learners reach their potential. It aligns with and contributes to the government's Action Plan for Pacific Education. Our current five goals we have that shape how we support you are:

1. Pacific children and young people are lifelong learners and succeeding as culturally located learners.
2. Supporting Pacific learner culture, language, and identity confidence.
3. Early childhood services provide Pacific learners with high quality education.
4. Being a key partner in Pacific-focused educational and social sector evaluations in Aotearoa and the Pacific region.
5. ERO has the capability and capacity to deliver for Pacific learners.

We can provide you further detail on each of these and our Pacific work programme, if you desire it.

Table One: Recent Publications

Project	Publication	Purpose	Accompanying Resources
Education For All Our Children: Embracing Diverse Ethnicities	15 March 2023	This report is ERO’s Long-Term Insights Briefing. It looks at the experiences of learners from ethnic communities and their whānau and explores implications for the future. The report found that, while many learners from ethnic communities succeed in education, they encounter widespread racism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Summary of the main report (translated into 9 languages) → A guide for school leaders and teachers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Draft report for consultation, and draft summary for consultation (translated into 9 languages). NB. The draft report for consultation was released on 22 November 2022. → Summary of submissions on topic decision (published 2 June 2022)
Attendance: Getting Back to School	21 February 2023	This report sets out the drivers of attendance that have the biggest impact on whether learners go to school regularly. These include parents’ attitudes, learners’ attitudes, and how learners experience school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Guide for primary school teachers → Guide for secondary school teachers → Guide for parents and whānau.
Working together: How teacher aides can have the most impact	30 November 2022	This good practice report sets out what good teacher aide practice and support looks like, setting out four key areas of teacher aide practice that make a difference for learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Summary of the main report → Practical guide for teachers → Practical guide for teacher aides → Practical guide for school leaders → Guide for school boards → Guide for parents and whānau

Project	Publication	Purpose	Accompanying Resources
Missing Out: Why Aren't Our Children Going to School?	10 November 2022	This report looks at what is driving the decline in attendance and found that many New Zealand parents and students don't prioritise going to school. It also suggests how attendance can be improved.	→ Summary of the main report
Thriving at school? Education for disabled learners in schools	28 September 2022	This system report looks at how well the education system is supporting disabled learners in schools. We found that we need to improve education for disabled learners so they can thrive. This report describes what we found and what is needed to significantly improve education for these priority learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Summary of the main report → Good practice guide for principals and school leaders → Good practice guide for teachers → Guide for parents and whānau
A Great Start? Education for Disabled Children in Early Childhood	28 September 2022	This system report looks at how well the education system is supporting disabled children in early childhood education. We found that too many disabled children are excluded from ECE and, while many services provide safe and nurturing environments, we need to strengthen teaching practices. This report describes what we found and what is needed to significantly improve education for these priority learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Summary of the main report → Good practice guide for leaders and kaiako → Guide for parents and whānau
Poutama Reo The Improvement Journey – Te reo Māori in English-medium schools	13 September 2022	Poutama Reo is a framework that provides a progressive pathway for English Medium schools to review and improve their provision of te reo Māori language school wide. The development of this framework has evolved out of a body of policy and research work and recognises the important contribution English-medium schools have to make	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Self-Review Tool - Leading → Self-Review Tool – Whānau, Hapū and Iwi → Self-Review Tool - Student Agency → Self-Review Tool - Teaching and Learning

Project	Publication	Purpose	Accompanying Resources
		toward ensuring that Māori language is valued and sustained as a living language in Aotearoa.	
Starting School Together: What Do We Know?	26 May 2022	This report looked at how changing to cohort entry (starting primary school in scheduled groups) impacts on children, their peers, and whānau, as well as their schools and early childhood education services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Summary of the main report → Guide for school leaders → Guide for school boards → Guide for ECE services → Guide for parents

Table Two: Short to Medium Term Decisions, Briefings and National Publications¹

Topic	Type	Due Date	Key ERO Contacts	Contact Details
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
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[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

¹ Note we will provide your office with a copy of a report and any briefing required ahead of publication.

Topic	Type	Due Date	Key ERO Contacts	Contact Details
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
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[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

Table Three: Long Term National Research and Evaluation Work Programme

Project	Purpose	Approximate Publication
[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]
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[Redacted]	[Redacted]	[Redacted]

Project	Purpose	Approximate Publication
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
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