



**Te Tāhuhu o
te Mātauranga**
Ministry of Education

Erika Whittome

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23 June 2026

Tēnā koe Erika

OIA: GEMS-48315 – Mandatory COVID-19 vaccinations for education workforce

Thank you for your email of 11 May 2026 to the Ministry of Health, which was transferred on 22 May 2025 to the Ministry of Education (the Ministry), requesting the following information:

On 11 Oct 2021, there was an announcement of Mandatory vaccination for two workforces: health and education workers which is here:

<https://tinyurl.com/24uyud6y>

- 1. Would you please share the "Mandatory vaccination" legislation at this time for health and education workforces?*
- 2. Would you please share all the letters, correspondence, ministerial briefings, etc that led to this 11 Oct 2021 announcement?*

Thank you also for your email of 25 May 2026 advising the following for part two of your request:

Please would you supply the above requested information for this 11 Oct 2021 announcement on education workers

https://web.archive.org/web/20211021200010mp_/https://covid19.govt.nz/covid-19-vaccines/vaccinations-and-work/mandatory-vaccinations-for-workers/education-sector-vaccinations/

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

Regarding **part one** of your request, the legislation you may be referring to is the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Amendment Order (No 3) 2021. I am refusing to provide a copy of this legislation under section 18(d) of the Act, as it is publicly available at the following link: <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/secondary-legislation/pco-drafted/2021/325/en/latest/#LMS579320>.

Regarding **part two** of your request, as with our responses to your previous requests for similar information, much of the correspondence related to COVID-19 decisions was not centrally stored in a manner in which it could be easily retrieved. Keyword

searches were undertaken to locate the information you are requesting. The smallest pool of retrievable items was with the keywords "vaccination" and any of the words "mandatory" or "sector" or "workforce" or "order". This search produced no fewer than 500 results, which for one staff member alone would require an estimated 40 hours a week to review. To capture all information in scope of part two of your request would produce a much greater number of results.

Decisions made regarding the introduction of a vaccine mandate involving education were not made in isolation from other public health decisions during the pandemic. The Ministry worked closely with the Ministry of Health throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and evidence produced by the Ministry of Health heavily informed Ministry decisions and papers throughout the period. Therefore, a number of papers could have influenced decision-making on this matter.

As a result, I am refusing part two of your request under section 18(f) of the Act, as the information requested cannot be made available without substantial collation or research.

In coming to this decision, as required by sections 18A and 18B of the Act, I have considered whether the Ministry would be able to meet your request by seeking further refinement, fixing a charge, or extending the time limit for responding. However, we have determined that none of these mechanisms would be appropriate, and any possible refinement would be unlikely to reduce the volume of material significantly.

However, so as to provide you with some of the information that is important to you, the Ministry has determined that we are able to provide you with key documents related to part two of your request. Two key documents in scope of these aspects of your request have been identified. I am releasing these to you as **Appendix A**, as detailed below.

A meeting was held with the Minister of Education, Hon Chris Hipkins, on 4 October 2021. Following the meeting, and an email from the Minister's office, the Ministry produced a Cabinet Paper relating to the mandate.

The Cabinet paper *Education System Vaccination and Testing Requirements* was provided to Ministers on 11 October 2021 and sought agreement to introduce mandatory vaccinations for the education workforce and testing requirements while vaccination levels were increasing.

I am providing a copy of the email chain originating from the Minister's office and the Cabinet Paper as **Appendix A**.

Regarding the email chain, I am withholding some names and contact details under section 9(2)(a) of the Act, to protect the privacy of natural persons. Also please note that no document was attached to the latest email despite it advising there was an attached draft.

As required under section 9(1) of the Act, I have considered the public interest in releasing the information withheld. I do not consider that the public interest considerations favouring the release of this information are sufficient to outweigh the need to withhold it at this time.

Please note, we may publish this response on our website after five working days. Your name and contact details will be removed.

Thank you again for your email. You have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review my decision on your request, in accordance with section 28 of the Act. You can do this by writing to info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or to Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Nāku noa, nā



Katrina Sutich
General Manager, Tertiary Policy
Te Pou Kaupapahere | Policy