

Frequently Asked Questions: Proposed closure of Redcliffs School

1. What proposal has been announced?

Today (23 March 2015) the Minister proposed the closure of Redcliffs School. The Board of Trustees has been asked to consult with its community and respond to this proposal by 1 May 2015. This proposal has been made because the Minister is not satisfied that returning the school to its site will provide certainty for Redcliffs students in the future. The likelihood of future rockfall from the cliffs behind the Redcliffs School site makes it impossible to guarantee ongoing and uninterrupted education provision on that site.

2. What geotechnical and engineering advice did the Ministry receive about the Redcliffs School site?

The expert advice provided to the Ministry concluded that the rockfall risk present at the Redcliffs School site could be reduced to an acceptable level for a school site by reducing the site area and constructing a mechanically stabilised earth bund on the boundary of the school that faces the cliffs. Although the expert analysis and modelling indicates that risk at the site could be reduced to a satisfactory level, it is never possible to provide absolute guarantees of safety.

The advice predicted further rockfall and indicated that reassessment and possible repair could be needed following future rockfalls to determine whether the site remained within the acceptable risk level. The school would be unable to operate on the site while that assessment and any required repairs, removal of rock or other mitigations were carried out. This could be for a period of up to 2 years following any subsequent rockfall.

3. What will happen if we put forward alternative proposals to closure?

Alternative proposals are welcome. The Ministry will consider each submission and will undertake modelling and analysis and seek any additional information to understand the implications of any alternative proposals. This will then be provided to the Minister for her consideration.

4. Who can put forward a submission?

Any individual person or group from the community can put forward a submission.

5. Is this a final decision?

No, this is a proposal. The Minister will consider the Board's submission and all other submissions that are received, and will make an interim decision in early June. In accordance with section 154 of the Education Act 1989, where the Minister's interim decision is that the school should close, a school's Board "must be asked if it has any arguments in favour of the school's staying open". This is required within a 28 day period.

6. Who else will be consulted?

Under section 157 of the Education Act, the Minister must consult with any state school whose roll might, in the opinion of the Minister, be affected if a decision is

made to close. The Ministry on behalf of the Minister, will be consulting with the following schools:

- Bamford School
- Heathcote Valley School
- Mt Pleasant School
- Star of the Sea School
- Sumner School
- Van Asch Deaf Education Centre

7. What support will be provided for the Board?

The Board can contract a Ministry-funded facilitator to support it to put together a submission. The Ministry has staff who will explain the process and seek answers to any questions the Board may have. The New Zealand School Trustees Association will also provide support for the Board.

8. What are you doing to support the students, parents, teachers and community?

Ministry staff will be available to provide tailored programmes to meet the school's specific needs. If a final decision is made to close Redcliffs School, the Ministry will appoint a change manager to support the Board. Ministry staff will work closely with the change manager and ensure that there is sufficient support to the school throughout this process.

9. What support is available to staff during this time?

Staff can get support from their Board of Trustees, and (if they are members) from their union (NZEI, SFWU, AWU, PSA). All school staff can access free support from EAP Services Ltd. Phone 03 348 0854 to find out more about this service. The Ministry will be able to provide information about further support that may be available.

10. Can the school still accept new enrolments during this period?

Yes, Redcliffs School has a current enrolment scheme, and so it must enrol a student who is genuinely living in a school's home zone. Students living outside of the school's home zone will have neighbourhood schools to attend.

11. Can the school appoint permanent staff?

No, all staff vacancies that arise at the school will be filled with temporary appointments. Once a final decision is made, Redcliffs Schools will be in a position to know whether it can permanently appoint new staff.

12. What about enrolment schemes? How will they change if Redcliffs School closes?

If the decision is made to close Redcliffs School, the Ministry will work with the Boards of schools where enrolment schemes were required to change so that these were implemented in a timely way. Enrolment schemes are established to ensure

that all students have the right of access to a 'reasonably convenient school' in relation to where they live.

13. Who decides whether to close a school?

The Minister of Education makes the decision about the closure or merger or relocation of a state school. A final decision can only be made after consultation with the board and the boards of other schools where the roll may be affected.

14. Isn't this really about cost cutting? Are you trying to save money because the cost of other rebuilds is rising and there isn't enough money left for this one?

Cost estimates for a return to site, which would include rebuilding, is comparable to closing Redcliffs School and accommodating students at other schools. Exact costs cannot be calculated because a timeframe for any construction to begin is unknown at this time.

15. The report mentions rezoning at another school – does that mean families who expect to send their kids to that school can't and if so where will they be able to send their kids?

Students and their siblings will continue to attend their current school regardless of any changes to schools' enrolment schemes in the future. Should the final decision be for closure the Ministry would work with Boards to determine what changes might be required to enrolment schemes in the future and we will make sure we keep parents well informed.

16. Where can I find further information?

The Education Report on the school, is available at www.shapingeducation.govt.nz