



# Consultation with schools whose rolls might be affected by a closure or merger proposal after an area strategy

**An area strategy is a process that looks at the network of schools across a particular area.**

Area strategies are usually carried out in areas with too many or too few students. They involve discussions with schools and the wider community on what the future network might look like, and often cover options for closing or merging schools.

## Current state

Before a decision to close or merge a school can be made, the Minister of Education must consult with the boards of all state schools whose rolls might be affected under section 157 of the Education Act 1989 (the Act).

However, when schools and communities have been consulted as part of an area strategy, having a further period of consultation under section 157 can make the process repetitive and drawn out for them.

## What's the change?

The Act has been changed to clarify that the Minister is not required to undertake further consultation if the schools whose rolls might be affected have been consulted on a specific closure or merger option as part of an area strategy.

## Will schools and communities still be consulted on closing and merging schools?

Yes. The Minister will continue to consult with schools and communities before making decisions on closing or merging schools.

There are no changes to the consultation requirements for schools directly affected by a closure or merger proposal.

## Will there be any changes to the way area strategies are carried out?

The Ministry will ensure that area strategies have comprehensive consultation processes, including providing schools and communities with detailed options on the specific proposals.

## When do the changes take effect?

These provisions take effect from 19 May 2017.

## Links to key provisions

Section 157(3A):

<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/19890080/latest/DLM182482.html>