

Education Bill to improve safety, accountability

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Hon Chris Carter
Minister of Education

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Measures introduced into Parliament today will make early childhood services and schools safer places for students and introduce measures to improve student attendance and engagement, Education Minister Chris Carter says.

The Education Amendment Bill proposes police vetting of all people who have unsupervised access to children during the opening hours of early childhood centres and schools.

“With these changes parents can feel confident that their child is under safe supervision. Schools will also be able to know at a glance that staff members are registered and clear of any supervisory conditions,” said Chris Carter.

The creation of an information matching programme will allow the identification of teachers who are teaching without a current practising certificate or authorisation.

Chris Carter also said the new requirements will ensure that students get good guidance on career choices and pathways while they are at school.

“We know students who leave school early are at the greatest risk of poor social and economic outcomes. While student participation and achievement is improving, there are still far too many leaving school early with little or no attainment.

“Accordingly the Bill removes early leaving provisions for 15 year olds to signal the importance of staying at school. Schools Plus will support schools to offer students greater flexibility and more choices so they are encouraged to stay at school and fulfil their ambitions,” said Chris Carter.

In addition the Bill provides greater clarity to school boards of trustees on their roles, and increases flexibility around timing of board elections, the establishment boards and alternative board constitutions.

The Bill also includes technical amendments affecting special education and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority; and amendments to deter people from committing offences relating to students' loans and allowances.

“Together these measures serve to strengthen the education system for all students and give them the opportunity to realise their full potential,” said Chris Carter.