

15 November 2016

CJ and VA Turnbull

Dear Callum and Victoria Turnbull

RURU SPECIAL SCHOOL – CORRESPONDENCE 9 NOVEMBER 2016

Thank you for your letter to Murray Roberts, Regional Manager Learning Support dated 9 November 2016. As Director of Education for Otago/Southland the letter has been referred to me for a response.

As stated in my letter dated 2 November, the Ministry carefully considered the information you put in front of it through your correspondence of 12 October. At that time, the Ministry had no reason to put in place an Intervention under the Education Act to replace the Board of Trustees. We have no substantiated evidence to suggest that this has changed since the date of that letter and this response.

Boards of Trustees are independent Crown Agencies and they take their legal and employment relations advice from either the New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) or they engage their own independent advice. In the case of Ruru Special School it is our understanding that the Board of Trustees has engaged its own legal counsel.

The Ministry is not in a position to stand down the Principal of the school. Such an action is covered by employment law and the Board of Trustees is responsible for the employment of the school principal and is the only party that can put in place that action.

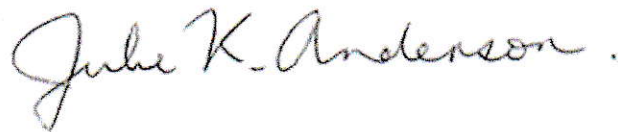
The Ministry does not have a role in approving correspondence or newsletters between schools and their parent communities. Board of Trustees are responsible through the delegations to the principal to issue such documents in accordance with agreed Board Policies.

I am concerned that the language you are using in your most recent letter refers to “mass allegation of unlawful detainment and assault of students”. It is our understanding that the New Zealand Police is currently investigating one complaint related to Ruru School. We have not been notified by the Police of any mass allegations. If this was the case we would have expected to have been notified through our existing Memorandums of Understanding between the Ministries. We would have also expected that Child Youth and Families (CYFs) would have been notified accordingly.

As Director of Education, I have personally been in contact with both the Board Chairperson of the school and the principal since the date of my last letter (2 November). Following discussions with both person's I am of the view that the school is following due process and has assisted the Police with its inquiry. The Board has every right, as does any individual, to take seek legal counsel regarding any police investigation. On the other hand the New Zealand Police has particular powers available to it through legislation to pursue charges where they consider this is necessary.

Thank you for brining your concerns to my attention.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julie K. Anderson .".

Julie Anderson
Director of Education
Otago/ Southland