

2 November 2016

C J and V A Turnbull

Dear Callum and Victoria Turnbull

Thank you for your letter of 12 October and the accompanying material that you have forwarded to the Deputy Chief Review Officer, Education Review Office (ERO).

Your letter requested that the Ministry of Education formally stand down the Board of Trustees and the Principal of Ruru Special School. The Ministry is, like you concerned to ensure that all schools provide an environment where the well being of children is paramount.

In 2014 you made a complaint to the Ministry of Education which led to the Ministry commissioning an independent Investigation into the concerns you raised. The outcome of the investigation was the release of a detailed report which was supplied to both you and the Board of Trustees of Ruru Special School.

Following the release of the report, the Ministry worked with the Board of Trustees to address the recommendations contained in the report. The Board of Trustees developed an action plan that addressed all the recommendations made in the report. This plan was signed off by the Director of Education. The Board worked through the implementation of the Action Plan and reported against milestones to the Ministry. The Ministry is satisfied with the final results that were achieved by the Board.

Your correspondence makes reference to the Ruru School ERO Report August 2016. This is the most recent report issued by Education Review Office in relation to Ruru Special School. The report can be found at this link. <http://www.ero.govt.nz/review-reports/ruru-special-school-08-08-2016/>. The Ministry is not in a position to make comment about the initial "draft" report. If you believe there is something that has changed between the draft and the final report then you need to take this up directly with ERO, as only they can explain any differences in their reports.

The Ministry has confidence in the Board. The recent Board elections has seen new leadership for the Board and it is the Ministry view that the Board having addressed the recommendations of the investigation report, continues to work through a process of self review and improvement to provide an environment with a focus on wellbeing and achievement for its student population. The ERO Report noted that:

"Students have a strong sense of belonging at the school in a family-like setting where families and whānau are welcomed and included in activities and learning. The school's vision and values are highly evident. Students are seen as capable and confident learners. There is a strong emphasis on ensuring that students are well prepared for their life beyond school, and can confidently take their place in the world"

It is our understanding that the Board has the confidence of its parent community. The Ministry will continue to monitor the school and will be available to provide any specialist assistance that should be required.

Boards' of Trustees are self managing Crown Entities and any employment matters related to the staff are the responsibility of the Board and not the Ministry of Education.

The Ministry will not be taking any steps to implement a statutory intervention around the Board of Trustees of Ruru Special School at this point in time for the reasons given in the earlier part of the letter. We are confident that the Board is well place to demonstrate a well functioning self managing school and we will continue to work in partnership with the board to monitor ongoing progress and be available to assist with any specialist assistance the Board of Trustees may request.

Thank you for sharing your concerns with the Ministry.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Julie K. Anderson'.

Julie Anderson
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