Briefing report

Education Review Office (ERO): Evaluation of provision in Alternative Education: Draft findings and recommendations

Date	1 June 2023
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Date requested	ERO initiated
Date due	ERO initiated
Proactive release	Recommended

Addressee	Action sought	
Min Tinetti, Minister of Education	**a)**	**Note** that ERO will provide you with a near final draft of the report in June.
Min Davis, Assoc. Minister of Education	**b)**	**Indicate** if you would like to meet with officials to discuss this briefing.
	c)	**Note** the attached slides for the upcoming Youth Crime Ministerial Group meeting.
Min Luxton, Assoc. Minister of Education	**d)**	**Note** this briefing is recommended for proactive release after the final report is published.

Attachments:

Appendix A: Slides for Youth Crime Ministerial Group meeting

Comments:

Minister's Office to complete	
Noted	☐
Seen	☐
Approved	☐
Referred to:	
Date signed by Minister:	

EDUCATION REVIEW OFFICE
Te Tari Arotake Mātauranga

Our Ref: M23-25

1 June 2023

Hon Jan Tinetti
Minister of Education

Hon Kelvin Davis
Associate Minister of Education

Hon Jo Luxton
Associate Minister of Education

ERO Evaluation of Education Provision for Young People in Alternative Education: Draft Findings and Recommendations

Purpose

1. This briefing updates you on key findings from ERO's evaluation of the quality of education provision for young people in Alternative Education and sets out the potential recommendations to reform Alternative Education.

Background

2. Alternative Education provides education for over 2000 young people (aged 13-16) who have disengaged from secondary schooling in any one year. There are an estimated 170 providers across the country, offering provision for approximately 1,400 young people at any one time. Seventy percent of young people enrolled in Alternative Education are Māori.

3. Alternative Education is a contracted service model.. The Ministry of Education funds a contract holder, typically a school, who then manage the contracts with one or more providers of Alternative Education. These providers can also sometimes sub-contract some elements of the provision to other specialist providers. The contract holder makes the decision whether to offer a young person a place at one of their providers.

4. ERO has partnered with the Social Wellbeing Agency (SWA) to review the quality of Alternative Education. We are working with an Expert Advisory Group who are supporting this work and with the Ministries of Education, Social Development, Justice, Oranga Tamariki, Whaikaha and Tertiary Education Commission.

5. We have previously briefed you (M23-18) on draft findings. This briefing updates those findings and sets out draft recommendations.

Draft findings overview

6. In 2011, ERO reported that Alternative Education was not adequately supporting young people to succeed. We continue to see the model failing to meet the needs of our most disadvantaged young people.

7. The evaluation has identified ten key findings, which are summarised below.

Finding 1: Young people in Alternative Education are the most highly disengaged from education and have high, and often complex, needs. Many have experienced trauma. Many are in the youth justice system.

Finding 2: Young people in Alternative Education are disproportionately Māori and male though the number of girls has increased recently.

Finding 3: These young people are referred to Alternative Education due to behaviour (over a quarter have been suspended), attendance issues, alienation from school and referrals made by Youth Justice and Oranga Tamariki (one in six have been in care).

Finding 4: These young people's needs have not been identified and met early enough. They also have significant gaps in their learning, which have not been addressed. Waiting for a place at Alternative Education deepens the disengagement. This indicates that our education system is not currently set up with sufficient or the right range of provision to meet the needs of these young people.

Finding 5: While in Alternative Education they attend more, enjoy learning more, feel safer, have a stronger sense of belonging and improved behaviour.

Finding 6: When they move out of Alternative Education only one in four return to school. More than half do not go on to further training or employment. By age 19, almost 70% are receiving a benefit.

Finding 7: Alternative Education does not provide good outcomes. These young people have significantly worse outcomes than other young people, worse even than very similarly disengaged young people with high needs. They are very unlikely to achieve an education qualification (less than one in five achieve NCEA). As adults, they are much more likely to be receiving benefits and involved in the criminal justice system.

Finding 8: The current model of Alternative Education is inadequate to meet the level of need of these often highly disengaged young people, leading to worse outcomes than for other young people:
*   Teaching is weak and teaching resources are inadequate.
*   Facilities are often so run down they act as a barrier to learning.
*   Funding is inadequate (lower than funding for other, less disadvantaged, young people) and has decreased in real terms since 2010.
*   Funding limitations make it unviable for many providers, and provider and staff turnover is high.
*   Providers are often isolated from other providers and schools so they often lack access to broader education resources (e.g. careers advice, specialist subjects, sports) and professional teaching support.
*   Providers cannot always access the broader wrap-around support young people need.
*   Accountability for delivery and outcomes is weak.

Finding 9: When young people (exceptionally) do succeed at Alternative Education it is due to the elements of the model that do work:

- Small class sizes.
- Having the same teacher/tutor throughout the day.
- The flexibility to provide a different education on a site separate from school.
- Having staff with experience, aptitude, and commitment to working with these young people, who act as positive role models.

But these elements need to be combined with a model enabling quality education, wrap-around support and a range of pathways.

Finding 10: Alternative Education is potentially a missed opportunity to change these young people's life trajectories. They are often engaged and attending but the current model of provision is failing to provide them with a quality education and may be contributing to poorer outcomes. The long-term costs for both the young person, their family and broader society are very significant.

8. ERO is concerned that we are seeing a consistent pattern of education provision not meeting the needs of the young people with the greatest risk of disengagement and the highest needs. ERO's previous evaluations of Te Kura (Correspondence School 2021) and education in residential care (2021) also found that there is inadequate education provision to meet the needs of the most disengaged young people.

Draft recommendations

9. ERO and SWA are working with agencies, in particular the Ministry of Education to develop a draft package of recommendations to reform Alternative Education. These recommendations build on the proposed changes to Alternative Education agreed by Cabinet in 2019.

10. There are five draft areas of recommendation:

Area 1: Better identify and meet the needs of these young people before they become disengaged and increase the number who are able to stay and succeed in mainstream schooling.

Area 2: Make sure there are a range of effective options (of different type, intensity and duration) available for those young people who are not thriving in the school setting and that there are clear, consistent and rigorous gateways so that young people are matched to provision that best meets their needs.

Area 3: As part of this set of options, reform the "Alternative Education" model of provision so that it is designed to meet both the education and broader needs of the most disengaged young people who require a alternative to mainstream schooling.

Area 4: Put in place the support needed for successful pathways and transitions from "Alternative Education" into further education, training or employment.

Area 5: Strengthen accountability and monitor how well provision is meeting the needs of young people who are in "Alternative Education".

Action Area 1: Better identify and meet the needs of these young people before they become disengaged and increase the number who are able to stay and succeed in mainstream schooling.

Recommendation 1: The Ministry of Education provide guidance on how to effectively identify young people most at risk of disengagement and support schools to better identify these young people.

Recommendation 2: Having identified young people most at risk of disengagement, the Ministry of Education support schools to act early to enable them to stay and succeed in school, including increasing awareness of:
- The predictive risk factors.
- Models of practice and intervention that support young people's continued engagement in education.
- Where and how flexibility can help with inclusion for young people at risk of disengaging.
- How to access support to address issues, including connecting with other services and programmes that provide more intensive support and links to other tools and resources that may help.

Recommendation 3: ERO and the Ministry of Education identify and share with schools best practice in managing challenging behaviours in the classroom to enable more learners to stay in school.

Action Area 2: Make sure there are a range of effective options (of different type, intensity and duration) available for those young people who are not thriving in the school setting and that there are clear, consistent and rigorous gateways so that young people are matched to provision that best meets their needs.

Recommendation 4: The Ministry of Education examine the range of options available for those young people who are not thriving in the school setting, how well they meet the range of needs and are complementary, and how clear and consistent are the criteria for referral.

Recommendation 5: To support decisions with whānau on which education options are suitable for a young person, the Ministry of Education develop guidance for all schools that includes:
- The range of options for education outside of schooling.
- The types of learners that each of the options are most suitable for.
- How to access each of the options and eligibility requirements.
- What is needed for good transition into the different education settings, including having a plan for information to follow the learners.
- The role of all agencies in each of the options.

Action Area 3: As part of this set of options, reform the "Alternative Education" model of provision so that there is a new model that is designed to meet both the education and broader needs of the most disengaged young people who need an alternative to mainstream schooling.

Recommendation 6: The Ministry of Education develop a clear national model and set of standards for high quality "Alternative Education" provision that includes:

- Funding that is sufficient to meet the depth and complexity of needs of this group.

- A funding model that allows for greater oversight and accountability.
- A national model of teaching practice that is based on the evidence of teaching approaches that work for these young people.
- Providers are required to have qualified, registered teachers.
- Small class sizes and continuity of teacher or tutor.
- Access to the broad range of education expertise and resources across education providers so young people can access education programmes and pathways that match their interests.
- Skilled support workers to provide wrap-around support for the young people and to broker access to specialist support to meet young people's broader needs.
- Kaupapa Māori approaches that enable Māori learners to succeed as Māori.

Recommendation 7: The Ministry of Education to ensure all current and future "Alternative Education" provision has suitable premises and facilities – in line with the expectations for other learning environments.

Recommendation 8: The Ministry of Education supports teachers in Alternative Education with, a lead of professional practice, curriculum resources tailored for learners in Alternative Education and facilitated professional networks.

Recommendation 9: The Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Oranga Tamariki, Te Puni Kōkiri and Ministry of Social Development to work together to ensure young people in "Alternative Education" are a priority for the specialist support they need.

Action Area 4: Put in place the support needed for successful pathways and transitions from "Alternative Education" into further education, training or employment.

Recommendation 10: The Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education Commission, Ministry of Social Development and Oranga Tamariki review the transition and ongoing support for learners in "Alternative Education" to ensure learners have a planned and supported pathway, with sufficient pastoral and learning support, to make a successful transition into further learning or work.

Action Area 5: Strengthen accountability and monitor how well provision is meeting the needs of young people who are in "Alternative Education".

Recommendation 11: The Ministry of Education actively monitor the quality of provision in Alternative Education.

Recommendation 12: The Ministry of Education report annually on the education experiences and outcomes for learners in Alternative Education, including:
- Number of learners referred to Alternative Education.
- Wait times for entry to Alternative Education.
- Number of learners who receive a place and go on to attend Alternative Education.
- Attendance of learners in Alternative Education.
- Achievement of learners in Alternative Education.

Recommendation 13: The Ministry of Education ensure Alternative Education providers and managing schools collect and report reliable data on learners' enrolment, education outcomes and destinations.

Recommendation 14: The Ministry of Education reports back to the Minister of Education, and Ministers with responsibility for Oranga Tamariki and Youth Justice, on progress made in response to these recommendations by June 2024.

Next Steps

11. ERO is working with key agencies to develop the recommendations and complete the report. As part of this, you may wish to discuss this at the Youth Crime Ministerial Group. We attach slides (Appendix A) to support this.

12. You may also wish to meet with Ministry of Education and ERO officials to discuss the recommendations in more detail.

13. We will provide you with a near final draft of the report, including final recommendations, in mid-June and publish the report at the end of June.

Recommendations

14.   It is recommended that you:

a)   **Note** that ERO will provide you with a near final draft of the report in June.   **Noted**

b)   **Indicate** if you would like to meet with officials to discuss this briefing.   **Yes/No**

c)   **Note** the attached slides for the upcoming Youth Crime Ministerial Group meeting.   **Noted**

d)   **Note** this briefing is recommended for proactive release after the final report is published.   **Noted**

Nicholas Pole
Chief Executive

NOTED/APPROVED

Jan Tinetti
Minister of Education
_16_ / _07_ / _2023_

Kelvin Davis
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____ / ____ / ____

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_7_ / _7_ / _23_