



28/03/2024

C. Radford

fyi-request-25773-d64872b9@requests.fyi.org.nz

Tēnā koe C. Radford

OIA: 1323089 – Current Ministry contracts with BLENNZ

Thank you for your email of 18 February 2024 to the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) requesting the following information:

- 1. I would like to see the current contracts that the Ministry of Education (MoE) has with Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ (BLENNZ).*
- 2. I am interested in finding how funding allocations are made for children with different ranges of vision loss or are blind.*
- 3. I would also like to see any criteria that the MoE has to determine how children access different services through BLENNZ.*

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

Regarding **part one** of your request, I can advise that there are no existing contracts between the Ministry and BLENNZ. As an alternative, we have provided you with a Resourcing Notice for BLENNZ, which is attached as **Appendix A**. This notice records the additional grants to BLENNZ in recognition of their specialised service, while also outlining the basis for the resourcing.

We have withheld all personal information under section 9(2)(a) of the Act, to protect the privacy of natural persons.

We have also withheld all calculations and payments that are outlined for each service shared in the Resourcing Notice under section 9(2)(b)(ii) of the Act, to protect information where the making available of the information would be likely unreasonably to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied or who is the subject of the information.

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

For your interest, the total Government funds for BLENNZ school operations, teacher salaries, and property funding (between 2018-2022) are available on the Ministry's Education Counts website.



This can be accessed by using the following link: <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/find-school/school/financial-performance?district=7619®ion=2&school=4156>.

Regarding **part two** of your request, on funding allocations.

One way of allocating funds for ākonga with vision loss or who are blind is through the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS). Applications for ORS are sent to a panel of Ministry of Education verifiers who consider the applications against specific ORS criteria. If ākonga meet the ORS criteria for vision, they will be ORS verified High or Very High depending on their level of need.

The resources available through ORS consist of specialist support, 0.1 FTE (High) or 0.2 FTE (Very High) specialist teacher component (or referred to as additional teacher), a contribution towards the cost of Teacher Aide and a consumables grant for small items.

For your interest, the Ministry's general criteria for ORS is publicly available on the Ministry's website and can be accessed using the following link:

<https://www.education.govt.nz/school/student-support/special-education/ors/criteria-for-ors/>.

Regarding **part three** of your request on criteria to access services.

Ākonga who do not meet the ORS criteria for vision may still be eligible for services through BLENNZ as the sensory provider, including support from Resource Teachers: Vision (RTVs). RTVs assess ākonga needs in a range of settings and work with whānau, teachers and specialists to provide the most appropriate support. BLENNZ have their own eligibility criterion for services they provide to these ākonga. I am therefore refusing this part of your request under section 18(g) of the Act, as the information requested is not held by the Ministry, and I have no grounds for believing that the information is either held by or connected more closely with the functions of another department subject to the Act.

You may like to contact BLENNZ directly to see if they are able to provide you more information about the eligibility criteria for other services they provide to ākonga who do not meet eligibility for ORS.

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



Michelle Ashby
General Manager
Te Mahau | Te Pae Aronui | Learning Support