



COOK ISLANDS

HEALTHY SCHOOLS POLICY

October 2026

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1. Policy Statement

Te Marae Ora Ministry of Health Cook Islands (TMO), in collaboration with Te Maraurau o te Apii Ministry of Education (MoE), is committed to promoting healthy, supportive, safe and inclusive education environments that enable children and young people to learn, grow and thrive.

This Cook Islands Healthy Schools Policy establishes the public-health position and technical health foundation for Healthy Schools. It brings together TMO public-health leadership with clear recognition of MoE's separate education sector authority and responsibilities. MOE retains responsibility for determining how relevant public-health recommendations and standards are adopted and implemented within the education sector through its own policies and authorised mechanisms.

TMO and MoE will work collaboratively to support implementation, provide appropriate guidance and technical advice, promote healthy initiatives, and address systemic barriers to the implementation. The Healthy Schools approach supports physical, mental and social wellbeing, lifelong healthy behaviours, learning and development, and prevention of risk factors associated with obesity and non-communicable diseases (NCDs), while recognising Cook Islands culture, climate change, local circumstances and the different operating conditions in Rarotonga and the Pa Enua.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this Cook Islands Healthy Schools Policy is to establish a clear and practical public-health framework for promoting Healthy Schools across the Cook Islands, in partnership with MoE. The policy sets out TMO's public-health position and technical health foundation while recognising that MoE determines how relevant recommendations and technical standards are adopted and implemented within the education sector through its complementary Healthy Schools Implementation Policy and other authorised education sector mechanisms.

The Policy aims to:

- Clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of TMO, MoE, education providers, leaders, staff, families, children and other partners;
- Establish how relevant TMO technical advice, recommendations and health standards are considered and, where applicable, incorporated into education settings through the appropriate education sector mechanisms.
- Support healthy food and beverage environments, physical activity, wellbeing, preventive health, safe and climate sensitive environments;
- Support coordinated delivery of school-based health-promotion, screening and oral-health programmes;
- provide a consistent approach to implementation, monitoring, reporting, corrective action and continuous improvement; and
- Recognise Pa Enua and other local circumstances so that Healthy School outcomes are pursued through practical, equitable and sustainable approaches.

3. Objectives

- Promote healthy eating habits and access to nutritious, culturally appropriate foods that support healthy growth, learning and long-term wellbeing.
- Reduce exposure to sugary drinks, energy drinks, confectionery and foods high in sugar, salt or unhealthy fats within education environments.
- Promote water and nutritious as everyday drink choices and ready access to safe drinking water.
- Encourage fruit and vegetable consumption, including through school gardens and garden-to-table activities where appropriate.
- Strengthen healthy food and beverage standards for canteens, vendors, and catering, fundraising and education-related events.
- Promote regular physical activity, active play, movement and reduced sedentary behaviour.
- Promote positive mental wellbeing, resilience, respectful relationships and appropriate early support and referral.
- Support national efforts to prevent and reduce NCD risk factors and childhood and adolescent obesity.
- Strengthen partnerships among health, education, families, communities and government agencies.
- Promote consistent and equitable Healthy School approaches across the Cook Islands while recognising Pa Enua circumstances.

4. Scope

This Policy applies to:

- The Healthy School Programmes across early childhood, primary and secondary education settings, including government and registered private providers, subject to applicable legal, regulatory, funding, contractual and operational arrangements.
- Food and beverages, canteens and catering, school events and activities, physical activity, student health and wellbeing, health promotion, screening and oral health, smoke, vape and alcohol-free environments, sun protection, food safety and hygiene, and other approved Healthy Schools initiatives.
- Home-packed food is addressed through supportive family engagement and healthy-lunchbox approaches and is not automatically considered provider-controlled food.

Implementation may vary between early childhood, primary and secondary education settings, and between Rarotonga and the Pa Enua, taking into account the applicable legal, regulatory, funding, contractual and operational arrangements. TMO and MoE will work in partnership, to exercise its respective statutory functions and responsibilities and working collaboratively with education providers and other relevant partners. Requirements that are not applicable to a particular setting will not be treated as compliance requirements for that setting.

5. Legislation and Regulations

Healthy Schools Policy must operate within the laws, regulations and other authorised requirements applicable to the relevant education provider, health service, food provider or activity. These include, as applicable, the

Education Act 2012, applicable food-safety, hygiene and licensing requirements, relevant education and child-safeguarding requirements, health and safety requirements, privacy and confidentiality requirements, and other legislation or regulations administered by each Ministry.

This policy does not replace, override or create an alternative process for a statutory or regulatory obligation. Where a statutory or regulatory requirement applies, it continues to operate under the legislation and processes under which it is established. Where there is uncertainty about the legal status of a requirement, the relevant Ministry should confirm the applicable legal or policy mechanism before treating it as mandatory.

6. Alignment to National and Regional Frameworks

This Healthy Schools Policy supports and should be implemented consistently with relevant Cook Islands national frameworks, strategies, curricula, guidelines and inter-agency arrangements.

These include, as applicable, the Education Master Plan 2024–2034, Cook Islands Curriculum, MoE Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (MERL) Framework 2024–2034, *Te Pata Tutara* a Te Marae Ora National Health Roadmap 2017-2036, *Parani Paruru ete Ngaki'anga te Ora'anga Meitaki* Cook Islands Action Plan to Prevent and Control NCDs 2026-2030, Cook Islands Kai Ora Guidelines for Healthy Eating and Living, Cook Islands Physical Activity & Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Everyone (2023), relevant TMO health-promotion, screening, oral-health and NCD-prevention guidance, and the Agreement of Cooperation between TMO and MoE dated 18 December 2025.

The policy should also be implemented with regard to relevant regional and international public-health, child wellbeing, nutrition, physical activity, education and sustainable-development frameworks where these are applicable to the Cook Islands. Alignment provides policy coherence and supports shared outcomes; it does not, by itself, create a new statutory or education sector obligation unless the relevant framework is adopted through an authorised mechanism.

7. Mandate and Authority

The Cook Islands Healthy Schools Policy establishes the public health position and technical health foundation for Healthy Schools. MoE determines how relevant the Healthy Schools requirements are adopted, implemented and monitored within the education sector through its complementary Healthy Schools Implementation Policy and other authorised education sector mechanisms. The two Ministries collaborate where their responsibilities intersect, without transferring or merging their statutory or organisational authority.

TMO is responsible for public health, clinical services, specialist technical advice, health promotion, food safety, health screening, health standards and guidelines, and health data monitoring and evaluation within its lawful authority.

MoE is responsible for leading education sector implementation and determining how relevant Healthy School requirements are integrated into education policies, curriculum, school operations, provider accountability, registration, funding and monitoring arrangements.

Nothing in this policy transfers statutory functions between the Ministries, creates new regulatory powers, or makes a TMO technical recommendation automatically binding on an education provider. Mandatory education-sector requirements must be traceable to applicable legislation or regulation, the MoE Healthy Schools Implementation Policy, or another authorised MoE or provider implementation mechanism.

8. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

Definitions	Meaning
Healthy Schools	a coordinated approach to creating education environments that support the physical, mental and social wellbeing, healthy development and learning of children and young people.
Education provider	a government school, registered private school, early childhood education provider or other education setting to which an applicable Healthy Schools requirement applies.
Education setting	the school, ECE or other education environment and relevant education-related activities covered by this policy.
TMO	Te Marae Ora Ministry of Health Cook Islands
MoE	Te Maraurau o te Apii Ministry of Education
Healthy School Food Standards	the current TMO technical standards for food and beverages provided, sold, supplied or promoted through school-controlled food provision where the relevant implementation arrangement provides for their application
Public health recommendation	health advice that does not become an education sector compliance requirement unless formally adopted through an appropriate mechanism
Education sector requirement	a requirement made applicable to a provider through an authorised MoE, registration, funding, contractual, governance or other education sector mechanism
Home-packed food	food or drink supplied by a parent or caregiver for the individual consumption of their child and not otherwise controlled or provided by the education provider
Screening	an organised health assessment or check undertaken under an approved TMO clinical or public health programme to identify potential health risks and support appropriate follow-up or referral
Health information	individual information relating to a person's health, screening, clinical assessment, treatment, referral or related health status and is subject to applicable confidentiality and privacy requirements
Pa Enea	the islands and communities outside Rarotonga, recognising their differing local circumstances and implementation capacity
Technical standard	a detailed health, nutrition, clinical or public-health standard maintained by the responsible technical authority. A TMO technical standard becomes an education-provider requirement only through the applicable adoption mechanism
Principal	Is the senior Ministry official responsible for the day to day management of school

9. Authority and Relationship between TMO and MoE

- The Cook Islands Healthy Schools Policy establishes the public health position and technical health foundation for Healthy Schools. MoE determines how relevant Healthy School requirements are adopted, implemented and monitored within the education sector through its complementary Healthy Schools Implementation Policy and other authorised education sector mechanisms.
- Public health recommendations provide health guidance and direction. It supports education practice but are not treated as mandatory education compliance requirements unless expressly adopted through an appropriate education sector mechanism.
- TMO technical standards provide detailed health or nutrition requirements. Where these standards are adopted or incorporated through an applicable MoE, regulatory, registration, funding, contractual or provider arrangement, education providers are expected to implement them accordingly.
- Statutory and regulatory public health requirements, including applicable food-safety and licensing requirements, operate according to the legislation and regulatory processes under which it is established.
- MoE retains responsibility for education sector matters including curriculum implementation, staffing and employment arrangements, school governance, provider accountability, school review and other Ministry monitoring processes.
- TMO retains responsibility for public health, clinical, technical, food-safety, licensing and other statutory functions within its authority.
- The Ministries will work collaboratively wherever health and education responsibilities intersect.

10. Guiding Principles

- Child Wellbeing and Learning First – the Healthy Schools initiatives place physical, mental and social wellbeing at the centre and support participation, engagement and learning.
- Equity and Inclusion – implementation should take account of age, gender, disability, socioeconomic circumstances, island location, differing abilities and other relevant needs.
- Evidence-Based Practice – guidance should reflect available evidence, Cook Islands data, monitoring, surveillance and evaluation where available.
- Cultural & Climate Relevance – approaches should reflect Cook Islands culture, values, traditional foods, physical activities, games, locally appropriate practices with climate resilient environments.
- Partnership and Shared Contribution – health and education providers, families and communities contribute according to their respective roles.
- Prevention and Early Intervention – education settings provide opportunities to establish healthy behaviours, reduce preventable health risks, recognise concerns early and support referral.
- Practical, Proportionate and Sustainable Implementation – requirements should be achievable, affordable, clearly communicated and proportionate to their purpose.
- Supportive and Non-Punitive Engagement – healthy behaviours should be promoted through education, encouragement and appropriate support rather than shame, stigma or unnecessary penalty.
- Privacy, Consent and Confidentiality – health activities and information must be managed in accordance with applicable requirements.

- Continuity of Teaching and Learning – health activities should be coordinated to minimise unnecessary disruption.

11. Roles and Responsibilities

11.1 Te Marae Ora Ministry of Health

- Provide public health leadership and technical guidance on nutrition, physical activity, NCD prevention, mental wellbeing, oral health and health promotion.
- Maintain and review the *Cook Islands Kai Ora Guidelines for Healthy Eating and Living* and related technical nutrition guidance.
- Provide and promote approved health education resources, including My Healthy Plate and other healthy lifestyle resources.
- Deliver or coordinate school based health promotion and preventive health programmes, including screening and oral health activities, in accordance with current TMO programme and clinical requirements.
- Provide or facilitate voluntary adult health promotion and NCD screening opportunities in accordance with current TMO protocols.
- Provide appropriate health advice, follow-up and referral pathways where risks are identified.
- Undertake food-safety, licensing, inspection and related regulatory functions in accordance with applicable legislation and TMO processes.
- Monitor and evaluate relevant health promotion activity, programme delivery and population health outcomes.
- Advise MoE of significant emerging health evidence, technical concerns or changes to TMO standards that may affect education sector implementation.
- Work collaboratively with MoE, education providers, families, communities, island administrations and other partners, including in the Pa Enua.

11.2 Te Maraurau o te Apii Ministry of Education

- Retains responsibility for determining how relevant Cook Islands Healthy Schools Policy and technical standards are adopted, implemented and monitored within the education sector.
- Responsibilities are exercised through the MoE Healthy Schools Implementation Policy, applicable legislation, education-sector policies and other authorised mechanisms.
- TMO and MoE will collaborate on technical advice, health-promotion programmes, implementation support and matters requiring inter-agency coordination, while maintaining their respective statutory and organisational responsibilities.

11.3 Education Providers, Principals and Education Leaders

- Support Healthy Schools initiatives in accordance with applicable legislation, MoE policies, provider governance arrangements and other authorised education-sector requirements.
- Responsibilities may include facilitating approved health-promotion activities, supporting healthy and safe education environments, communicating relevant health information and coordinating with TMO where appropriate.

- Specific requirements relating to curriculum, staffing, supervision, school operations, monitoring and accountability are determined through the applicable education-sector arrangements.

11.4 Teachers and Other Education Staff

- Contribute to Healthy Schools outcomes through their professional responsibilities and applicable education-provider requirements.
- Involvement in health-promotion activities, student wellbeing, supervision and referral arrangements is governed by relevant MoE or provider policies and procedures.
- Clinical assessment, diagnosis and treatment remain the responsibility of appropriately qualified and authorised health professionals.

11.5 Parents and Caregivers

Parents and caregivers are important partners in Healthy Schools. They are encouraged to support nutritious and culturally appropriate food choices, regular physical activity, adequate rest and consistent health messages; participate in relevant Healthy School initiatives; communicate information relevant to a child's health and wellbeing where appropriate; and work constructively with education and health providers.

11.6 Children and Young People

Children and young people are encouraged to make healthy choices, participate in appropriate physical activity, contribute to respectful and supportive environments, engage in health promotion activities and participate in screening programmes subject to applicable consent, assent and clinical requirements. Their views should be considered meaningfully in Healthy Schools initiatives where appropriate.

11.7 Vendors and Food Providers

- Comply with applicable food safety, hygiene and licensing requirements.
- Comply with the TMO Food Standards where those standards have been incorporated into the applicable provider, contractual or education sector arrangement.
- Follow relevant food service, vendor or provider requirements established by the education provider.
- Cooperate with applicable TMO regulatory, licensing and technical requirements.

12. Healthy Schools Public Health and Implementation Requirements

12.1 Healthy Eating and Nutrition

Healthy eating supports growth, learning, development and NCD prevention. TMO promotes a balanced and varied diet, daily fruit and vegetable consumption, appropriate portions and healthy use of local and traditional foods and preparation methods.

TMO recommends water and nu as everyday drink choices and promotes ready access to safe drinking water. Detailed food classifications, portions, serving guidance, nutritional criteria and permitted exceptions are maintained in the *Cook Islands Kai Ora Guidelines and Healthy Eating and Living*.

Where the *Cook Islands Kai Ora Guidelines and Healthy Eating and Living* have been adopted or incorporated through an arrangement applicable to an education provider, food and beverages sold, supplied, promoted or catered by or on behalf of the provider must comply with the applicable Standards. Providers should prioritise nutritious, culturally appropriate and locally available foods, including traditional Cook Islands foods prepared in healthy ways.

12.2 Healthy School Food Standards

The *Cook Islands Kai Ora Guidelines and Healthy Eating and Living* are the technical framework for food and beverages provided, sold, supplied or promoted through school controlled food provision where the relevant implementation arrangements provide for their application.

The detailed nutritional criteria¹, proportions, classifications, serving guidance, beverage provisions, examples and permitted exceptions are maintained in the *Cook Islands Kai Ora Guidelines and Healthy Eating and Living* rather than duplicated in this policy. Education providers must not establish alternative nutritional classifications that conflict with an applicable TMO standard.

12.3 Home-Packed Food and Family Engagement

Food or beverages supplied by a parent or caregiver for the individual consumption of their child are encouraged to comply with the *Cook Islands Kai Ora Guidelines and Healthy Eating and Living*.

Home-packed food approaches must be supportive and non-stigmatising. A child must not be shamed, embarrassed, publicly identified or unnecessarily penalised because of food supplied by their family, and food must not be confiscated in a manner that leaves the child without adequate food.

Where there is concern that a child does not have adequate food, the immediate priority is the child's wellbeing. The matter should be addressed sensitively through family engagement, pastoral support and referral pathways where necessary. Home packed food should consider affordable options, locally available foods and traditional foods should be promoted where appropriate.

12.4 Events, Celebrations, Sports, Excursions and Fundraising

Healthy School principles apply, where relevant, to sports events and competitions, excursions and education outside the classroom activities, celebrations, special occasions, fundraising activities, community and family events, and other activities where food or beverages are provided, sold or promoted through the education setting.

Where the *Cook Islands Kai Ora Guidelines and Healthy Eating and Living* apply to the provider, food and beverages supplied or sold through these activities must comply with the applicable Standard, including any expressly permitted event, fundraising or special occasion provisions. Safe drinking water should be reasonably available, particularly during sport, physical activity and extended outdoor activities.

¹ *Cook Islands Kai Ora Guidelines and Healthy Eating and Living*, pg12

12.5 Physical Activity and Physical Education

Consistent with the *Cook Islands Physical Activity & Sedentary Behavior Guidelines for Everyone 2023*, TMO recommends that children and adolescents² (including children with disabilities) achieve an average of at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity³ per day across the week.

Education settings may contribute through Physical Education, sport, active play, movement opportunities, traditional Cook Islands games and cultural activities, inclusive recreational activities, walking or cycling where safe and appropriate, road-safety promotion, movement breaks and opportunities to reduce prolonged sitting.

The 60-minute physical activity is a public health recommendation and does not require an education provider to deliver 60 minutes of formal curriculum instruction each day. Formal Physical Education is governed by the Cook Islands Curriculum and applicable MoE curriculum requirements.

The physical-activity recommendations of 30mins of moderate intensity or 15mins of high intensity physical activity at least 5 days a week for adults⁴ are health guidelines and do not constitute employment, appraisal or staff-performance requirements.

12.6 Mental Health and Wellbeing

Education providers must promote safe, supportive, inclusive and respectful environments that support the mental and emotional wellbeing of children and young people. Providers must implement applicable requirements relating to student wellbeing, respectful relationships, bullying, violence, discrimination and student safety.

Teachers and education staff should be supported to recognise signs that a child or young person may require additional assistance, respond appropriately within their professional role, and use established support and referral pathways. Clinical assessment, diagnosis and treatment remain the responsibility of qualified health professionals.

TMO may work with MoE, education providers and other ministries on age appropriate mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention initiatives, including resilience, respectful relationships, mental health understanding and early recognition of health risks.

12.7 Student Health Promotion, Screening and Oral Health

TMO provides school based health promotion, preventive and screening services.

The school based health programmes include and not limited to physical health examinations for students every two years; metabolic health checks twice each year for students in Years 9 and 10; oral health promotion, screening and access to relevant oral health services; health promotion, NCD prevention activities,

² Ages 5-17years, Cook Islands Physical Activity & Sedentary Behavior Guidelines for Everyone 2023, p16

³ Moderate physical activity includes, walking to school and household chores, vigorous physical activity includes sports, heavy chores in yard & garden

⁴ Ages 18-64 years including those with disabilities and chronic diseases, Cook Islands Physical Activity & Sedentary Behavior Guidelines for Everyone 2023, p18

immunisation; mental health and wellbeing promotion initiatives where provided through TMO programmes; and appropriate health advice, follow-up and referral.

Education providers will support reasonable access to scheduled TMO programmes while minimising unnecessary disruption to teaching and learning. Screening and individual health interventions must follow applicable TMO clinical protocols, parental or caregiver consent, student assent where appropriate, privacy and confidentiality requirements.

Individual clinical results remain health information and must not be used as education provider compliance or student performance information. A student must not be treated as non-compliant with education requirements solely because the student or parent/caregiver does not participate in a consent based health screening activity.

12.8 Staff Health Promotion and Voluntary Screening

TMO provides or facilitates voluntary health promotion and preventive health activities for education staff. These may include blood pressure, blood glucose and lipid checks, height and weight measurements, other NCD risk assessments, mental health assessment and clinically appropriate screening, health information, advice and referral.

Participation is voluntary. Individual health information is confidential and must not be provided to MoE or an employer, or used for employment or performance management purposes, except with appropriate consent or where disclosure is otherwise authorised or required by law.

12.9 Smoke, Vape and Alcohol-Free Environments

Education providers must maintain smoke, vape and alcohol-free environments in accordance with applicable legislation and education sector or provider requirements. TMO may provide prevention information, health promotion resources and related public health support.

Conduct relating to smoking, vaping or alcohol is addressed through applicable education, behaviour, employment, provider or statutory processes. This policy does not create a separate disciplinary process.

12.10 Sun Protection

- Encourage broad brimmed, bucket or legionnaire style hats that provide appropriate protection to the face, ears and neck.
- Provide or make reasonable use of available shade, particularly during outdoor activities and periods of higher sun exposure.
- Support disability, age, and gender appropriate sun safety education.
- Where a specific hat, uniform or other sun protection requirement is to be mandatory, establish it through the applicable education provider or MoE process, taking account of affordability, practicality and local circumstances.

12.11 Health Promotion and Preventive Health

Education providers should support age appropriate health promotion and preventive health initiatives covering healthy eating and nutrition, physical activity and reduced sedentary behaviour, NCD prevention, oral health,

mental and emotional wellbeing, tobacco, vaping and alcohol prevention, sun safety and other public health priorities identified through collaboration between TMO and MoE.

Health promotion content that intersects with formal teaching and learning must remain consistent with the Cook Islands Curriculum and applicable MoE requirements.

13. Pa Enua and Local Implementation

This Healthy School Policy must promote equitable health and education outcomes across Rarotonga and the Pa Enua while recognising differences in local circumstances.

- availability and seasonality of food;
- affordability and freight costs;
- interruptions to shipping and food supply;
- availability of locally grown and traditional foods;
- access to safe drinking water and food-storage or preparation facilities;
- infrastructure and equipment;
- access to health services, screening and specialist support;
- staffing and operational capacity; and
- other circumstances outside the reasonable control of the education provider.

Providers should make reasonable efforts to achieve intended Healthy Schools outcomes through locally appropriate and sustainable approaches. Where circumstances outside a provider's reasonable control temporarily prevent full implementation of an applicable technical standard or education sector requirement, this should not by itself constitute non-compliance or failure to support the policy. The provider should identify the constraint, take reasonable steps to address or manage it, and seek appropriate MoE or TMO advice where necessary.

Local flexibility does not provide a general exemption where reasonable and practicable alternatives are available. Where a formal exception or alternative arrangement is required, it must be managed through the applicable TMO technical standard or education sector process.

14. Canteens, Vendors and Food Safety

Education providers operating a canteen, engaging a food or beverage vendor, or authorising another person or organisation to sell or supply food or beverages must ensure that the arrangement reflects the Healthy Schools requirements applicable to that provider.

- Applicable food safety, hygiene and licensing requirements are met.

- The applicable *Cook Islands Kai Ora Guidelines for Healthy Eating and Living* are clearly communicated to canteen operators, vendors and food providers.
- Responsibility for meeting requirements is clearly established.
- Food and beverage offerings can be reasonably monitored by the provider.
- Concerns or non-compliance can be raised and addressed through the arrangement.
- Repeated or significant failure may result in appropriate corrective action, including review or termination of an arrangement where warranted.

The Cook Islands Healthy Schools policy requirements should be incorporated into existing written arrangements such as contracts, service agreements, leases, licences, memoranda of understanding or other appropriate arrangements. Such arrangements should identify the *Cook Islands Kai Ora Guidelines for Healthy Eating and Living*, food safety requirements, responsibility, monitoring, and communication of concerns and consequences of repeated or significant non-compliance.

This policy does not replace or limit food safety, hygiene, licensing, inspection or other statutory requirements administered by TMO or another competent authority. Statutory breaches are managed through the applicable statutory or regulatory process.

15. Implementation Support, Resourcing and New Initiatives

MoE and TMO will work collaboratively, within their respective responsibilities and available resources, to support this policy approach. Support may include implementation guidance, communication materials, technical public health and nutrition advice, clarification of the *Cook Islands Kai Ora Guidelines for Healthy Eating and Living*, professional learning, workshops, health promotion resources and targeted assistance.

TMO is responsible for developing and maintaining the technical public health guidance and standards that it owns. MoE is responsible for education sector guidance explaining how applicable the Cook Islands Healthy Schools policy requirements are implemented within education settings.

Implementation should, wherever reasonably practicable, use existing resources, systems and programmes. This policy does not create an automatic entitlement to additional MoE funding, staffing, infrastructure, equipment or other resources.

Where a proposed requirement creates significant new financial, staffing, infrastructure, procurement or operational implications, those implications must be identified and considered through the appropriate planning, budgeting and approval processes before a new education sector obligation is established.

Where a new Healthy Schools initiative or programme is proposed, MoE and TMO should agree before implementation on its purpose and outcomes, participating providers, respective responsibilities, staffing and operational implications, funding responsibilities where applicable, information and privacy requirements, monitoring and evaluation arrangements, and duration and continuation arrangements.

16. Monitoring, Reporting, Corrective Action and Evaluation

16.1 Monitoring

The Cook Islands Healthy Schools policy implementation will be monitored through existing education and health sector systems wherever practicable, with the aim of supporting implementation, identifying barriers and avoiding unnecessary duplication.

MoE will determine how applicable education sector requirements are incorporated into existing monitoring, governance, provider accountability and school review processes. TMO may undertake monitoring, technical assessment, health surveillance, inspection, screening, licensing and other activities within its public health, clinical, technical and statutory functions.

16.2 Reporting and Information Sharing

The Cook Islands Healthy Schools implementation should use existing reporting arrangements wherever these provide sufficient information for monitoring and accountability. MoE should, wherever practicable, incorporate relevant information into existing Ministry reporting, governance, review or data-collection processes rather than establish parallel systems.

TMO may collect health programme, population health or technical monitoring information required for its functions and may use appropriate aggregate and de-identified information for evaluation and planning. Individual clinical information must not be included in routine education sector reporting.

Information shared between TMO and MoE must be handled in accordance with applicable privacy, confidentiality, information sharing and records management requirements.

16.3 Corrective Action

Where a Healthy Schools requirement has not been met, the response should be proportionate to the nature, seriousness and cause of the issue. Consideration should include whether the matter involves a statutory or regulatory requirement, education and health sector requirements, technical standard or guidance; the actual or potential risk; whether the provider had reasonable control; whether the issue is isolated, repeated or systemic; prior advice or support; Pa Enua circumstances; and urgency.

Where education sector corrective action is required, the responsible authority will communicate the action, responsible person or provider and appropriate timeframe. Immediate action may be required where there is a significant health or safety risk or where legislation requires it. Other matters may be addressed through improvement actions, technical assistance or normal provider planning processes.

16.4 Support before Escalation

Where an issue does not present an immediate or significant health, safety, statutory or regulatory risk, the preferred approach is to support the provider to achieve the required outcome through clarification, technical

advice, reasonable improvement actions and follow-up. Formal escalation should occur where warranted by the seriousness, persistence or nature of the matter.

16.5 Continuous Improvement

Monitoring and evaluation findings should be used to strengthen implementation, identify emerging health needs, improve technical guidance and support appropriate responses to barriers experienced by providers and communities. TMO will periodically review relevant health evidence, implementation experience and available data. MoE will review education sector implementation experience and implications through its applicable policy processes.

17. Key Performance Indicators

The indicators below relate to TMO public-health, programme-delivery and technical responsibilities. Education-sector implementation indicators are established and approved separately through the MoE Healthy Schools Implementation Policy and the MoE Policy Management Framework.

Indicator	Target / Measure	Lead
TMO Healthy Schools technical standards maintained	Relevant TMO technical standards and guidance are reviewed and updated as required in response to evidence, programme experience or identified need.	TMO
Health-promotion and preventive-health programmes delivered	Applicable scheduled TMO health-promotion, screening and oral-health programmes are delivered or coordinated subject to consent, service availability and local circumstances.	TMO
Material technical changes communicated	Significant emerging health evidence, technical concerns or changes to TMO standards with education-sector implications are communicated to MoE in a timely manner.	TMO
Public-health and regulatory functions undertaken	Applicable food-safety, licensing, inspection and related regulatory functions are undertaken through the relevant statutory and TMO processes.	TMO
Healthy Schools public-health monitoring and evaluation	Relevant programme delivery, health-promotion activity and available population-health information are monitored and used to inform continuous improvement.	TMO

18. Policy Review and Amendment

This policy should be formally reviewed at least every three years, or earlier where required by legislative change, emerging health evidence, national priorities, significant implementation experience or a material policy issue.

The review should consider health data, implementation experience across Rarotonga and the Pa Enua, feedback from education partners and communities, relevant education and health sector monitoring, and developments in national, regional and international policies.

Supporting TMO technical standards, guidelines, protocols and resources may be reviewed and updated separately as required. Where proposed changes have significant implications for education settings, TMO will consult with MoE and affected education partners as appropriate. Material amendments to the education sector implementation arrangements must be approved through the applicable MoE policy-management process; TMO amendments must follow applicable TMO approval arrangements. MoE determines whether, how and from what date revised TMO technical standards or recommendations are incorporated into education-sector arrangements through authorised MoE or provider mechanisms.

19. Inter-Agency Governance and Relationship

TMO and MoE share a commitment to improving the health, wellbeing, development and educational outcomes of children and young people throughout the Cook Islands.

Both Ministries will work collaboratively on implementation planning, communication, technical and education sector guidance, health promotion, professional learning, monitoring and evaluation, identification of systemic barriers, Pa Enua implementation and continuous improvement.

TMO and MoE maintain two separate but complementary Healthy Schools policy instruments: the Cook Islands Healthy Schools Policy, establishes the public-health position and technical health foundation; and the MoE Healthy Schools Implementation Policy, which determines how relevant health recommendations and standards are adopted and implemented in the education sector. Each policy is approved and administered by its respective Ministry. Both Ministries collaborate to support one coherent Healthy Schools approach without merging their separate policy authorities.

20. Authorization

The Cook Islands Healthy Schools Policy is owned and approved by TMO in accordance with its applicable policy approval arrangements. It is approved by TMO Executive per approved Resolution No. 2026-10-09, dated 27th October 2026 and will be effective from 1 February 2027.

The Ministry of Education is an education-sector partner and retains independent authority over its Healthy Schools Implementation Policy and other authorised education-sector mechanisms. This policy does not, by itself, alter statutory functions, create an automatic funding commitment, or replace an independent statutory or regulatory obligation.

Associated and supporting documents

The documents listed in this section provide relevant policy, legislative, technical and operational context and guidance for the implementation of this policy. Unless expressly stated otherwise, their inclusion does not create additional legal or contractual obligations for their parties/participant.

Where a supporting document is amended, replaced or updated, the revised document will not automatically alter the obligations, requirements or commitments under this policy.

1. Cook Islands Education Master Plan 2024–2034. <https://www.education.gov.ck/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/241017 -EMP-2024-2034.pdf>
2. Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning (MERL) Standards
3. Cook Islands Curriculum Framework <https://www.education.gov.ck/curriculum-documents/curriculum-framework/>
4. Cook Islands Kai Ora Guidelines for Healthy Eating and Living (*Mataara ki te Kai Ora nō te Ora'anga*). <https://www.health.gov.ck/kai-ora-guideline-for-healthy-eating-and-living>
5. Cook Islands Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for Everyone 2023. <https://www.health.gov.ck/page/2/?wpnonce=156e0661f6&id=1637&method>
6. Ara Tango Anga'anga — Cook Islands National Health Strategic Plan 2023–2027. <https://www.health.gov.ck/national-health-strategic-plan-2017-2021/>
7. Te Papa Tutara a Te Marae Ora — National Health Road Map 2017–2036. <https://www.health.gov.ck/national-health-road-map-2017-2036/>
8. Legislation- *Public Health Act 2024*. <https://www.health.gov.ck/policies-guidelines/>
9. Legislation-*Ministry of Health Act 2013*. <https://www.health.gov.ck/policies-guidelines/>
10. Legislation- *Food Act 1992-93 and Amendments Act 2005*. <https://www.health.gov.ck/policies-guidelines/>
11. My *Healthy Plate* and TMO Nutrition and Health-Promotion Resources <https://www.health.gov.ck/public-health/health-promotion/>
12. TMO Student Health Screening and Referral Protocols
13. Relevant Oral Health Promotion and Service Guidance
14. NCD Prevention and Screening Guidance <https://www.health.gov.ck/public-health/health-promotion/>
15. Mental Health and Wellbeing Promotion and Referral Guidance <https://www.health.gov.ck/public-health/health-promotion/>
16. Legislation-*Education Act 2012* <https://www.education.gov.ck/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Education-Act-2012.pdf>
17. Cook Islands Education Guidelines and Administration Guidelines
18. Agreement of Cooperation between Te Marae Ora Ministry of Health and Te Maraurau o te Apii Ministry of Education. Date 18th December 2025