

## **Accountability in the New Zealand schooling system**

### **Purpose**

1. To support the Taskforce's thinking, this initial paper provides a broad and high-level overview of accountability in the schooling system, including:
  - the role and purpose of accountability in school systems and evidence on effective accountability in school systems
  - core accountability settings introduced through the Tomorrow's Schools reforms
  - the current accountability features of the New Zealand school system.

### **The role and purpose of accountability in schooling systems and evidence on effective accountability**

2. Accountability can be defined as the obligation of an organisation or an individual to account for activities and/or outputs or outcomes to stakeholders, providing transparency. In the public sector this often includes accounting for the agreed use of public funds.
3. Traditionally the purpose of accountability in education is to provide legitimation, through evidencing compliance with laws and regulations. However in the last three decades the focus has shifted and regulatory accountability mechanisms have been supplemented by school performance accountability. This has resulted in accountability in schooling commonly being used to account for, and improve, the quality of services provided, in addition to its ongoing legitimation purpose.<sup>1</sup> This shift has corresponded with a de-centralisation of decision making in many schooling systems and this movement to performance accountability has been an important step in ensuring quality control and effective guidance and direction of systems.<sup>2</sup> This involves accountability mechanisms being used to provide support or intervention when the quality of services is identified as being below a particular standard.
4. In recognition of the limitations of school performance accountability (particularly recognising that not all outcomes are easily quantifiable), in some Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries there has also been a move to expand accountability to a multi-dimensional approach.<sup>3</sup> This sees performance measures supplemented with assessment and feedback from other sources (such as students, parents, communities and other stakeholders). This results in accountability that is more process-oriented (rather than product-oriented), with school performance considered and evaluated from multiple angles. A frequent tension is that the various stakeholders can often have different, conflicting interests, perspectives and requirements. This can result in the prioritisation of compliance focused accountability mechanisms.<sup>4</sup>
5. The scope and nature of accountability mechanisms vary between and within systems depending on what it is that is being held to account and why accountability is in place. For example the method for holding actors in the system to account for compliance with financial processes will differ from how they are held to account for outcomes achieved by learners.

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<sup>1</sup> Burns, T. & Köster, F. (eds). (2016). *Governing Education in a Complex World*, Educational Research and Innovation, OECD Publishing Press, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Burns, T. & Köster, F. (eds). (2016). *Governing Education in a Complex World*.

<sup>3</sup> Burns, T. & Köster, F. (eds). (2016). *Governing Education in a Complex World*.

<sup>4</sup> Burns, T. & Köster, F. (eds). (2016). *Governing Education in a Complex World*.

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6. The rationale behind accountability mechanisms influences their nature. Currently schools are held to account for the appropriate use of finances as schools boards of trustees are crown entities and the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) is fulfilling the crown's ownership role. In contrast, schools are held to account for the outcomes their learners achieve to provide educational accountability in line with the objectives of education; here accountability is also being used as a central vehicle for improvement.
7. The Treaty of Waitangi plays a fundamental role in the New Zealand accountability system. It provides a context for the relationship between the Crown, iwi and Māori. As such, it provides context for the relationship between national education agencies and crown entities (including boards of trustees) and iwi and Māori. Ensuring Māori students enjoy and achieve education success as Māori is a joint responsibility of the Crown (represented by the Ministry and other education agencies) and iwi, hapū and whānau and therefore underpins all accountability mechanisms in the schooling system.
8. The concept of accountability described above is based on relatively traditional, European, public management grounded notions of accountability and may not appropriately reflect Māori and Pacific values. It may be useful to further interrogate whether the accountability system accurately represents and reflects Māori and Pacific values and priorities, including whether the school system is accountable to the identity, language and culture of every child. Values could be drawn on to further explore this issue, such as whakapapa, tikanga, whanaungatanga and rangatiratanga. Existing tools such as Te Whare Tapa Whā or Te Wheke (created for use in healthcare) could also be considered. Kaupapa.org provides tools for iwi and Māori organisations to use to consider accountability. Suggestions include giving effect to narratives associated with tūpana and whakatauki, explicitly recognising the inherent rangatiratanga of ngā hapū, or expressively describing the organisation as a servant of the tribal interest.<sup>5</sup>

### **Accountability in complex adaptive systems**

9. Schooling systems are complex; there are a range of outcomes, many of which are hard to quantify and can be viewed and prioritised subjectively. The system is accountable to multiple stakeholders, many of whom may have conflicting perspectives. The de-centralisation of decision making also adds complexity.
10. It is useful to understand education systems using the framework of complex adaptive systems. In complex adaptive systems there are a number of different organisations and individuals that have different functions, roles, accountabilities and information flows. These systems:
  - are dynamic and often respond in unpredictable ways, meaning cause and effect cannot be relied on and scaling up can be difficult
  - have multiple parties and actors involved, with no 'one' party or person in charge and no 'one' single point of control
  - often evolve through emergent behaviours rather than design
  - often have multiple goals and objectives, presenting challenges for measurement

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<sup>5</sup> 'Accountability and Participatory Processes.' *Kaupapa: Practical tools for Iwi and Māori organisations*. Retrieved from <http://kaupapa.org/organisation/accountability/>. Accessed on May 30 2018.

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- are not usually well suited to solely hierarchal, top-down accountability mechanisms.<sup>6</sup>
11. The interaction of the multiple parties, levers and accountabilities in a complex adaptive system determines its ability to deliver its aims.

### Accountability in high-performing schooling systems

12. Most countries are seeking a strong accountability system that increases educational achievement and excellence whilst allowing for creativity and innovation.<sup>7</sup> OECD countries largely use accountability as a tool for improvement whilst aiming to allow room to innovate.<sup>8</sup>
13. OECD evidence shows that in high-performing systems (as defined by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results) education settings often have high levels of autonomy over education resources, management, curriculum and assessment. However there is also research to suggest that high levels of autonomy alone are not sufficient to ensure outcomes for students and this autonomy must be paired with parallel policies including strong accountability to be effective.<sup>9</sup> PISA data from 2009 and 2012 shows that where a country has a strong accountability system, schools with greater autonomy over curriculum and assessment perform better than those with less autonomy. In contrast, in systems with low accountability the performance of schools with greater autonomy was weaker than those with less autonomy.<sup>10</sup>
14. High-performing education systems have coherence: they have integrated accountability mechanisms set up in a way which ensure that the levers, incentives and relationships between the various levels and functions of the system are interlinked and all focused on achieving system goals.<sup>11</sup> This avoids duplication and ensures all mechanisms are driving a consistent improvement framework, which is therefore more likely to be effective.
15. Evidence suggests that effective accountability systems share other key characteristics. They:
- **Set and communicate clear expectations at each level of the system.** Actors at all level of the system need to understand what it is they will be held to account for and how they will be held to account. To achieve this the system should not be overly complex and there should be a shared understanding of what expected performance or outcomes look like. High performing systems may use accountability mechanisms to define optimal performance. At a national level there should be clear and transparent goals for the system.

Whilst it is important to set clear expectations, Fullan suggests that an overreliance on quantitative targets is not conducive to sustaining long-term improvement.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Scott, G. (2016). 'A systems perspective on accountabilities in the school system.'

<sup>7</sup> Burns, T. & Köster, F. (eds). (2016). *Governing Education in a Complex World*.

<sup>8</sup> Burns, T. & Köster, F. (eds). (2016). *Governing Education in a Complex World*.

<sup>9</sup> Suggett, D. (2015). 'School autonomy: Necessary but not sufficient.' *Evidence Base*, 2015(1): 1-33. Accessed on April 30 2018.

<sup>10</sup> Suggett, D. (2015). 'School autonomy: Necessary but not sufficient.'

<sup>11</sup> Fullan, M. & Quinn, J. (2015). *Coherence: The Right Drivers for Action for Schools, Districts and Systems*.

<sup>12</sup> Fullan, M. (2012). 'Transforming schools an entire system at a time.' Retrieved from

<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-sector/our-insights/transforming-schools-an-entire-system-at-a-time>.

Accessed on May 9 2018.

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- **Accurately measure the activities, outputs or outcomes for which actors are being held to account.** This may range from focus on activities and processes to outputs and outcomes. Despite the range of things measured, high performing systems have a clear data management approach. McKinsey research into the world's best performing school systems found that the high performing systems tend to measure the quality of teaching and learning in two ways: examinations to test what students know, understand and can do, providing an objective measure of outcomes at a high level of detail, and school review which measures both outcomes and the processes that drive them.<sup>13</sup> Monitoring performance can also identify best practice, enabling it to be shared.

In measuring activities, outputs or outcomes there is a balance to be struck between securing high quality information and ensuring any negative implications of monitoring (such as additional workload burdens or pressure) are minimised. In some high-performing systems this is achieved by monitoring poor-performing schools more regularly than high-performing schools. Evidence suggests there is a risk that too great a focus on monitoring can encourage a culture of performativity and compliance.

McKinsey research suggests that some of the highest performing systems locate the processes for monitoring within schools themselves.<sup>14</sup> However many high performing systems separate responsibility for monitoring outcomes from responsibility for improving performance at an agency level.<sup>15</sup>

- **Are transparent.** Accountability systems should provide timely, accessible and appropriate information to stakeholders on the activities and outcomes the system is being held to account for.<sup>16</sup> This should build a shared understanding of optimal outcomes and use of resources. There is often debate about the level of information that should be made available and to whom, recognising the challenges in securing accurate data and the consequences that can arise from the publication of data. Whilst transparency is a common feature of all high performing school systems, there are differences in the granularity of information published, with some systems publishing data at system level only, while others publish at school level.<sup>17</sup>
- **Have a positive focus.** Fullan argues that school systems are most effective when they focus relentlessly on positive core improvement goals.<sup>18</sup> Research by McKinsey also suggests that framing accountability in a negative way (for example by creating a blame culture) can have negative consequences in the mid to long term.<sup>19</sup>
- **Invest in building the capacity of actors in the system to fulfil their responsibilities.**<sup>20</sup> In many cases this is done by agencies **intervening and supporting when required**, for example when underperformance or non-

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<sup>13</sup> Barber, M., & Mourshed, M. (2007) 'How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top.' Retrieved from [https://www.mckinsey.com/mwg-internal/de5fs23hu73ds/progress?id=fg7EGgJmIPBy2AAxeHntLNilbnw0N9S72ACf\\_r2M85Q.&d](https://www.mckinsey.com/mwg-internal/de5fs23hu73ds/progress?id=fg7EGgJmIPBy2AAxeHntLNilbnw0N9S72ACf_r2M85Q.&d) Accessed May 11 2018.

<sup>14</sup> Barber, M., & Mourshed, M. (2007) 'How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top.'

<sup>15</sup> Barber, M., & Mourshed, M. (2007) 'How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top.'

<sup>16</sup> Mourshed, M., Chijioke, C. & Barber, M. (2010). 'How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better.' Retrieved from <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/social-sector/our-insights/how-the-worlds-most-improved-school-systems-keep-getting-better>. Accessed May 11 2018.

<sup>17</sup> Mourshed, M., Chijioke, C. & Barber, M. (2010). 'How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better.'

<sup>18</sup> Fullan, M. (2012). 'Transforming schools an entire system at a time.'

<sup>19</sup> Fullan, M. (2012) 'Transforming schools an entire system at a time.'

<sup>20</sup> Mourshed, M., Chijioke, C. & Barber, M. (2010). 'How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better.'

compliance is identified. Often the triggers for interventions are data-driven. Depending on the nature of interventions they may or may not require statutory powers.

The role of support and intervention is central to the function of performance accountability as a vehicle for improvement. Interventions can incentivise actors to fulfil their responsibilities but primarily work to take corrective action when necessary, for example by providing support or resources to build capability. In high-performing systems intervention is proportionate, constructive, relevant to the need identified and based on evidence about what works, recognizing the role of local context.

16. The Center on International Education Benchmarking summarises the accountability systems of the top performing education systems (identified using 2015 PISA results).<sup>21</sup>

### Types of accountability

17. Much of the literature on accountability distinguishes between two types of accountability: vertical/external and horizontal/internal.
18. Traditionally the main accountability mechanisms built into schooling and other public sector systems have been **vertical or external accountabilities**. These involve levels of the system being monitored and held to account by levels above them (such as the Ministry of Education) or by external bodies (such as the Education Review Office). Vertical accountabilities can include legislative or statutory instruments and are generally top-down and hierarchal. They can incentivise compliance with laws and regulations.<sup>22</sup>
19. In vertical accountability systems it is important that there is two-way sharing of information between the different levels of the system, enabling stakeholders to have some influence on decision making. To achieve this there must be clear channels for information exchange and a willingness for decision-makers to act based on this knowledge. **Reciprocal accountability** can support the building of consensus on a set of shared objectives and values for the system.
20. There is increasing emphasis in literature on the importance of building internal accountabilities as a means of improving system performance.<sup>23</sup> **Internal or horizontal accountability** involves stakeholders with non-hierarchical relationships holding each other to account. This can take place within one institution or across a level of the system (for example across a network of schools or a Kāhui Ako) and can empower actors to take collective responsibility for improvement. Horizontal accountabilities often involve multiple stakeholders, for example students, parents and communities.<sup>24</sup>
21. An embedded collaborative culture with high-trust relationships is important for horizontal accountability to be effective. In turn horizontal accountability supports collaboration and may enhance professionalism. There can be challenges in building effective horizontal accountabilities. Professional capabilities are required, such as data literacy and evaluative capabilities. There is also a risk that relationships are prioritized over improvement.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> 'Top Performing Countries'. *Center on International Education Benchmarking*. <http://ncee.org/what-we-do/center-on-international-education-benchmarking/top-performing-countries/>. Accessed on May 31 2018.

<sup>22</sup> Burns, T., & Köster, F. (eds). (2016). *Governing Education in a Complex World*.

<sup>23</sup> Timperley, H. & Mayo, S. (2016). 'Think Piece on Education Accountability.' The University of Auckland.

<sup>24</sup> Burns, T., & Köster, F. (eds). (2016). *Governing Education in a Complex World*.

<sup>25</sup> Farrar, M. (2015) *Learning together: The power of cluster-based school improvement*. Melbourne, CSE.

22. McKinsey research into the world's most improved school systems found that horizontal accountabilities are often present. It found that 'good' systems decentralise pedagogical rights to the middle layer in the system or to schools, but utilise internal accountabilities and collaboration (by making teachers responsible to each other as professionals for their own performance and that of colleagues) to mitigate the risk of these freedoms resulting in wide variations in learning.
23. Some academics suggest that internal accountabilities should precede external. For example, Fullan argues that internal accountabilities are the necessary first step in enabling and delivering the types of outcomes required from external accountabilities.<sup>26</sup> He argues that a system relying primarily on external control cannot be sustained and instead accountability must be built into the system on the part of implementers to empower improvement.<sup>27</sup> In a system where internal accountabilities are the primary driver of improvement, external and vertical accountabilities can provide quality assurance by intersecting at key points. They can also foster the conditions whereby internal accountabilities can develop.

### **Risks associated with accountability**

24. A challenge for strong accountability systems in driving improvement is the need to "keep a clear focus on achievement and excellence, while being nuanced enough to allow for innovation, creativity and a rounded-learning experience".<sup>28</sup> There is a risk that accountability can discourage innovation and creativity by placing too great a focus on compliance with certain processes, or by creating a climate of fear where it is easy for poor quality information about expected behaviours to perpetuate.
25. Accountability can create pressure to narrow curricula if it emphasises certain subjects above others.<sup>29</sup> Relying too heavily on standardised performance accountability can discourage focus on educational outcomes that are not easily quantifiable, such as well-being, personal development and non-cognitive skills.
26. Accountability systems must aim to maintain appropriate levels of professional autonomy whilst also driving the right behaviours consistently. If the right balance is not achieved a system can become prescriptive which can disempower actors from taking responsibility for the role they have to play in improvement.
27. These risks are often more acute when the stakes associated with accountability are higher. As a result, the weakest performing schools are often more susceptible.<sup>30</sup> Schools with lower social capital, who can't draw on the same level of support from their community, may also be more susceptible to these risks.

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<sup>26</sup> Fullan, M. & Quinn, J. (2015) *Coherence: The Right Drivers for Action for Schools, Districts and Systems*.

<sup>27</sup> Fullan, M. (2012). 'Transforming schools an entire system at a time.'

<sup>28</sup> Burns, T., & Köster, F. (eds). (2016). *Governing Education in a Complex World*.

<sup>29</sup> Burns, T., & Köster, F. (eds). (2016). *Governing Education in a Complex World*.

<sup>30</sup> Burns, T., & Köster, F. (eds). (2016). *Governing Education in a Complex World*.

## Accountability in the New Zealand schooling system

### Core accountability settings introduced by Tomorrow's Schools

28. In 1988 Administering for Excellence (the Picot Report) identified five core challenges in the education system:
- over-centralisation of decision-making
  - complexity in administration and a lack of co-ordination between parts of the system
  - a lack of information and choice
  - a lack of effective management practices; and
  - the feeling of powerlessness among parents, communities and practitioners.
29. The Picot Report identified that the lack of effective management practices meant that system objectives and priorities were undefined and unclear. In addition, there were no clear accountabilities for the use of resources. The report said:
30. "Those who use public funds must be accountable for what is achieved with those funds. To be accountable, individuals and organisations must know what they are to achieve and must have control over resources needed to do this – otherwise, accountability cannot exist. As well, those who are accountable must know who they are accountable to: the lines of accountability must be clear."
31. The Tomorrow's Schools education reforms undertaken in response to the Picot Report brought greater autonomy at the school and community level. The core accountability mechanisms subsequently established by the reforms were through:
- **elected boards of trustees**, comprising of parents and/or members of the local community and the school Principal, who were required to report regularly to their community and the Ministry of Education on the achievement of objectives of the school charter. It was intended that this would ensure schools were responding to the needs and priorities of their local communities; this was one way in which the reforms attempted to respond to the identification that Māori and Pacific learners were not adequately served by the education system.
  - **the Review and Audit Agency** (now the Education Review Office) was set up as an independent body to ensure that educational institutions were accountable for their use of government funds and for meeting the objectives set out in their charters.
  - **the Ministry of Education** was created to oversee the implementation of national policies approved by the Minister, to establish national guidelines for education, set the national curriculum framework and approve school charters.
32. Community Education Forums were established to be a further route through which communities could express their views. The Parent Advocacy Council was intended to be a forum for parents to raise and address issues. Both mechanisms have since been disestablished.

### An overview of the current accountability system

33. The Tomorrow's Schools reforms intended for the Ministry, ERO and other government education agencies to hold schools to account for the use of public finances and compliance with regulations. It was intended that schools would be held to account for learner outcomes primarily by their local communities. Picot

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found that communities felt unable to influence the education system and frustrated by unresponsive and inflexible education institutions, and the reforms therefore prioritised the voice of communities. Schools were to develop charters which would include the priorities of parents, whānau and the local community. Schools would be required to regularly report to parents on the achievement of these goals. Parents and whānau could elect representatives to, and be elected to, the board of trustees. If they were unhappy with school performance they would have ability to move their child to another school. It was assumed that a declining roll would prompt a school to improve and that the poorest performing schools, should they not improve, would eventually exit the market.

34. Over the last 20 years the Ministry and ERO have changed their approaches, investments and added on supports in aid of school support, school improvement and teacher development. For example, ERO has shifted from being focused on audit and compliance to placing a greater focus on self-review and school improvement. In part, these changes are in recognition that the original intention that community action would raise quality has not taken effect in all cases.
35. The National Education Guidelines were issued in 1993 and introduced national educational goals and national administration guidelines. Further changes to planning and reporting were made in the early 2000s. The Education Amendment Act 2000 aimed to strengthen the arrangements for governance of schools. The National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) was introduced in 2003.
36. In 2017 the Education Act, which sets the framework for the schooling system, was updated with implications for the accountability system:
  - The Act now enables the Government to set a statement of National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP). The Minister of Education can also set a small number of national performance measures that schools will report on in their annual reports.
  - The planning and reporting framework is being updated. From 1 January 2020 school boards of trustees must develop a strategic plan in consultation with the school community every four years which will replace school charters. The plan must reflect the NELP (if one is promulgated) and must plan for different groups of learners, including those not progressing as expected or at risk of underachievement. The plan must be submitted to the Secretary of Education for approval, where it will be assessed for quality and compliance with regulations. Boards must also develop an annual implementation plan setting out how they will achieve the strategic plan goals. Boards will be continue to be required to submit an annual report to the Ministry on progress against strategic goals, including reporting on national performance measures set by the Minister for Education.
  - The update further clarifies boards of trustees' roles and responsibilities, particularly by further focusing the board's work on raising student achievement, with an explicit obligation to act consistently with the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.
  - The update also introduced a graduated range of interventions so that schools receive more responsive and tailored support when they need it. These comprise of a mandatory case conference between the board, external parties and the Ministry, an audit of certain aspects of the school's affairs, a requirement for the board to carry out a specific action, and a Ministerial appointed trustee to the board.








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37. The update to the Act introduced a set of enduring objectives for the education system:

- helping each child and young person attain educational achievement to the best of their potential
- promoting the development of:
  - resilience, determination, confidence and creative and critical thinking
  - good social skills and the ability to form good relationships
  - participation in community life and fulfilment of civic and social responsibilities
  - preparedness for work
- instilling an appreciation of the importance of:
  - the inclusion within society of different groups and persons with different personal characteristics
  - the diversity of society
  - cultural knowledge, identity and the different official languages
  - the Treaty of Waitangi and te reo Māori.

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### A summary of the accountability functions in the New Zealand education system

Direction of accountability	Type of accountability
Government  Ministry of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Ministry of Education provides advice and reports directly to the Minister of Education.</li> <li>• The Minister of Education is held to account by Parliament and Select Committees.</li> <li>• The Ministry publishes an annual report, outlining activities and progress against priorities.</li> </ul>
Government agencies  Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools submit charters to the Ministry, the Ministry reviews them to confirm compliance with the Education Act. From 2020, charters will be replaced by a strategic plan which will have to reflect the statement of National Education and Learning Priorities set by the Minister (if one is promulgated).</li> <li>• Schools must provide Annual Reports and selected information/data to the Ministry. This includes audited financial statements and an evaluation of progress in achieving the aims and targets set out in the school charter. There will be further changes to the reporting process as the new framework is developed in consultation with the sector over the course of 2018.</li> <li>• The Education Council sets registration and certification standards and processes, the Code of Conduct and disciplinary processes.</li> <li>• ERO undertake external review of schools.</li> </ul>
Within a school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School evaluation integrates internal self-review and ERO's external evaluation.</li> <li>• Board of trustees review school progress against strategic goals set out in the charter.</li> <li>• Boards of trustees are the employer of teachers and school leaders and are therefore responsible for holding employees to account for their performance.</li> </ul>
Schools  Parents, whānau and communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents elect the school board of trustees, which is responsible for school governance. Parents can be elected to the board of trustees.</li> <li>• The school charter should include parents, whānau and community priorities.</li> <li>• Parents can access information about their child's achievement and the school's ERO review, charter and the annual report. There will be further changes to the reporting process as the new framework is developed in consultation with the sector over the course of 2018.</li> </ul>
Between Education Professionals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kāhui Ako exist as a way to enable continued improvements in teaching and school effectiveness through collaboration between teachers and leaders across schools and other education providers.</li> <li>• The Education Council has developed, with the teaching profession, a Code of Professional Responsibility and the Standards for the Teaching Profession.</li> </ul>

38. Annex One provides a more detailed diagram setting out how the accountability functions and agencies operating in this space interact in the current accountability system.

### **Views on the coherence and coverage of the current accountability system**

39. The OECD's review of evaluation and assessment in New Zealand (2011) found that the principles of evaluation and assessment are well articulated across the system. However it also found that there is a lack of clarity about how evaluation

and assessment at student, teacher, school and system level are intended to link together and how they relate to a consistent improvement framework.<sup>31</sup> This Review also highlighted a lack of coherence between the education agencies with evaluative roles: the Ministry, NZQA, the former Teachers' Council (the Education Council was established in 2015 following a review) and ERO. It found that there is considerable overlap between these agencies but no consistent improvement framework linking the work together or providing clarity on roles and responsibilities, with limited information sharing between these agencies. Currently schools report to multiple agencies, duplicating reporting in some cases. This may incentivise a culture of compliance and reporting rather than genuine evaluation and inquiry for improvement.

40. This resonates with the findings of Timperley and Mayo who note that one of the core challenges for developing system coherence in the New Zealand education system is that there is not a clear theory for improvement running throughout the education systems accountability structures or processes, nor is there a single agency responsible for creating such a framework across the schooling system.<sup>32</sup>

### **Further information about the current accountability system**

41. This section sets out how actors in the schooling system are currently held to account for the following activities and outcomes:

- learner outcomes
- teaching and leadership quality
- appropriate use of finances
- overall system performance

42. It also outlines how support and intervention is provided when underperformance is identified.

### **Accountability for learner outcomes**

43. In the current accountability system, and in most school systems internationally, learner outcomes focusing on educational achievement and progress are central.
44. The objectives of the school system are primarily educational achievement, the development of certain competencies and an appreciation of inclusion, diversity, cultural knowledge and the Treaty of Waitangi (as prescribed in S1AA(3) Education Act 1989). The New Zealand curricula provide the frameworks for all teaching and learning and details a vision of what young people should achieve from education which broadly aligns with the objectives for the system. These can all be considered learner outcomes. Some are easier to quantify than others.
45. The role of boards of trustees includes focusing on ensuring every student at the school is able to attain his or her highest possible standards of educational achievement (S6(5) Education Act 1989). School strategic goals, which must be included in school charters may also focus on other outcomes and must include the priorities identified by parents, whānau and the local community.
46. Our accountability system places a focus on measuring learner outcomes against the curricula through formative assessment, based on overall teacher judgement

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<sup>31</sup> Nusche, D., Laveault, D., MacBeath, J. & Santiago, P. (2011). 'OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: New Zealand.'

<sup>32</sup> Timperley, H. & Mayo, S. (2016). 'Think Piece on Education Accountability.'

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through schooling (years 1 – 13) and the NCEA during secondary schooling. The National Administration Guidelines set out the schools must, through the analysis of good quality assessment information, evaluate the progress and achievement of students. They note that good quality assessment information draws on a range of evidence to evaluate the progress and achievement of students and build a comprehensive picture of student learning across the curriculum.

### **Boards of trustee role in holding schools to account for learner outcomes**

47. Governance and accountability are closely interlinked. Specifically boards of trustees play a role in holding their school to account for learner outcomes. Under the National Administration Guideline 1 it is an explicit responsibility of principals and boards of trustees to develop and implement teaching and learning strategies to address the needs of students who are not progressing or achieving or are at risk of not progressing or achieving.
48. Information about learner achievement and progress is used by boards to assess progress against strategic school goals (as set out in the charter) and is reported in the school annual report. This report is shared with external bodies (ERO and the Ministry) and must also be made available to parents, whānau and communities.
49. This process incorporates self-review or evaluation which is an internal accountability for learner outcomes. There are wider internal accountabilities related to learner outcomes in other parts of the system, including Kāhui Ako | Communities of Learning collaborating on achievement goals, teachers reflecting on their own practice, and principals using information about learner outcomes to review teaching and leadership strategies for the school.
50. The board of trustees, as the employer of all school staff, also plays a role in vertical accountability within schools (through the appraisal process) and may use information about learner outcomes to do this.

### **Parent, whānau and community role in holding schools to account for learner outcomes**

51. Evidence shows that greater engagement with parents, whānau and the wider community is a critical factor for the success of Māori and Pacific students in particular.<sup>33</sup> Multiple and horizontal accountabilities that include parents, whānau and communities can support and strengthen this engagement. Parents and whānau play a role in holding schools to account for learner outcomes.
52. The Minister sets an expectation through the National Administration Guidelines that parents and whānau should receive trustworthy, meaningful and accessible information about their child's progress and achievement. In addition, parents and whānau should have access to a school's annual report, enabling them to understand the school's progress towards its goals relating to learner outcomes. It is intended that this information can enable parents and whānau to advocate for their child, to support their learning outside of the school context, and also to hold schools to account for the progress their child is making.

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<sup>33</sup> 'Ka Hikitia – Accelerating Success 2013 – 2017.' *Ministry of Education*. Retrieved from <https://www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/overall-strategies-and-policies/the-maori-education-strategy-ka-hikitia-accelerating-success-2013-2017/>.

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53. Parents and whānau can elect representatives to, and be elected to, boards of trustees, providing them with a further accountability mechanism relating to school performance.
54. It is intended that school charters include the priorities of parents, whānau and the community. Boards must report to communities, through the annual report, on progress in achieving the objectives of the charter. Some accountability mechanisms also consider whether schooling is responding to community values and priorities, for example culturally responsive pedagogy is explicitly referenced in the ERO evaluation framework.
55. As stated earlier, Tomorrow's Schools considered that student mobility could function as an accountability mechanism. It was intended that declining rolls would prompt a school to take action to improve and if a school was unable to improve it would eventually exit the market. In practice this intention has not materialised. There is evidence to suggest that declining rolls, and the reduced funding this entails, can have a negative impact on school performance.<sup>34</sup> Schools have infrequently exited the market on the basis of poor performance and Government has not regularly intervened to close schools.
56. Furthermore, parent and whānau ability to move their child to a different school in response to concerns about performance is limited by a number of factors, including zoning (introduced as part of the Education Amendment Act 2000), reasonable travel distance from home and financial barriers (such as costs relating to uniforms, donations or attendance dues). Parents and whānau need to be engaged and informed to make such a decision on the basis of school performance. Parent choice is often guided by limited or incomplete information and decile rating is often used by parents and schools, however it is not intended to be a proxy for quality.
57. Choice and competition as an accountability mechanism can mean that schools place a greater emphasis on facilities and other achievements rather than learner outcomes. Anecdotally it has been suggested that this focus on easily visible interpretations of school performance can disincentivise schools from supporting pupils with some learning support needs, including students with behavioural issues or students who are at risk of underachieving. It can also dis-incentivise collaboration between schools.

### **Accountability to learners**

58. In holding schools to account, parents, whānau and communities are advocating on behalf of their children. There is an increasing emphasis on directly hearing the learner voice in the accountability system. State and state integrated schools with students above year 9 must hold an annual student trustee election so that there is a student representative on the board. Accountabilities to learners and their whānau feature strongly in the Code of Professional Responsibility and the Standards for the Teaching Profession which set the expectations for behavior and teaching practice for all teachers in New Zealand.
59. There are examples of good practice in hearing the voice of children and young people in individual classrooms, schools, Kāhui Ako, and education agencies. For example, in a recent report by the Office of the Children's Commissioner, 'Education matters to me', children and young people identified common experiences of the education system and ways it can work better for them.

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<sup>34</sup> Lauder, H., Jamieson, I., & Wikeley, F., 'Models of Effective Schools: Limits and Capabilities' in Slee, R., Tomlinson, S., & Weinger, G. (eds). (1998). *School Effectiveness for Whom?*

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However this practice is not systemic and the learner voice is not heard directly throughout all accountability functions.

### **Publicly available information on learner outcomes**

60. Publicly available information about school-level learner outcomes can support transparency, which is a key function of accountability. To do this in a constructive way information must be accurate, fit-for-purpose and accessible to all stakeholders (both in terms of its availability and it being appropriate for stakeholders to digest). The following information is currently publicly available at individual school level:

- ERO reports are published after all reviews and consider both accountability and effectiveness in ensuring learner outcomes.
- At primary and intermediate, school level data is published on student stand-downs, suspensions and exclusions. Following the removal of National Standards, data is not currently published about educational achievement at school level by the government in a nationally-consistent way. However information about progress and achievement against charter targets is included in annual reports published by schools.
- At secondary school, NCEA outcomes are published online at school level alongside comparative regional, state, decile and national data. School-level data about stand-downs, suspensions and exclusions is also published. Student retention data is published, as is data about student progression to tertiary education. Information about progress and achievement against charter targets is included in annual reports published by schools.

61. The stakes attached to published data can be higher by nature of it being publicly available. It may be used by some people to compare performance between schools, however such comparisons can be unfair or inaccurate. For example the variability in the ways in which NCEA can be achieved mean that it is not necessarily a useful comparison of learner outcomes between schools.

62. NCEA is a qualification, and is therefore is intended to measure student achievement. Use for accountability purposes is not the intended function of NCEA data. NCEA data alone does not provide a narrative about the progress made by students since it does not take into account the variation in students' starting points and other factors influencing performance.

63. Some school systems internationally have placed a greater focus on measuring progress (rather than achievement) to assess school performance in recent years.

### **The Education Review Office role in holding schools to account for learner outcomes**

64. The role of ERO is to evaluate and report publically on the quality of education and care provided by individual schools and early childhood education services (services). ERO plays an important role in holding schools to account for learner outcomes through external review. ERO's independence from the Ministry, schools and services is regarded as a strength.

65. Learner outcomes are the primary focus of ERO reviews, but ERO also considers practices and processes that contribute to school effectiveness and improvement (assessed using evaluation indicators). ERO reviewers work to understand how effective schools are in terms of the outcomes they are achieving, how they are ensuring equity in learner outcomes, how well learners are accelerated according

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to their needs, whether school achievement is improving over time and whether schools are likely to sustain ongoing improvement. The ERO evaluation indicators are also intended to be used by schools for self-review and ERO looks at how a schools' planning, implementation and internal evaluation helps improve teaching practice. ERO also considers school governance.

66. Core to ERO's focus on learner outcomes are school efforts to ensure equitable outcomes for Māori, Pacific and other under-served learners. In recent years ERO has placed greater focus on how schools are serving learners who aren't achieving intended outcomes. ERO has a strategy on accelerating outcomes for Māori, as well as a Pacific Strategy and reports on how responsive schools are to the educational needs of Māori and Pacific learners.
67. ERO has been moving into an improvement role to support school and service self-review in a collaborative approach to evaluation. This contrasts to a previous accountability focus on compliance, where reports were largely descriptive. This shift has the potential for greater connectedness between the role that boards and ERO play in accountability by enabling these different forms of evaluation to intersect and support each other. In 2013 ERO moved to a differentiated review cycle, whereby the outcome of a school's review influences the timing of their next review.
68. ERO reports are published, with the intention that this information can be used by parents and whānau in informing choices about their child's schooling. However reports may be difficult for parents to interpret and to find the information they seek.<sup>35</sup>

### **The role of the Ministry of Education in holding schools to account for learner outcomes**

69. Boards must submit an annual report to the Ministry which reviews progress made against the aims and targets set out in the school charter. Annual reports must contain an analysis of variance, which is a statement that evaluates the progress made in achieving these aims and targets and how successful these actions have been for improving student achievement. As this evaluates progress against specific school goals the information provided through the analysis of variance is not nationally consistent. Whilst the update to the Act is making changes to this process, these intend to serve to strengthen the process of reporting on achievement.
70. In addition the Ministry can access reports on learner outcomes through ERO reports. In terms of learner outcomes being used to trigger intervention, the Ministry is largely reliant on ERO identifying schools with poor achievement or at risk of underperformance, although regional offices have awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of schools within their area.
71. Ultimately the Ministry is accountable to Ministers and Parliament for the performance of the schooling system.

### **Understanding educational outcomes at the national level**

72. It is important that whole system performance is measured so that those responsible can be held to account, so that national policies and processes can be evaluated, and so that any necessary improvement action can be taken.

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<sup>35</sup> 'Formal Review of the Education Review Office (ERO).' *State Services Commission, the Treasury and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet*. 2012.

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Educational outcomes of learners nationally is an important indicator of system performance, as is the country's performance in international studies.

73. At the national level, ERO produces National Evaluation Reports and effective practice reports.
74. An overview of student outcomes and achievement nationally is provided in the accompanying paper on student outcomes from the New Zealand school system.
75. In December 2017, Government revoked the requirement to report against National Standards. Alongside the work to address how we share and report on student progress and achievement to parents and whānau, the Minister of Education has asked the Ministry to provide advice on how we measure education system performance by September 2018. This advice will specifically address how we ensure there is reliable and fit-for-purpose information available at a national level to inform decision making.

### **Measuring the performance of the national agencies that function in the schooling system**

76. It is important that the national level agencies that function in the education system are held to account for their performance.
77. Ultimately, the Government is responsible for the performance of the schooling system, and is held to account for this through the democratic process. The Ministry of Education reports to the Minister of Education, who in turn reports to Parliament and publicly on overall system performance. The Ministry of Education, ERO and NZQA are also directly scrutinized and held to account by Parliamentary Select Committees. Government agencies, including the Ministry and the ERO are also occasionally reviewed by the State Services Commission, The Treasury and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Reports from these reviews are published online.
78. Through its Public Finance Act responsibilities, the Treasury plays a role in ensuring the Ministry acts appropriately and is held to account for the use of public finances.
79. National level agencies are also required to publish information which can be used to monitor their performance. The Ministry, ERO and NZQA all publish annual reports which outline their activities over the past year, assess performance against strategic goals and include audited financial statements, enabling public scrutiny. The Education Council, an independent statutory body, is also required to publish annual reports which outline its activities.



### **Teaching and school leadership quality**

80. Research by McKinsey suggests that the main driver of variation in student learning within schools is the quality of teachers.<sup>36</sup> Ka Hikitia also identifies teaching reflecting identity, language and culture as a factor that contributes to the success of Māori students. The Code of Professional Responsibility and the Standards for the Teaching Profession both commit teachers to respecting and fostering the diversity of the heritage, language, identity and culture of all learners.
81. Accountability mechanisms relating to teaching and leadership aim to support a shared understanding of what high quality teaching and leadership looks like, provide ways by which to measure teaching and leadership quality in order to identify areas for improvement, and trigger intervention in the case of underperformance or non-compliance. There are a number of accountability settings in this space which fulfil multiple functions.

### **Measuring the quality of teaching and leadership**

82. While learner educational outcomes and teaching and leadership quality are heavily linked, educational outcomes are influenced by a number of other factors external to the school context and are therefore not a direct proxy for the quality of teaching. Evidence shows the most reliable evaluations of teaching quality incorporate multiple observations by more than one observer using clear criteria, student feedback and measures of student progress.<sup>37</sup>

### **Boards of trustees role in holding schools to account for high quality teaching and leadership**

83. As the legal employer of all staff at a school, boards of trustees play a dual role in teaching and leadership by firstly holding schools to account for their practice and secondly by working to raise the quality of teaching and leadership. The board is the legal employer of all staff at a school.
84. The Education Council is responsible for the registration and appraisal process of teachers but board of trustees play a fundamental role in the delivery of this. The registration policy states that any individual in a teaching position in a school (which includes principals) must hold a current practising certificate. To be issued or to renew a current practicing certificate, principals and teachers must be annually appraised using the Standards for the Teaching Profession (the Standards). An annual appraisal summary report must be completed for each teacher and principal.
85. The Standards are produced by the Education Council and provide a shared framework for teacher quality which underpins many of the accountability mechanisms on teaching and leadership quality.
86. A school's board of trustees is responsible for conducting the annual appraisal for principals (although this process can be delegated), and for ensuring the principal manages the performance of all staff. This plays a role in building board capability to understand what high quality teaching and leadership looks like and to develop and sustain high quality of teaching staff. In practice this process can be less effective if those holding others to account for the quality of their teaching and leadership lack the capability or capacity to effectively identify underperformance or provide the support to address this. The issue of board of trustee capability is further explored in the paper on governance.

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<sup>36</sup> Barber, M., & Mourshed, M. (2007) 'How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top.'

<sup>37</sup> OECD. (2009). 'Teacher Evaluation, A Conceptual Framework and examples of Country Practices'.

**The ERO role in holding teachers to account for high quality teaching and leadership**

87. The Education Council is required by law to audit and moderate at least 10 per cent of all appraisals made by professional leaders for the issue and renewal of practising certificates each year to make sure the appraisals achieve a reasonable and consistent standard. The Education Council contracts ERO to do this as part of external review to hold teachers to account for high quality teaching and leadership.

**The Education Council role in holding schools to account for high quality teaching and leadership**

88. As the independent professional body for teachers, the Education Council has the statutory responsibility for ensuring safe and high-quality teaching and leadership in early childhood, primary and secondary schooling in both English and Māori medium settings.

89. The Education Council provides leadership and direction for a self-managing, standards-based profession which uses specialist knowledge and research to shape teaching practices that have the learner at the centre. Key to this is achieving quality teaching and leadership for a profession which holds itself accountable for outcomes that are in the public interest. The Education Council does this by working with the profession to set the standards and requirements for entry into the profession, including requirements and monitoring for qualifications and teacher education programmes, and requirements and decisions on teacher registration and limited authority to teach.

90. The Education Council also sets standards for ongoing teacher practice and conduct, developing the Standards for the Teaching Profession (the Standards) and the Code of Professional Responsibility (the Code) with the profession. Teachers are required to be appraised using the Standards for the issue and renewal of practising certificates decided by the Education Council.

91. The Education Council also aims to raise the status of the profession by delivering a regulatory framework to strengthen accountability and bring consistently high standards to teaching. This includes investigating complaints and mandatory reports about teacher competence and conduct. The Education Council has powers to immediately remove teachers from any contact with children when a child's safety is a concern. Once the Education Council has completed its investigation there are two disciplinary bodies and a competence authority that make decisions which may include the cancellation of a teacher's registration or practising certificate. The Education Council makes sure the process and subsequent decision-making are fair and robust to ensure child safety as well as the reputation of the profession.

**The Kāhui Ako role: collaboration to lift teaching and leadership quality**

92. Kāhui Ako | Communities of Learning are an example of horizontal accountabilities within the education system. Kāhui Ako are groups of educational and training providers formed around children and young people's learning pathways. They aim to raise achievement for all young people by sharing expertise in leadership, teaching and learning and by supporting each other. Kāhui Ako work to identify the achievement challenges in their community, which are endorsed by the Secretary of Education, and then work collaboratively towards tackling their goals. This requires the sharing of information and expertise on progress and achievement between members. In this sense Kāhui Ako work to build capability and enhance teaching and learning quality through horizontal accountability based on high-trust,

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voluntary relationships centered around a collective commitment to lifting attainment for their children and young people. The use of transparent professional standards for the appointment and remuneration of the new school and across school teachers appointed to the Kāhui Ako are central to the internal accountability mechanisms built into Kāhui Ako.

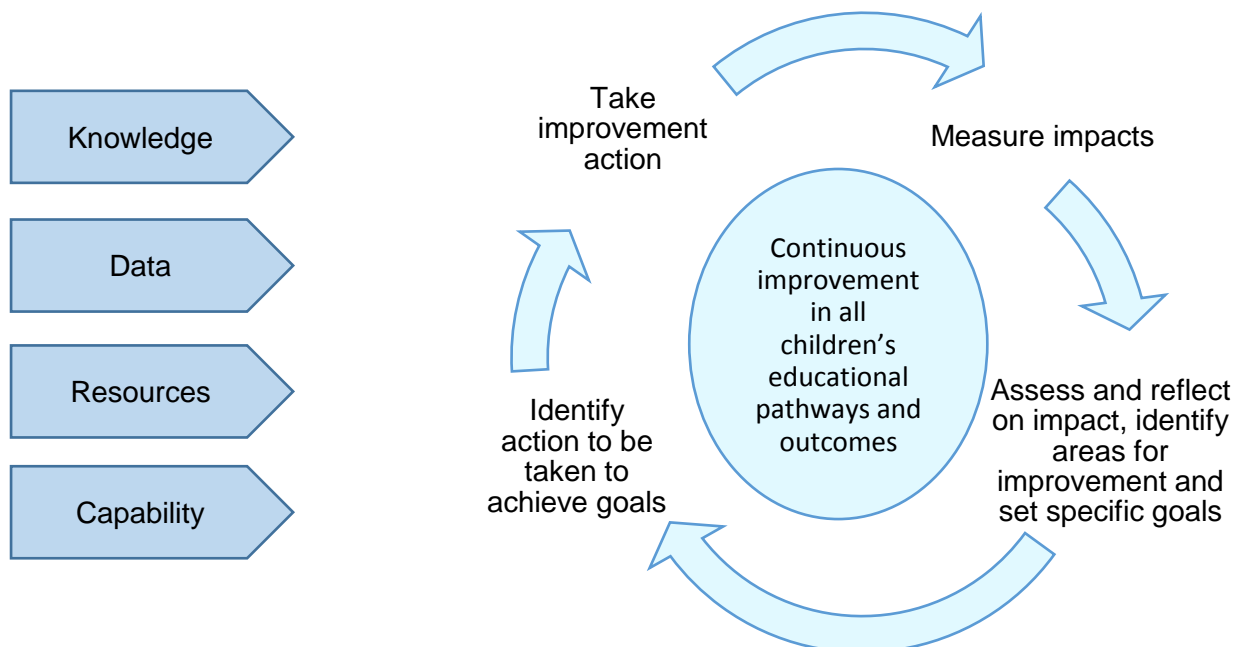
93. There are not formal authority structures within Kāhui Ako, instead formal accountabilities remain with schools' individual boards of trustees. There is also not a single actor within each Kāhui Ako responsible for the agreed achievement goals, instead Kāhui Ako aim to build peer obligations and collective responsibility for these goals. These are set out at a high level in a Memorandum of Agreement signed by all members. This approach aims to foster what Fullan refers to as a shared moral purpose built off a collective vision that promotes a better future for all learners.

### **The role of accountability in driving continuous improvement**

94. This paper has detailed a series of internal or horizontal accountabilities that exist within the schooling system around learner outcomes and teaching and leadership quality (such as Kāhui Ako working collaboratively on achievement challenges and boards of trustees undertaking self-review in considering progress against school objectives).

95. There is a school of thought which argues that the accountability system should be driven by the premise that all parts of the system should undertake an ongoing process of evaluation and inquiry for improvement, to create a self-improving school system. The ERO evaluation framework incorporates rigorous internal evaluation complemented by external evaluation.

An example of a cyclical process of evaluation and inquiry for improvement:



### **Appropriate use of finances**

96. State and state-integrated schools are held to account for compliance with financial processes. As crown-entities funded by the taxpayer it is important that schools are accountable for using public funds appropriately. As the body responsible for these crown entities, the Ministry fulfils the primary role of holding schools to account for financial compliance, although boards of trustees also play a role in holding internal actors to account for use of resources.

### **The role of the Ministry of Education**

97. Schools are required to publish annual reports which contain the school's audited annual financial statements, demonstrating how the board has used its funds to achieve its charter goals. Audits of these reports are completed by the Office of the Auditor General. These reports are required to be published online and are also sent to the Ministry. The timeframes for development mean that the Ministry receives audited reports approximately six months following the end of the school year.

98. Audited annual reports hold schools to account for using finances in an appropriate and proper way; they work to identify any financial irregularities or instances of corruption. They do not consider whether schools are using funding in an optimal way to deliver intended educational outcomes, and provide no indication of whether resources are being targeted to improve outcomes for disadvantaged students. Currently there is not a shared understanding of optimal ways to use funding to maximise educational outcomes for all learners. As a result, accountability mechanisms are not in place to encourage boards to link educational outcomes and learner progress to decisions about how they use their funding.

### **The role of boards of trustees**

99. Boards of trustees are required to allocate funds to reflect the school's priorities as stated in its charter. They must monitor and control school expenditure and ensure that annual reports are prepared and audited. Boards must also establish and maintain financial policies and understand key financial information about their school, although day to day financial responsibilities will generally be delegated to the school principal. In this sense boards of trustees hold school staff to account for their use of resources. Issues about board capability relating to financial management can come into play here.

### **The role of ERO**

100. Before ERO review a school, the board and principal must complete an assurance statement. In this the school must note whether it has taken all reasonable steps to meet legislative obligations relating to finance and asset management, amongst other things.

### **What action is taken when a school is not delivering adequate educational outcomes for its students?**

101. It is important to distinguish between the different types of interventions used to ensure quality and address underperformance or non-compliance. These can range from the provision of support (which may be voluntary for schools to take up and may be available to schools regardless of whether underperformance has been identified) to accountability mechanisms triggering statutory interventions into schools (boards) in cases of non-compliance or significant underperformance.

#### **Identifying the need for support or intervention**

102. As the governing bodies of schools with significant autonomy it is a responsibility of the board of trustees to hold schools to account for their performance, identify areas of improvement and take appropriate action. The ability of Boards to do this effectively can be varied.

103. There are external and vertical mechanisms for identifying underperformance. ERO reviews are the primary mechanism for identifying areas where support or intervention is needed. ERO identifies schools needing further development and returns to these schools more frequently. If, following an ERO review, it is determined that a school should be subject to a 1 to 2 year review process the school will receive more frequent engagement with ERO, as well as the likely participation of other agencies and professional development providers to address key priorities for improvement. ERO can recommend that the Secretary considers particular schools where it has determined that students' learning, welfare, or the operation of the school is at risk.

104. The other accountability mechanisms described in this paper can also trigger intervention. For example, concerns about financial process could be raised through the audit of the school's annual report. Additionally, parents, whānau and communities can also raise concerns or complaints about a school with the Ministry if this complaint cannot be resolved by the school principal or board. Moreover, Ministry Directors in the regions work with schools in their area to build awareness of where support may be needed in their particular region. A board may also request help with a particular issue.

#### **What does intervention look like?**

105. The Ministry has the power to apply statutory interventions in schools needing help with operational, welfare or education performance issues. The range of interventions available are graduated. The thresholds for intervening are described in legislation as follows:

- **Reasonable grounds for concern** about the operation of a school, or the welfare or educational performance of its students. The threshold 'reasonable grounds for concern' is a lower standard for the decision maker to reach than 'reasonable grounds to believe'.
- **Reasonable grounds to believe** that there is a risk to the operation of a school, or the welfare or educational performance of its students. The threshold 'reasonable grounds to believe' is a higher standard for the decision maker to reach than 'reasonable grounds for concern'.

106. The Ministry will analyse the level of concern about or risk to the operation of the school welfare of the students or educational performance of the students. The Ministry will then consider the most appropriate action from a range of options which can include non-statutory intervention support. An intervention must be

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approved by the Minister for Education or Secretary for Education and interventions are reviewed annually by the Secretary. The aim of any intervention is always to return the school to full self-management when the recommendations of the intervention have been met and/or the Minister or Secretary is satisfied that the intervention is no longer required. Once a statutory intervention ends, the Ministry continues to monitor progress and maintain an informal level of support for whatever period is considered necessary to sustain the positive change.

107. Statutory interventions vary in the level of support provided to the school and can range from the board retaining its powers but being required to provide specific information to engaging specialist help, to a Limited Statutory Manager taking control of specific governance powers and duties, to the board being dissolved and replaced with a Commissioner. The update to the Act has introduced a more graduated range of interventions. Despite this range of statutory interventions being available, they are used relatively infrequently, particularly at the lower levels of intervention (those applied under s78J, s78LA, s78LB and s78LC of the Act). Ministry-imposed interventions are more often used as a result of issues with employment or compliance (for example financial irregularities or health and safety issues) than relating to educational performance.

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## Annex 1: State school system: Roles, accountabilities and information flows

State-integrated schools have additional accountabilities relating to proprietor

