National Report Summary

ERO publishes evaluation reports on education issues of national importance. This handout is a summary of a recent national report - it captures the key points and highlights findings which you may find useful. The full report is available on our website - **www.ero.govt.nz**

Student Safety in Schools: Recruiting and Managing Staff (January 2014)

In 2013, the Education Review Office (ERO) evaluated schools' approaches to ensuring student safety when recruiting and managing staff.

Student Safety in Schools: Recruiting and Managing Staff presents the findings of this evaluation. The evaluation included balancing needs of students and staff when managing concerns, appointment processes and checking procedures, ongoing registration and police vetting, and board preparation.

The report includes recommendations for schools and education agencies, as well as surveys and self-review tools that schools may find useful.

Why student safety is important when managing staff

The evaluation was prompted by two inquiries* into the employment of sex offenders in schools. Both inquiries reinforced the primary importance of student safety and welfare.

It is essential to ensure that the law, and all practices and procedures, including recruitment and hiring, are designed, managed and administered to provide the utmost protection for children within the education system as well as the wider community environment. It is perhaps even more important that people involved throughout the education system, no matter in what capacity, see beyond the system itself, and its processes, and recognise that the safety and welfare of the children in the education system transcend all else.
(Ministerial Inquiry p. 5)

What ERO found

Trustees, leaders and teachers all agreed that student safety is paramount. ERO's evaluation found that two-thirds of schools had robust practices to ensure student safety when appointing and managing staff. Examples of these practices are included over the page.

One-third of the schools reviewed had practices that meant they were unlikely to recognise situations when students are at risk from some staff and respond appropriately.

Improving safety in schools

This summary includes examples of good practice that ERO identified during the evaluation. These examples provide a useful benchmark against which schools can review their own policies and practices.

A good starting point for all schools is to base their policies and practices on two principles:
- Students may be at risk from some staff
- Students must be kept safe while schools meet their 'good employer' obligations.

Schools can also demonstrate their responsibility across the sector by:
- Providing honest references for staff
- Reporting to the Teachers Council when required.

The Pamapuria experience highlights how important it is for schools to be constantly aware of the connections between what is required in documentation and what is actually happening in reality. (The Commissioner of Pamapuria School)

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* *The Ministerial Inquiry into the Employment of a Convicted Sex Offender in the Education Sector[1] (Ministerial Inquiry),*
Report to the Commissioner of Pamapuria School on Review of the Employment and Offences of James Parker[1] (Parker Report).

Good practice

Schools that **ensured student safety is paramount** when dealing with concerns about staff:

- **proactively developed a coherent and connected focus** on student safety across all procedures with policies containing enough detail to guide actions
- **were vigilant** so practices followed policies and procedures and were reviewed in a timely and reflective manner
- undertook a range of preventative actions
- ensured student safety and wellbeing was maintained while schools met their 'good employer' obligation
- ensured students, family and whānau understand school policies and procedures

Schools with **robust employment systems**:

- **proactively developed a coherent and connected focus** on student safety across all procedures with policies containing enough detail to guide actions
- **were vigilant** so practices followed policies and procedures and were reviewed in a timely and reflective manner
- **thoroughly checked** potential employees' backgrounds, experience, qualifications and identities
- **consistently accessed and used resources** available to guide decisions about employing and managing staff
- ensured **relevant employment information** was reported to the board

Schools with **effective registration processes** had appraisal systems that included:

- opportunities for **reflection** and **self assessment** about practice
- targeted **observations** and **feedback**
- **goals** and **evidence** linked to the Registered Teacher Criteria
- a formal discussion about the **evidence** that the Registered Teacher Criteria were being met.

ERO considers the following employment resources particularly useful for schools:
Ministry of Education
http://www.minedu.govt.nz/Boards/EffectiveGovernance.aspx
Effective governance: Recruiting and managing school staff: A guide for boards of trustees.
This series of resources is comprehensive and designed to help boards review current practice.

New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA)
www.nzsta.org.nz/board-as-employers/appointment-process/
NZSTA provides guidance and templates for boards on employment matters. The templates include an application form that is a detailed tool to lead schools through the appointment process.

Education Review Office (ERO)
www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/For-Schools-and-Kura-Kaupapa-Maori/Review-Documentation-for-Schools
The *Guidelines for Board Assurance Statement*, *Whānau Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklists* include a brief discussion of what best practice looks like in making staff appointments, and student health, safety and wellbeing, and presents check points in the Self-Audit Checklists.

Child Matters
www.childmatters.org.nz/88/resources-info-centre/resources
Safe not Sorry (Child Matters, 2012) has been developed as a guide for organisations in which adults are involved with children and young people, such as schools. It includes sample application forms, checking forms and more.

For the full report and other resources: http://www.ero.govt.nz/National-Reports

FIND OUT MORE
For more ideas and information, you can read the full report online at **www.ero.govt.nz/national-reports**

Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa
The Child – the Heart of the Matter