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Tēnā koe e te rangatira, Arran

Experiences of Care in Aotearoa: Agency Compliance with the National Care Standards and Related Matters Regulations 2024 - 2025

Thank you for providing your final report *Experiences of Care in Aotearoa 2024/25* and for the opportunity to respond in line with section 30 of the Oversight of Oranga Tamariki System Act 2022 (Oversight Act). Our professional relationship and shared endeavours support our joint contribution to the educational experiences of tamariki and rangatahi in care and protection.

The report findings provide critical insights that contribute to our improvement focus. The four key themes to strengthen the experience of tamariki and rangatahi in care, include

1. Cross agency collaboration
2. Information sharing
3. Enrolment and attendance in education
4. Access to educational supports.

The Ministry's response includes comment, reflects on the progress of the past 12 months and identifies next steps. We provide a detailed plan, outlining current and new actions, including clear timeframes, anticipated completion dates, and mechanisms for monitoring impact. We know positive educational experiences build the foundations for long-term wellbeing and life pathways for tamariki and rangatahi in care.

As always, many thanks for the work of your team and the opportunity to provide our response. We look forward to providing you with a progress report no later than 26 June 2026.

Any questions or queries should be made in the first instance to Grant Pollard, General Manager Data and Insights grant.pollard@education.govt.nz.

Nāku noa, nā



Lynda Pura-Watson
General Manager, Learning Support
Te Pae Aronui

Ministry of Education Response on 2024/25 *Experiences of Care in Aotearoa* report

The *Experiences of Care in Aotearoa (2024–2025)* report highlights several areas for us to strengthen our efforts to support better educational outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi in care.

Over the past 12 months, the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) has continued to progress a range of key actions aimed at improving outcomes for all children in education, including targeted initiatives for tamariki and rangatahi in care. We acknowledge that many of these actions are still underway, which affects our ability to demonstrate immediate impact within the 2024–25 reporting period.

We recognise that, while Health and Education may hold different legislative responsibilities to Oranga Tamariki, we each carry important policy, operational, and practice responsibilities as Crown agencies to support the wellbeing and success of tamariki and rangatahi in care.

1. **Cross Agency Collaboration**

Report Reflections

Findings from the report underscore the value of effective collaboration across agencies to remove barriers to equitable education. We acknowledge the importance of collaboration between the Ministry and other oranga tamariki system agencies and are committed to ongoing collective efforts to strengthen educational pathways for tamariki and rangatahi in care.

Progress – Cross Agency Collaboration

The Ministry is working to improve cross agency relationships and strengthen accountability by:

- Representation at inter-agency governance levels, e.g., Social Sector CEs Forum, Gateway Governance Group, High and Complex Needs Governance Group.
- Representation at local/ regional inter-agency working groups to support educational outcomes.
- Proactive involvement in the Aroturuki Tamariki regional visits to support deeper engagement and investigation into educational issues.
- The refresh of the Memorandum of Understanding between Oranga Tamariki and the Ministry (completed).
- Reviewing ten agreements (protocols) between Oranga Tamariki and the Ministry, all due by 30 June 2026, including protocols for Chronic Absence, Education in Residences, Student Aide, High and Complex Needs, and Gateway – all of which are identified as areas for improvement within the report.
- Regular operational meetings between Oranga Tamariki and the Ministry to support progression of actions under the Oranga Tamariki System Action Plan (OTSAP).

Next Steps

We have made progress through strengthened collaboration and updates to key agreements and protocols. The impact of these improvements has not yet been fully communicated across our shared sectors. We know that clear, consistent messaging is needed so that everyone understands their responsibilities and accountabilities—particularly the distinct roles of schools as self-governing Crown entities and the role of the Ministry. This communication should outline accessible escalation pathways to support our sectors in resolving issues when progress stalls governing Crown entities and the role of the Ministry.

2. Information Sharing

Report Reflections

The Ministry of Education is committed to effective information sharing with Oranga Tamariki and values the partnership that supports our shared work. Our recent move to more structured data sharing through the attendance and enrolment exchange is an important step toward trusted, consistent, evidence informed practice. The arrangements planned for 2026 reflect our joint commitment to better decision making through clearer governance, improved data quality, and simple, reliable ways of sharing information.

Following the initial data share issues were highlighted with data quality and matching. We are working to update collection processes, improve automated matching, and lift the overall quality of data supplied. We are also updating the systems that support it. We are moving to standard, easier to maintain tools, stronger data governance, and a single source of truth for shared information. A consistent national framework with clear templates and guidelines will improve how our systems connect and provide more timely insights to support earlier, more confident decisions.

We recognise the importance of schools knowing when a child is in care so they can act early and work alongside the Ministry and partner agencies. While we understand the sensitivities involved, there is opportunity to strengthen practice by involving schools appropriately and at the right time. Contact with regional offices or signalling through the Gateway Assessment process can support this, and clear escalation pathways for frontline staff are essential to maintaining momentum and resolving issues quickly for the wellbeing of tamariki and their whānau.

Progress – Information Sharing

To progress information sharing we have:

- Completed the bi-annual review of Oranga Tamariki – Ministry of Education Information Sharing Agreement (ISA),
- Completed the first detailed data schedule for sharing with Oranga Tamariki on **attendance and enrolment** (November 2025), inclusive of ongoing monthly data shares.

Next Steps

We are continually strengthening our knowledge, practice, and accuracy in information sharing to support better interventions and evidence informed decision-making. Next steps for improvement include:

- Continuing to refine the data share on **Attendance and Engagement** (February 2026 – ongoing).
- Developing and agreeing the information sharing requirements with Oranga Tamariki on **Standdowns, Suspensions, Exclusions and Expulsions** (by 30 June 2026).
- Developing and agreeing the information sharing requirement with Oranga Tamariki on **Interventions and Learning Support** (by 30 June 2026).
- Working with Oranga Tamariki to further refine the Oranga Tamariki System Action Plan (OTSAP) dashboard report to reflect accurate education data and regional insights.
- A stocktake of existing regional information sharing arrangements with Oranga Tamariki. This will assist us to determine and establish a coordinated programme of work to enhance consistency and effectiveness.

The Ministry is interested in a systemwide view of all tamariki and rangatahi in education, with a specific focus on those in care. Completing our planned information sharing arrangements is a vital first step. With these foundations in place, agencies will be able to explore a more integrated, system level view to help with earlier identification, coordinated responses, and better outcomes for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau/ caregivers.

3. Enrolment and Attendance in Education

Report Reflections

Being enrolled in education is critical to positive life outcomes, offering tamariki and rangatahi stability, opportunity, and clear pathways for the future. Your report highlights that non-enrolment continues to be a significant barrier for some tamariki and rangatahi in care, with extended periods out of education impacting long-term outcomes. We remain committed to improving the system and reducing barriers to enrolment for all learners. We also recognise the ongoing attendance challenges facing tamariki and rangatahi in care. Improving attendance takes time and collective effort, and the Ministry continues to focus on practical, sustained action to support better engagement.

While there is flexibility within the education system to maintain enrolment and learning continuity during temporary placements or transitions, improved communication between schools and Oranga Tamariki would strengthen access to support. We acknowledge that the Ministry should clearly communicate available pathways and interventions to external partners. A new action is proposed to support strengthened communication and practice between schools, the Ministry, Oranga Tamariki, and frontline staff of both agencies.

Through the Attendance Action Plan and the redesign of Attendance Services, we are enhancing how the system responds—prioritising early support, closer collaboration with whānau, schools, and agencies, and more targeted interventions. Attendance Service Providers remain essential in supporting non-enrolled learners back into education.

Our ongoing focus is on strengthening the settings and supports that enable timely re-engagement and reduce the risk of sustained disengagement. For learners with complex needs, providers will continue to work through strengthened inter-agency forums to ensure whānau/ caregivers have access to the right mix of support, reflecting our shared commitment to coordinated, sustained re-engagement in education.

Progress – Enrolment and Attendance in Education

To support enrolment and attendance, the Ministry is progressing several connected initiatives. This includes:

- A staged review of the Chronic Absence protocol between Oranga Tamariki and the Ministry, with an initial focus on chronic absence, followed by an expansion to better address non-enrolment from 2026.
- Updating the Stand-downs, Suspensions, Exclusions and Expulsions (SSEE) legal guidelines to ensure they are current, clear, and aligned with legislative and practice expectations, supporting schools to meet their obligations and respond consistently.
- From January 2026, the new attendance services model will strengthen this support, expand capacity and improve responsiveness for chronically absent and non-enrolled learners. The model places greater emphasis on understanding underlying barriers and on coordinated, locally based responses that draw on strong relationships across education, social services, and community agencies.
- Provision of Attendance Services includes tamariki and rangatahi in care, inclusive of operational guidelines for supporting responses to chronic absence.

Next Steps

The above approaches and interventions combined with our efforts to improve information sharing and communicate clear roles, responsibilities and escalation pathways to our combined sectors will make a difference to the way in which our sector responds to and supports tamariki and rangatahi who are non-enrolled or who have irregular or chronic absence.

4. Access to Educational Supports

Report Reflections

Supporting learners to be present, engaged, and connected to education is essential. Access to learning supports that honour who a child is, where they come from, and what they need is essential to helping tamariki and rangatahi thrive. When supports are tailored to their strengths, aspirations, and lived experiences—and developed in partnership with the child, their whānau or caregivers, educators, and other professionals—we can create conditions that nurture belonging, promote wellbeing, and open meaningful pathways for learning.

A key mechanism for identifying the learning needs of tamariki and rangatahi in care is the Gateway Assessment. While the full redesign is not expected to be completed until the end of 2027, redesigned education profiles were developed in 2025 to strengthen assessment quality. The Ministry remains committed to supporting Oranga Tamariki as they lead and deliver the Gateway programme.

Your report also highlights that disabled tamariki and rangatahi in care are more likely to have concerns raised about educational progress. The Ministry provides targeted programmes and supports for disabled learners, including physical disability services such as physiotherapy and occupational therapy. Through Budget 2025, we are strengthening outcomes for disabled learners in all settings, supported by increased places and learning support property modifications within the specialist school network.

We acknowledge the role that practical supports, such as uniforms and school-related costs, play in enabling learners to participate confidently in education. In Budget 2025 government invested almost \$140 million to improve student attendance. This included an improved attendance service model starting in 2026. This new model includes funding to address immediate unmet basic needs that are affecting a student's attendance, such as school uniforms. School fees are voluntary, and we remain committed to ensuring they do not create barriers to learning. Further clarity on accessing learning supports will be provided through the revised Student Aide protocol, scheduled for completion in June 2026.

Progress – Access to Educational Supports

The Ministry has prioritised \$2.5 billion investment through Budget 2025 to better respond to learner needs and improve outcomes. Our key interventions include:

- Extending the Early Intervention Service (EIS) from early childhood education through to the end of year 1 of primary school.
- Additional funding to meet increased demand for Ongoing Resource Scheme (ORS) for students with high and complex needs.
- Additional funding so that all Year 1-8 schools and kura are funded for a Learning Support Coordinator (LSC) to work with students, families and educators.
- Increased funding to meet the growing demand of students with communication and behaviour needs.
- Additional teacher aide hours.
- Employing extra intern educational psychologists.
- Funding for additional learning support satellite classrooms to provide around 225 new student places across the specialist school network, as well as providing learning support property modifications so that schools are more accessible to learner with additional needs.
- Providing a range of supports to learners, which include in-class support, school high health needs funding, High and Complex Needs (HCN) funding, specialist schools, Assistive Technology, Learning Support Coordinators (LSC), specialist teachers, and Te Kahu Tōi Intensive Wraparound Service.

Next Steps

In 2026-27 we propose that the Ministry works with Oranga Tamariki to develop guidance and professional learning opportunities to enable Ministry and Oranga Tamariki staff and caregivers to work collaboratively to enrol and support tamariki and rangatahi in education. This would include information such as escalation pathways, directed enrolments and the range of supports available and how to access them.

We welcome the further recommendations that will emerge from the Gateway review led by Oranga Tamariki and the Social Investment Agency, due for completion in March 2026. These insights will provide valuable guidance as we continue working together to strengthen pathways of support for tamariki, rangatahi, and their whānau.

New Actions (from 2024-25 Experiences in Care Report)

Key Theme	Action	Timeline	Completion Date	Monitoring
1. Cross-Agency Collaboration	1.1 Communicating and embedding escalation pathways between OT and MoE at local, regional, and national levels	April 2026 – June 2027	June 2027	<p><i>Monitoring</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination of communication between MoE and OT • No. of communications distributed and type of communication channel <p><i>Deliverable</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed comms plan • Completed escalation pathways content
	2.1 Improve data quality in collaboration with Oranga Tamariki	February 2026 – June 2027	June 2027	<p><i>Monitoring</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly review of rates of data matching errors • Record of data protocols and interventions undertaken to improve data accuracy <p><i>Deliverable</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting of data via Social Sector CE's forum
2. Information Sharing	2.2 Complete a stocktake of regional information sharing arrangements and co-develop regional actions with Oranga Tamariki for OTSAP. sharing arrangements and co-develop regional actions with Oranga Tamariki for	July 2026 – June 2027	June 2027	<p><i>Monitoring</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record of discussions through regular hui with OT • Note: this action is subject to progress on action 2.1 <p><i>Deliverable</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. regional information shares
	3.1 Develop guidance to enable Ministry and Oranga Tamariki staff and caregivers to work collaboratively to enrol and support tamariki and rangatahi in education. This would include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ escalation pathways (see 1.1) ○ directed enrolments ○ supports available and how to access them 	April 2026 – December 2026	December 2026	<p><i>Monitoring</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record of progression through regular hui with OT <p><i>Deliverable</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed guidance document
3. Enrolment, Attendance, and Access to Educational Supports	3.2 Co-develop and deliver a professional learning package with Oranga Tamariki to implement guidance (action 3.1)	April 2026 – December 2026	June 2027	<p><i>Monitoring</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record of progression through regular hui with OT <p><i>Deliverable</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. of PLD sessions completed and locality

Previous Actions *(from 2023-24 Experiences in Care Report)*

Key Theme	Action	Progress	Completion Date	Monitoring
Collaboration and Sharing	Operationalise the Information Sharing Agreement (ISA) with Oranga Tamariki, supporting regular sharing of enrolment and attendance data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monthly data sharing between the Ministry and Oranga Tamariki on enrolment and attendance data sharing is in place Updates to the ISA and Detailed Data Schedules (DDS) is currently in progress as planned. The Ministry has agreed to OTSAP reporting to Children's Chief Executives from February 2026. The next full ISA review is scheduled for 2028. Further enhancements to data quality, matching and regional use expected by June 2026 – continuation as BAU The DDA for the Auckland Central use-case will be completed in 2026. 	Completed - BAU	Monthly data sharing and ongoing review of data quality as part of BAU
	Identify further data to share with Oranga Tamariki to support attendance, engagement and achievement at school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Ministry data dictionary has been shared with Oranga Tamariki, and a draft Detailed Data Schedule has been developed for stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions. Work to identify the learning support information needed for the schedule will recommence in March 2026. Additional types of information may be added to this information share as this work progresses. 	30 June 2026	Updates to the Detailed Data Schedule
	As part of the Attendance Work Programme, work with OT, Police, Kāinga Ora, MSD, MBIE and TPK to identify opportunities to support student attendance by sharing information at a national and regional level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ministry and OT have been sharing information (NEET) with MSD since 2020. The Ministry continues to support ad hoc sharing as needed with OT for one off needs. Our next step is to better understand and systemise the information collection and use. 	Completed - BAU	Regular updates on agency agreements, the use of OT information, and opportunities for information sharing
Support attendance and engagement	Attendance action plan to incorporate improvements to operational guidance for directed enrolments and share information about these processes for schools and Oranga Tamariki kaimahi.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resourcing challenges are actively being addressed. The Attendance Work Programme will be supporting this action. Once resolved, MOE will commence developing improvements to operational guidance. 	30 June 2026	Monitoring this action will be incorporated into the Attendance Work Programme's internal status reporting, which occurs fortnightly

Key Theme	Action	Progress	Completion Date	Monitoring
Access to responsive education	Process improvements arising from the Gateway Assessment review and test the Gateway profile with Ministry of Health (MoH) and OT to be sure that changes will support assessment processes with a focus on improving timeliness and accountability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three education profiles (Primary & Secondary, ECE, and Non-enrolled) and supporting guidance have been reviewed, approved, and shared with Oranga Tamariki for upload into CYRAS. High-level process maps will be shared once internal Ministry guidance is finalised. Gateway Protocol to be reviewed 	June 2026	OTSAP review process and progress reporting. Regular discussion via the inter-agency Gateway Governance Group
	Consideration of findings from the Student Aide review in collaboration with Oranga Tamariki and include actions in the 25/26 OTSAP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review is completed and OTSAP actions are in progress Review of the Student Aide protocol is currently in progress – due for completion by June 2026 	Completed	To be monitored as part of the OTSAP review process

Previous Actions *(from 2022-23 Experiences in Care Report)*

Key Theme	Action – 2022-2023	Progress	Completion Date	Monitoring
Collaboration and Sharing	Define and formalise good practice demonstrated in the Ministry's regional offices for wider use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Ministry is progressing a formal review of all agreements and protocols with OT to contribute to a refresh of all operational guidelines. This work has shifted to ongoing BAU 	Completed - BAU	Action Closed
	Actively connect information sharing specialists in the regions, providing support to help lift confidence and maturity when sharing information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This action has been superseded by more recent information sharing actions. 	Action Withdrawn	Action Closed