



Enrolment in a State Integrated School

State Integrated School Board Professional Development and Learning Series

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Protecting Special Character

Enrolment is one of the most significant ways a state integrated school protects and expresses its special character. Getting enrolment right is both a legal obligation and a mission imperative.

Proprietor Determines Preference

The proprietor holds the authority to determine preference of enrolment, ensuring the school's special character is upheld through its student community.

Clarity of Criteria and Delegation

Both the proprietor and the board must have a shared and clear understanding of the criteria used to determine enrolment preference, and how responsibility is delegated.

Clear Guidelines for Parents

The board must make available transparent, accessible guidelines so that parents understand how enrolment priority is established and what is expected of them.

Managing Roll Numbers

The board is responsible for managing the school roll to ensure it does not exceed the maximum number of students agreed to in the Integration Agreement.

What Does the Legislation Say?

Enrolment in state integrated schools is governed by a clear legislative framework. Boards must be familiar with the relevant provisions to ensure full compliance.

Education and Training Act 2020

- **Schedule 6, cl 26–27** – Sets out the basis for preference of enrolment in state integrated schools, including who qualifies and how preference is granted.
- **Schedule 6, cl 30** – Addresses the management of roll numbers, including the obligations of the board in maintaining enrolment within agreed limits.

Integration Agreement

Each school's Integration Agreement is a legally binding document that specifies:

- The agreed **maximum roll** for the school
- The number of **preference** and **non-preference** student places
- The obligations on the board, proprietor, and parents

Boards should have ready access to their Integration Agreement and review it regularly.

What Is Different About Enrolment in a State Integrated School?

Preference of enrolment is given to those students whose parents have established a genuine connection with the special character of the school.

This is the defining feature that distinguishes enrolment in a state integrated school from a regular state school. The school's integration into the state system does not diminish its right and responsibility to prioritise enrolment based on special character. This means the school community, including its student body, should authentically reflect the values, faith, and ethos of the school. Families seeking enrolment are invited to demonstrate their connection to that character, which may be evidenced through active participation in the faith life or education philosophy.

- ❑ The special character is not an add-on — it is the foundation. Enrolment preference is the primary mechanism through which that special character is protected and sustained.

Enrolment Process – Part 1: Before You Enrol

Understanding the correct sequence of the enrolment process protects both the school and prospective families and whānau. There are important procedural requirements that must be followed before a student is enrolled.

1

Preference established first

The Act requires that preference be based on a **philosophical or religious connection**, but it leaves the **method of proof** to each Proprietor. For state integrated schools that use preference criteria, a preference certificate (or equivalent) must be issued by the Proprietor **before** a family and whānau proceeds to enrol.

This confirms the family's connection to the school's special character, as required under Schedule 6, [clause 26](#) of the Education and Training Act 2020.

No Enrolment Fees or Costs

Schools **cannot charge any fee as a condition of enrolment**. Domestic students are entitled to free enrolment under the Education and Training Act, and charging for enrolment is unlawful. [\[6\]](#)

Boards must ensure their processes fully comply with these requirements.

Appeals Process

There is **no statutory requirement** that all state integrated schools must have a formal appeals process for general enrolment decisions.

However:

- Proprietors determine how preference is granted, and may establish their own review or appeals processes for decisions they make. Integrated schools may adopt such processes as part of good governance and transparency.
- Any appeals processes that exist must align with the school's Integration Agreement and the requirements of Schedule 6.

Integrated schools may maintain an appeals or review process for enrolment-related decisions. Where such a process exists, it should be fair, documented, and clearly communicated to families. Appeals processes are determined by the Proprietor and are not mandated by legislation.

Enrolment Process — Part 2: Order, Obligations & Non-Preference

Once the initial steps are completed, schools must follow a clear and legally sound order of enrolment, and ensure all parties understand their ongoing obligations.

1

Order of Enrolment

Preference students must be enrolled ahead of non-preference students. The order follows the criteria set out in the Integration Agreement and the Education and Training Act 2020. Schools must apply this order consistently.

2

Non-Preference Places

Once preference places are filled, remaining places may be offered to non-preference students. The **number of non-preference** places is specified in the Integration Agreement. These students must still accept the school's special character programme.

3

Enrolment Obligations of Parents

Parents enrolling their child agree to support the school's special character, including **participating in the school programme** and meeting **attendance dues**. Schools must clearly communicate these obligations at the time of enrolment.

Maximum Roll

Managing the school roll within agreed limits is a legal obligation — not merely a policy preference. Boards carry direct accountability for ensuring compliance.

1

Set by Integration Agreement

The Integration Agreement specifies both the **maximum roll** and the maximum number of **non-preference students**. These numbers are legally binding and cannot be exceeded without formal amendment.

2

Preference Takes Priority

Preference students must always be enrolled ahead of non-preference students. Only after all eligible preference students are accommodated may non-preference places be filled.

3

Board's Legal Responsibility

The board is **legally responsible** for managing the roll within the agreed numbers. This responsibility cannot be delegated away. Boards must monitor enrolment numbers actively and regularly.

4

Do Not Breach the Agreement

Exceeding the maximum roll is a breach of the Integration Agreement. This can have serious legal and operational consequences for the school, proprietor, and board.

Questions to Consider

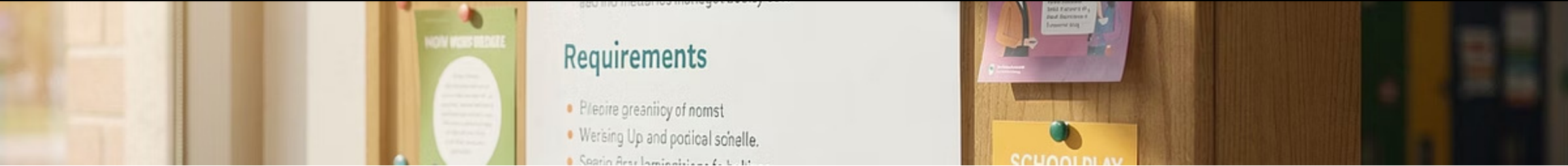
Use these questions as a governance self-audit tool. They are designed to prompt honest reflection about your school's enrolment practice, policy, and compliance — and to identify areas for development.

Policy, Process & Knowledge

- Does everyone in your school understand the correct enrolment procedures and respective roles?
- Is there a record of number of current preference and non preference students?
- Does the board have a detailed working knowledge of the legislative and regulatory framework?
- Does the board have a current, fit-for-purpose enrolment policy?
- Are enrolment advertising and other communications clear, accurate, and up to date?

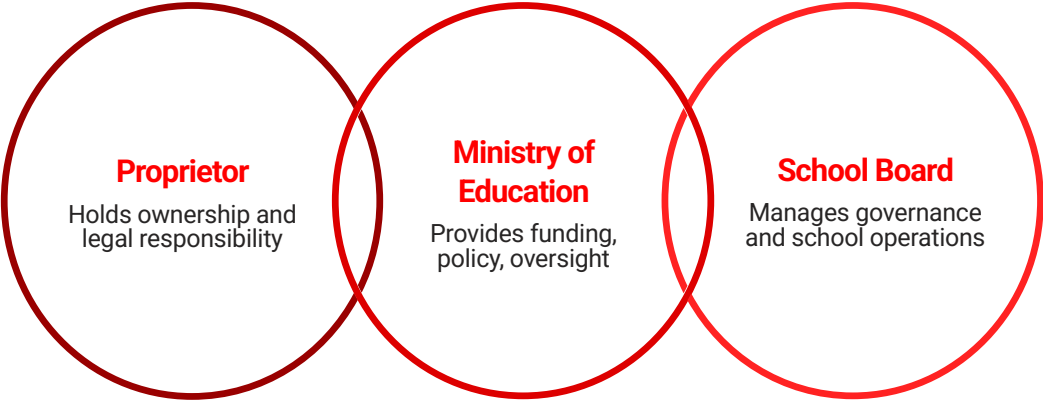
Delegation, Compliance & Support

- What delegation and discretion does the principal have in implementing enrolment procedures? How is this monitored?
- What processes induct parents into the school's Special Character?
- Do the school and proprietor have a robust complaints/concerns policy for enrolments?
- Are requests for attendance dues and donations lawful? Are you clear on what charges can legally be made?
- Do you know where to seek advice on any of these matters?



Partners and Support

Key Partnerships



State Integrated Schools are communities of partnership. The partners are the Proprietor of the school, the Ministry of Education, and the School Board. Each partner has a legal responsibility to maintain the school's special character.

Support Network

It is important to know who is there to support and guide you in your role as a school board member. Your primary contacts are:



[New Zealand School Boards Association](#)



[Ministry of Education](#)



[APIS](#) - For free advice and support, training, and workshops.