

Education Report: Consideration of Merger of Central New Brighton School (3311), Freeville School (3344) and North New Brighton School (3448) or Closure of Central New Brighton School and Merger of Freeville School and North New Brighton School: Feedback from the consultation period

Executive Summary

1. This paper seeks your decision on the proposed merger of Central New Brighton, Freeville and North New Brighton Schools under section 156A of the Education Act 1989.
2. On 13 September 2012, you announced a number of proposals for changes to schooling in greater Christchurch including the proposal to merge Central New Brighton and South New Brighton Schools on the South New Brighton School site, and the proposal to merge Freeville and North New Brighton Schools on the North New Brighton School site.
3. The proposals were based on the surplus capacity in the four existing primary schools in the Brighton cluster and the significant investment required to repair and strengthen school buildings at these schools following the Canterbury earthquakes.
4. In January 2013, the Ministry of Education reported to you on the results of the consultation undertaken by the Boards of each school with its community about both proposals to merge the two schools. These reports are attached for your information as Appendices One and Two (Metis 742542 and 742538). The Ministry recommended that the merger of Central New Brighton and South New Brighton Schools be approved and that the merger of Freeville and North New Brighton Schools be approved.
5. On 18 February 2013, you announced your interim decision that the mergers should proceed, and wrote to the Boards of each school giving them until 28 March 2013 to advise you of any reasons why the merger should not take place. The Boards of all four schools responded to your letter.
6. In April 2013, the Ministry reported to you on the results of this consultation. This report is attached for your information as Appendix Three (Metis 770385).
7. On 29 May 2013, you announced your final decision that the merger between Central New Brighton South New Brighton Schools would not proceed and that South New Brighton School would remain open on its current site.

8. You also announced that that you were deferring your decision about the merger of Freeville School and North New Brighton School and initiating consultation on two new proposals affecting three schools in New Brighton. These proposals were to:
 - merge Central New Brighton, Freeville and North New Brighton Schools on the North New Brighton School site; or
 - close Central New Brighton School and finalise the interim decision to merge Freeville and North New Brighton Schools on the North New Brighton site.
9. You gave the Boards of the three schools until 10 July to respond to these new proposals. The Boards of each school responded to your letter within the timeframe.
10. The Board of Central New Brighton School supports the proposed merger of Central New Brighton, Freeville and North New Brighton Schools. The Board also states that it is adamantly opposed to the second proposed option; the closure of Central New Brighton School. The Board has concerns about the proposed timeframe of May 2014 as the date of implementation and would rather implementation occur at the beginning of a year, preferably 2015. The Board also proposes that while construction is being undertaken on the North New Brighton School site, that the children are located on the Central New Brighton School site. It believes that this would decrease the construction time and minimise the concerns it has about disruptions to learning and safety.
11. The Board of Freeville School believes that the school should be retained and repaired on its current site and does not support the proposed three-school merger. The Board has said that should a merger proceed, its preference is for a two-school merger with North New Brighton School and for the closure of Central New Brighton School. The Board has concerns about the proposed timeframe of May 2014 and would rather that implementation occur at the beginning of a school year, preferably 2016. The Board also requested assurance that its bilingual unit would be protected in the proposed merged school.
12. The Board of North New Brighton School supports the proposed merger of North New Brighton, Central New Brighton and Freeville Schools. The Board, staff and parents are concerned about the proposed timeframe of May 2014 and would rather that implementation occur at the beginning of a school year.
13. The Ministry recommends that you agree to merge Central New Brighton, Freeville and North New Brighton Schools, initially on two sites; Freeville and North New Brighton, and finally on the North New Brighton School site when construction has been completed in 2016.
14. If you agree to this recommendation, the Ministry also recommends that the merger should take effect on 27 January 2015.

15. The Ministry has considered the rationale put forward by the Boards about why the merger should not be implemented in Term 2, 2014 and considers that, while it would be possible to successfully implement the merger at this time, it may not be in the best interests of the children as it could disrupt their learning more so than if it was implemented at the beginning of a school year.
16. The implementation of the merger for 27 January 2014 has also been considered and is not deemed possible. This is because time does not allow for necessary staffing processes to be completed for the start of 2014. These processes include the appointment of the Board, the appointment of the Principal and three rounds of appointments for the teaching staff. These processes are outlined in the relevant collective agreements. Should this be the effective date of merger the merged school would not be fully staffed until the end of Term One.
17. If you agree to the proposed merger it is recommended that the merged school would initially operate on two sites, the North New Brighton and Freeville School sites. The appointed Board should decide the configuration of the two sites which will determine where the children from Central New Brighton School would attend school until construction has been completed on the North New Brighton School site in January 2016.
18. If you agree to the merger of the three schools, it is estimated there would be operational costs to the Crown in the first year of \$834,734, with estimated annual operational savings after that of \$449,022 per year. The estimated net operational savings to the Crown in the first ten years after merger are estimated to be \$2,458,226.
19. If you agree with the Ministry's recommendation to merge the three schools the Ministry will prepare a report for you on the appointment of the Board for the continuing school; and appoint change manager/s, residual agent/s and a governance facilitator to support the process.

Recommended Actions

We recommend that you:

- a. **note** the information provided about the feedback from the consultation from the Boards of Trustees of Central New Brighton School, Freeville School and North New Brighton School and consider it alongside the first two submissions from each of the Boards;
- b. **agree** to the proposed merger of Central New Brighton School, Freeville School and North New Brighton School occurring on 27 January 2015 on the Freeville School and North New Brighton School sites and then on the North New Brighton School site in 2016 when the building work is complete, with the Board of North New Brighton School being the board of the continuing school (this is the Ministry's preferred option);

AGREE / DISAGREE

OR

- c. **agree** to the proposed merger between Central New Brighton School, Freeville School and North New Brighton School occurring on 5 May 2014 on the Freeville School and North New Brighton School sites and then on the North New Brighton School site in 2016 when the building work is complete, with the Board of North New Brighton School being the board of the continuing school;

AGREE / DISAGREE

AND

- d. **note** that once your decision is known, the Ministry will provide letters for your signature to the Boards of Central New Brighton School, Freeville School and North New Brighton School and to the local Members of Parliament, advising them of your decision;
- e. **note** that once your decision is known, a Gazette notice will be provided for your signature; and
- f. **agree** that a copy of this report is released to the Boards of Trustees of Central New Brighton School, Freeville School and North New Brighton School.

AGREE / DISAGREE

Katrina Casey
Deputy Secretary
Regional Operations

Encls

Hon Hekia Parata
Minister of Education

5 / 8 / 13

Education Report: Consideration of Merger of Central New Brighton School (3311), Freeville School (3344) and North New Brighton School (3448) or Closure of Central New Brighton School (3311): Feedback from the consultation period

Purpose

1. This report seeks your decision on the proposed merger of Central New Brighton, Freeville and North New Brighton Schools under section 156A of the Education Act 1989 (the Act).

Background

2. The New Brighton Learning Community Cluster comprises four Year 1-8 full primary schools. All of these schools have suffered some degree of earthquake damage. These schools are situated in an eight kilometre stretch of land which is separated from the rest of Christchurch by an area of red zone, the Avon River and an estuary. This is likely to constrain future population growth.
3. All of the four schools in New Brighton are utilising classrooms that were built in the 1960s/1970s and several of the schools are utilising classrooms that were built in the 1940s. The older age of these buildings means they need significant earthquake strengthening. It is not considered cost effective to repair existing buildings as the cost of earthquake repairs alone would exceed the cost of building a new primary school with modern learning environment facilities.
4. On 13 September 2012, you announced a number of proposed changes to schooling provision in greater Christchurch, and on 28 September 2012 you wrote to the Boards of Trustees of both Central New Brighton School and South New Brighton School formally initiating consultation on possible merger of the two schools. You also wrote to the Boards of Trustees of both Freeville School and North New Brighton School initiating consultation on possible merger of the two schools. That consultation period ended on 7 December 2012.
5. In January 2013, the Ministry reported to you on the outcome of the first consultation process and recommended that Central New Brighton and South New Brighton Schools should be merged (Metis 742542 – Appendix One) and that Freeville and North New Brighton Schools should also be merged (Metis 742538 – Appendix Two).
6. On 18 February 2013, you announced your interim decision that the mergers should proceed, and wrote to the Boards of Trustees giving them an additional period to let you know of any reasons why Central New Brighton and South New Brighton Schools should not be merged and why Freeville and North New Brighton Schools should not be merged. This consultation period ended on 28 March 2013.

7. On 29 May 2013, you announced your final decision that the merger between Central New Brighton School and South New Brighton School would not proceed and that South New Brighton School would remain open on its current site (Metis 770385 – Appendix Three). This decision was based on the very low proportion of the merged school's roll that would be from Central New Brighton School.
8. You also announced that you were deferring your decision to merge Freeville School and North New Brighton School and initiating consultation on two new proposals affecting three schools in New Brighton. These proposals are to:
 - merge Central New Brighton, Freeville and North New Brighton Schools on the North New Brighton School site; or
 - close Central New Brighton School and finalise the interim decision to merge Freeville and North New Brighton Schools on the North New Brighton School site.
9. Central New Brighton School is a decile 2, Year 1-8 full primary school in the Christchurch East electorate. The July 2012 roll of the school was 122 comprising 34 Māori, nine Pasifika, 76 New Zealand European children and three international students. Its March 2013 roll was 100.
10. Freeville School is a decile 4, Year 1-8 full primary school in the Christchurch East electorate. The July 2012 roll of the school was 299 comprising 82 Māori, 6 Pasifika, 204 New Zealand European, 6 Asian children, and one child of another ethnicity. Its March 2013 roll was 275.
11. North New Brighton School is a decile 4, Year 1-8 full primary school also in the Christchurch East electorate. The July 2012 roll of the school was 222 comprising 55 Māori, 9 Pasifika, 153 New Zealand European, and 4 Asian children, and one child of another ethnicity. Its March 2013 roll was 214.
12. You gave the Boards of the three schools until 10 July 2013 to respond to these new proposals. Submissions were received and were provided to you on 5 July.

Response from the Boards of Trustees – Central New Brighton, Freeville and North New Brighton Schools

13. The Boards of Central New Brighton, Freeville and North New Brighton Schools all responded to your letter within the set timeframe.

Central New Brighton School

14. The Board of Central New Brighton School supports the proposed merger of Central New Brighton, Freeville and North New Brighton Schools on the North New Brighton School site. The Board has identified the following benefits associated with the school merging instead of closing:
 - children will have more opportunity to stay with their friends
 - it is more likely that there will be familiar staff for children around the school, these staff would also bring valuable background knowledge about the children to the merged school
 - aspects of the Central New Brighton School culture would be able to be incorporated into the merged school's culture
 - the best teachers and support staff would be able to be appointed from the New Brighton community
 - their children would feel an important part of the new learning community
 - their community would feel their needs are being heard
 - parents from Central New Brighton School would be represented on the appointed Board.

15. The Board has also stated that it and its community are adamantly opposed to the second proposed option of the closure of the school. The Board has identified the following detrimental affects of the school's closure:
 - the loss of the school would add to the children's large amount of loss over the last two years and they would feel disempowered
 - there are likely to be fewer familiar teachers for the children
 - the children could not take aspects of their Central New Brighton culture with them to their new school/s
 - ORRS students would be disadvantaged
 - the current Year 7 group of children would not be able to finish their primary schooling as a group in Year 8
 - parents would not have representation on the appointed Board
 - a school with a long history in the community (125 years) would cease to exist
 - staff would not have as much opportunity to apply for positions
 - the merged school would not have as big a pool of teachers and support staff to draw on for its appointments. The bigger the pool the more opportunity to select the best personnel for the positions.

16. The Board and the community believe that the proposed merger should be implemented at the beginning of a school year, preferably 2015. The Board also proposes that the children from North New Brighton School relocate onto the Central New Brighton School site while construction is being undertaken on that site. This is proposed because the construction will involve noise, ground shaking, vehicle congestion, restricted play areas and could be a distraction to learning. The Board also notes that this could decrease the time required for construction and that there are more comfortable conditions for staff on the Central New Brighton site. The Board has proposed the following options:
- a merge at the beginning of 2015
 - b merge at the beginning of 2014 with North New Brighton School children relocating to Central New Brighton School while construction is undertaken on that site
 - c merge in May 2014 with North New Brighton School children relocating to Central New Brighton School while construction is undertaken on that site
 - d merge in May 2014 with Central New Brighton School children remaining on that site for the remainder of 2014.
17. The Board notes that of the 93% of families that responded to a questionnaire 96% of responses preferred the proposed three-school merger and 4% of responses preferred the proposed closure. Also, 90% of these responses indicated that they would send their children to the merged school, this is approximately 85 children. In addition, 97% of parents favoured the North New Brighton School children and staff relocating onto the Central New Brighton School site while construction work is undertaken on the North New Brighton site.
18. The Board has also identified a number of issues and requests related to the proposed merger including:
- an 'independent child and family advocate' being appointed to assist families with the transition to the merged school
 - that the \$30,000 put aside for the 125 year anniversary, scheduled for Waitangi weekend 2014, remains available for the event
 - the opportunity for the merged school to take part in PB4L
 - that the additional support for children and families in low decile schools remain
 - that the school's Social Worker in Schools (SWiS) should be transferred to the merged school
 - that the school hall and pool are community assets and the hall remains the asset of the merged school while the pool is offered to Rawhiti Sports Group to manage and run.

Freeville School

19. The Board of Freeville School believes in order to preserve the characteristics of its successful school that the school should be repaired and retained on its current site. Aside from the fact that North New Brighton School is physically close, the Board has not been convinced of the reasons why the school has been proposed to merge. The Board also believes that it is too early for long-term demographic projections to inform this decision and that a school of approximately 300 children is a viable roll size for an urban primary school.

20. The Board believes that the retention of Freeville School would maintain a level of choice and diversity available to residents in New Brighton. *"Parents would have the choice of sending their child to a smaller school rather than only having large schools as an option in our area."* The Board considers that this choice is important as otherwise in the New Brighton and Aranui area there will only be three primary schools, all of which will have rolls upwards of 500 children.
21. The Board also believes that the retention of Freeville School would minimise risks for its Māori bilingual unit. It considers that there is a risk that whānau who currently feel a sense of ownership of the unit could feel disenfranchised should the school be merged.
22. Should a merger occur, the Board's preference is for it to be a two-school merge with North New Brighton School, and that Central New Brighton School should close. The Board considers that this would better enable aspects of the Freeville culture to be preserved, there would be better Freeville representation on the appointed Board, and there would be a greater level of job protection to Freeville staff.
23. The Board of Freeville School is opposed to a three-school merger as it believes that it adds another level of complication to a merger and seems to have no advantages for its community.
24. The Board is opposed to the time frame of the merger being implemented in Term 2, 2014. It stated that while the date change was proposed in order to provide certainty it has actually increased uncertainty for its community. It also would increase the complexity of staffing decisions for the year which would add significant stress on the staff and community.
25. The Board proposes that the two-school merger should be implemented in 2016 as initially proposed as this would allow enough time for the community to meet and form a new vision, values and goals and to form the school's strategic direction. As the merged school is proposed to operate from a split site until 2016, the Board considers that there are no benefits to be gained from an earlier merge. As a second preferred option the Board proposes that the merger should be effective at the beginning of a school year.
26. The Board states that when a new school is established in New Zealand the Minister of Education allows a 12 month lead in for the appropriate processes to occur before children arrive on the new site, this includes the appointment of the Principal. The Board asks that the level of staffing entitlement support available to the new school to enable the release of staff is considered.
27. The Board is concerned that a shortened construction period could result in it being less involved in the design of the school site and buildings. The Board and community want spaces at least equal to the size and quality of the Freeville Learning Studio and do not want a design solution imposed on them.
28. The Board requests that adequate financial support is provided for the new school's facilities, including the hall, playgrounds, sports, library, hard surfaces, car parking and landscaping. The Board expects these facilities to be of a higher standard than Freeville's current facilities.

29. The Board has also raised a number of other issues related to the proposed merger:
- it wants clarity about the formation, structure and representation of the appointed Board
 - it wants a commitment for adequate funding for the operation of split sites. This must include a sufficient staffing component to fully release a staff member on both sites
 - it wants clear guidelines and job descriptions for the appointed Board, Change Manager, new / existing Principals, and the Ministry throughout the process
 - it wants the support of the Ministry to protect the bilingual programme through the merger process. This includes staffing, professional development, teaching spaces and other appropriate resources and facilities
 - it wants you to understand that the community is under a great deal of personal stress and the feeling of once again being disempowered by this process in their community is high. The Board believes that it does not have to be this way and requests the partnership of the Ministry.

North New Brighton School

30. The Board of North New Brighton School and its staff unanimously support the proposed merger of North New Brighton, Central New Brighton and Freeville Schools. They believe that this option gives equal and fair opportunity to all three schools from a community, student and staff perspective.
31. The Board and the community consider that the proposed merger should not be implemented in Term 2, 2014. Instead they want the merger to be implemented at the beginning of a school year.
32. The Board has identified a number of concerns that it associates with a mid-year merger date. This includes that:
- relationships between teachers and students are built at the start of the year. It does not seem reasonable to establish relationships in Term 1 and then expect this to happen again in Term 2
 - class and school cultures are established at the start of the year. It could be confusing and inconsistent for students to have two sets of rules and values within a year
 - there could be a disruption to teaching and learning / achievement. The Board references research which shows that when students transition schools their achievement declines and learning can be impeded for at least six months and up to a year or more while they deal with other priorities caused by the shift (Hawk, K & Hill, J, 2004)
 - there could be an increased workload for teachers should a merger occur mid-year. It would be unrealistic to expect teachers to prepare well for this change within a short time frame.

33. The Board has also identified other issues associated with the proposed merger. This includes that:
- it wants assurance that the construction can be completed within a timely manner with adequate funding and support
 - it wants assurance that financial, staffing and logistical issues that arise from having a split site will be addressed
 - it wants clear guidelines and job descriptions for the Change Manager and new / existing Principals and Boards
 - the increased workload on staff to prepare for the merger should be recognised
 - consideration should be given to the OSCAR programme currently run at the school.

Ministry's Response – Central New Brighton, Freeville and North New Brighton Schools

Date of Implementation

34. All three schools proposed that the merger be implemented at the beginning of a school year instead of Term 2, 2014. Freeville School proposed 2016, Central New Brighton School proposed 2014 or 2015, and North New Brighton School proposed 2015.
35. The Ministry has considered the rationale put forward by all three Boards and considers that, while it is possible to successfully implement the merger at May 2014, it could disrupt children's learning significantly more than if the merger was implemented at the beginning of a school year. If the merger was implemented at the beginning of a school year it would also make staffing decisions more straight forward.
36. Given the above, the Ministry recommends that if you decide to proceed with a merger, it should be effective from 27 January 2015.
37. The Ministry also considered an effective merger date of 27 January 2014. In order to make this timeline work:
- The local Ministry staff would have needed to start working with schools in July on deciding a Change Manager and Residual Agent, and on putting nominations forward for an appointed Board. While this doesn't result in anything that is irreversible (that is, we would identify the preferred Change Manager but wouldn't contract them), it would appear that your decision is being pre-empted by the actions of the Ministry. If all Boards had supported the three-school merger proposal for January 2014 the above actions would have been reasonable. However, only one school proposed that the merger proceed in January 2014 (Central New Brighton School).

- It required a final decision to be announced in mid-August. The Ministry understands that you will announce your decision in September.
 - The three rounds of staffing appointments (within the merging schools, other affected Christchurch schools and nationally advertised appointments), and the Christmas period, mean that the school would open on 27 January 2014 with the majority of staff, but wouldn't be fully staffed until the end of Term 1. The Ministry could not support that this is in the best educational interest of the children.
38. Given the above considerations, the Ministry does not consider that the merger becoming effective in Term 1, 2014 is possible.
39. The last possible date for a final announcement about this merger to allow a January 2014 implementation, given that only one school proposed January 2014 for implementation, was in July 2013.

Support for Merging Schools

40. All three Boards raised concerns that the proposed merged school would not be resourced adequately, especially as it would initially operate on two sites.
41. The Ministry has agreed to support schools that are operating on two sites for an interim period until property developments have been completed. The Ministry's split site funding is provided to address extra costs that may be associated with operating over more than one site. Funding for heat, light and water is considered separately to split site funding.
42. Split site funding is calculated based on the base funding component of a school's operational funding. The average split site payment made to primary schools in 2013 was approximately \$31,000 per annum. Boards have the discretion as to how this funding is used.
43. The Ministry has also agreed to provide additional funding for schools that merge in Christchurch. This includes:
- an administration grant of approximately \$24,000 (excluding GST)
 - release funding for Principal designate of up to 1.0 FTTE of Special Reasons Staffing for one term prior to the effective merger date
 - release funding for Senior Management of up to 1.0 FTTE of Special Reasons Staffing for two Senior Management teachers for up to the last five weeks of the last term prior to the merger becoming effective
 - Board related costs of a one-off payment of \$10,000 to the appointed Board.
44. The Board of Freeville School requested that the Principal be appointed 12 months before the effective date of merger as this is what happens at new schools. Once the final decision on the merger date is known the Ministry will consider if this request is possible, given the recruiting / appointment timeframe.

Central New Brighton School

45. Should the proposed three-school merger proceed, the Board noted that the best teachers and support staff from all three schools could be appointed. The Ministry considers that regardless of which proposed option proceeds, the best staff for the position should be appointed. The Board also noted that there could be more familiar staff for its children at the school who could also bring valuable background information about the Central New Brighton children. The Ministry recognises that teachers familiar with Central New Brighton children could assist with their transition to the merged school.
46. It also noted that the Central New Brighton School culture could be able to be incorporated in the merged school's culture as its parents would be represented on the appointed Board and that the Central New Brighton community would feel that their needs have been heard and the children part of the new learning community. The Ministry acknowledges that the Central New Brighton community is a significant part of the New Brighton area and it would be disappointing for it to not be represented on the school's Board.
47. Should the proposed closure of Central New Brighton School proceed the Board stated that children accessing Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) funding for special education needs would be disadvantaged. The Ministry will ensure that all children with special education needs are provided with appropriate support. The Board also noted that its children could feel a sense of loss and disempowerment if the school closed. The Ministry expects that whatever school the children transitioned to would provide each child with appropriate support, including a transition plan.
48. Should the merger proceed the Board has proposed that North New Brighton School children relocate to the Central New Brighton School site while the construction is undertaken. This would not allow the construction to be completed significantly earlier. While the Ministry acknowledges that the construction may be disruptive to the children's learning, we consider that it would be equally, if not more, disruptive to add an additional transition for the children from Central New Brighton and North New Brighton Schools by moving them for just one year. Therefore options b and c proposed by the Board are not considered to be worthwhile. Likewise, the Ministry considers that it is unnecessary to initially operate the school over three sites when it can be operated on two. This would create further staffing and logistical issues for the merged school, especially as Central New Brighton School has a low roll. Thus the Board's option d is not considered a good option either. The Ministry recommends that the merger proceeds on two sites; North New Brighton and Freeville, and that the appointed Board should decide at which site children from Central New Brighton School attend.

49. The Board also identified a number of other issues which are addressed below:
- the transition support that would be provided or the Change Manager could fulfil a similar role to the proposed 'independent child and family advocate'
 - as Waitangi weekend falls before the proposed merger date, the current Board is able to use its discretion to put aside \$30,000 for the 125 year anniversary celebration
 - the Ministry has developed a transition plan that identifies additional services and supports being provided to the three schools, this includes PB4L and SWiS. The Ministry would work with the merged school and providers to minimise any disruption to these services
 - Ministry analysis will be undertaken to determine the decile of the merged school. Regardless of a school's decile the Ministry expects all schools to provide appropriate support for their children
 - the Ministry will undertake further discussion and investigations about the future of the school hall and pool.

Freeville School

50. The Ministry considers that, for the reasons described in the Rationale for Change document for Freeville School, it is not a good option for the school to be retained and repaired on its current site. These reasons include population decline in the New Brighton area, the surrounding land being classified as Red Zone, the older age of the school buildings and the cost associated with their repair, and the opportunity to provide modern learning environments for a larger number of children in the New Brighton community.
51. The Board proposed that, should the school be retained, it could provide choice for families in the area about the size of the school their child attended. It is the Ministry's expectation, that regardless of size, all schools can achieve the same outcomes for their children. Thus the Ministry does not consider this an adequate reason to not proceed with the proposed merger.
52. The Board is also concerned about the potential risks a merger could have on its bilingual unit. The decision to operate a bilingual unit at the merged school would be the appointed Board's, however, the Ministry considers that the bilingual unit could be included, grown and enhanced in a merged school. The appointed Board would have representatives from Freeville School that are likely to be able to assist with the transition to and growth of the bilingual unit in the merged school. The Ministry does not consider that this is an adequate reason not to proceed with the proposed merger.
53. The Freeville School Board would prefer a two-school merge rather than a three-school merge in order to better preserve Freeville culture, have more representation on the appointed Board and to protect its staff. While a three-school merge would mean that there are likely to be fewer representatives from Freeville School on the appointed Board, the Ministry considers that there is still the opportunity to preserve the key positive aspects of the Freeville School culture in a merged school. In any case the best staff for the available positions should be appointed.

54. The Board is concerned that the proposed timeframe would not allow the appointed Board to be involved in the design of the school site and buildings. The Ministry's Property team would work closely with the appointed Board to provide input into the design of the new school buildings; including the teaching spaces and the layout. This would ensure that the school's infrastructure is in line with the school's vision and strategic direction. The Ministry is confident that the new buildings would be of at least the quality of the Freeville Learning Studio. This build would be resourced adequately.
55. The Board is concerned about the job security of its staff. The staff would be subject to the usual staffing appointment process that occurs in a merger and the best staff would be appointed to each position by the appointed Board.
56. The Ministry can provide the further information and clarity that the Board has requested about the formation, structure and representation of the appointed Board. There are also task lists available for the Change Manager and Residual Agent positions. The Ministry would support the Board and Principal to understand all of the different roles involved in the merger process.

North New Brighton School

57. The Board wants assurance that the construction can be completed in a timely manner with adequate funding and support. The Ministry would work closely with the appointed Board and provide regular updates about the construction and timeframes.
58. The Ministry could provide the further information and clarity that the Board has requested about the formation, structure and representation of the appointed Board. There are also task lists available for the Change Manager and Residual Agent positions. The Ministry would support the Board and Principal to understand all of the different roles involved in the merger process.
59. The Board has also requested that the OSCAR programme be given consideration. OSCAR programmes are before / after school and school holiday programmes that meet the OSCAR standards for school aged children. Some families are eligible for a subsidy for this service. This is a Ministry of Social Development (MSD) initiative and any new proposal / amendment to an existing programme would need to follow the process for operating an OSCAR programme as set out by MSD.

Priority Groups

Special Education

60. Provision of all aspects of Special Education have been considered by the Ministry. Individual children who currently receive a specialist service have been identified and, should you decide to merge the schools, transition planning for them will occur. This process has the goal of minimal, if any, disruption to these specialist services as schools transition through the merger process.
61. The Ministry's aim is for all schools to demonstrate inclusive practices. Where necessary merging schools will be assisted to meet the individual needs of all children who attend regardless of their level of special education need.

62. Any additional services or supports provided to schools, for example Social Workers in Schools, PB4L and RTLb, have been identified. The Ministry will work with the school and providers to minimise any disruption.

Central New Brighton School

63. Central New Brighton School had a July 2012 roll of 122, of which 34 (27.9%) were Māori and 9 (7.4%) were Pasifika children.
64. As at 1 July 2012, Central New Brighton School had two children accessing Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) High Needs funding. The school accesses a social worker under the Social Workers in Schools initiative and the school commenced School-Wide PB4L in 2012.

Freeville School

65. Freeville School had a July 2012 roll of 299, of which 82 (27.4%) were Māori and 6 (2%) were Pasifika children. Freeville School provides Māori immersion education at Level 2.
66. The Ministry provides specialist support to a number of children at Freeville School. Freeville School has one child accessing ORS High Needs funding and one child is receiving an Intensive Wraparound Service under PB4L.

North New Brighton School

67. North New Brighton School had a July 2012 roll of 222, of which 55 (24.8%) were Māori and 9 (4.1%) were Pasifika children.
68. The Ministry provides specialist support to one child at North New Brighton School who is receiving an Intensive Wraparound Service under PB4L.

Early Childhood Education

69. North Beach Community Childcare Centre is a community-based education and care centre established in 1996. In February 2011, the centre was forced from its severely damaged Christchurch City Council-owned site in Marriotts Rd. The Ministry assisted the service to establish in a fully relocatable, purpose-built centre on a site at North New Brighton School in July 2012. It operates under a temporary lease of one year, plus the right of renewal of one year.
70. If your final decision is that the merger between Central New Brighton, Freeville and North New Brighton Schools should proceed, it is proposed that the Centre remain on the North New Brighton School site. This could either be in its current position (at no additional cost to the Ministry) or on an alternative part of the merged school site if the reconfiguration of the merged schools requires relocation of the Centre. The Ministry would need to cover the cost of relocation of the building, playground, fencing and connection to services.

Financial Implications

Central New Brighton School, North New Brighton School and Freeville School proposed merger

71. If you agree to the merger of Central New Brighton, North New Brighton and Freeville Schools, the cost to the Crown of the Education Development Initiative (EDI) enhancement would be \$1,471,000 based on the EDI policy. Joint Schools Initiative Funding (JSIF) would be \$420,340. This funding is only generated if the merger is implemented.
72. It is estimated there would be operational costs to the Crown in the first year of \$834,734, with estimated annual operational savings after that of \$449,022 per year. The estimated total net operating savings to the Crown in the first ten years after merger are estimated to be \$2,458,226.

Freeville School and North New Brighton School proposed merger

73. If you agree to the merger of Freeville and North New Brighton Schools, the cost to the Crown of the EDI enhancement would be \$880,000 based on the EDI policy. JSIF would be \$251,520. This funding is only generated if the merger is implemented.
74. It is estimated there would be operational costs to the Crown in the first year of \$696,433, with estimated annual operational savings after that of \$196,869 per year. The estimated total net operating costs to the Crown in the first ten years after merger are estimated to be \$56,128.

Possible closure of Central New Brighton School

75. If you agree to close Central New Brighton School, the cost to the Crown of the EDI enhancement would be \$591,000 based on the EDI policy. This funding is only generated if the closure is implemented.

Property

Central New Brighton School, Freeville School and North New Brighton School proposed merger

76. The North New Brighton School site is large enough (4.7ha) to accommodate the merger of the three schools. The site is approximately twice the size of many Christchurch primary schools.
77. The Ministry recommends that the merged school should initially operate on two sites, the North New Brighton and Freeville sites, from 27 January 2015. The appointed Board would determine which site the children from Central New Brighton School would move to for 2015. All children would attend school on the North New Brighton School site when the rebuild has been completed in January 2016. Alternatively, if you decide that the effective date should be Term 2, 2014, the same configuration would apply.

78. If you approve the merger of Central New Brighton, Freeville and North New Brighton Schools on the North New Brighton School site, the expected cost for property would be approximately \$12-12.5 million. This is comprised of the cost to rebuild the school to accommodate 650 children. The site is large enough to rebuild the school while also accommodating children currently at the school and those enrolled at Central New Brighton School in the existing classrooms.
79. If the schools are merged, the Freeville and Central New Brighton School sites would be disposed of according to the government policy requirements applying to the disposal of surplus Crown owned land unless there was a need to keep utilising this land for education provision of some sort in the network.

Freeville School and North New Brighton School proposed merger

80. Should you decide to proceed with the merger of Freeville and North New Brighton Schools, the expected cost for property would be \$10.8 million. This is comprised of the cost to rebuild the school to accommodate 526 children.
81. The Ministry recommends that the merged school should initially operate on two sites until property is developed on the North New Brighton School site.
82. Should this be your decision the Freeville site would be disposed of according to the government policy requirements applying to the disposal of surplus Crown owned land unless there was a need to keep utilising this land for education provision of some sort in the network.

Possible closure of Central New Brighton School

83. Should you decide to proceed with the closure of Central New Brighton School, the site would be disposed of according to the government policy requirements applying to the disposal of surplus Crown owned land unless there was a need to keep utilising this land for education provision of some sort in the network.

Governance at the merged school

84. If your final decision is that Central New Brighton, Freeville and North New Brighton Schools should merge, North New Brighton School would be the continuing school. The Ministry recommends that the Board of the continuing school is a Board appointed by you during the interim period (being the set period prior to the merger until the election three months after the merger). The make up of this appointed Board would be developed in consultation with the affected Boards of Trustees. This gives the opportunity for it to reflect the wider community. The appointed Board would have an independent chairperson. The Ministry will seek nominations to the appointed Board and seek your agreement to its appointment.
85. The appointed Board would take over from the current Board of Trustees of North New Brighton School from the date of its appointment. It would govern North New Brighton School through to the merger date and also oversee the merger process.

Staffing

86. Central New Brighton School has a confirmed teacher staffing for 2013 of 5.9 FTTEs. The school also has 6.84 FTE support staff positions (11 employees). Freeville School has a confirmed teacher staffing for 2013 of 14.90 FTTEs and 8.64 FTE support staff positions (13 employees) and North New Brighton School has a confirmed teacher staffing for 2013 of 10.8 FTTEs and 5.48 FTE support staff positions (8 employees).
87. Based on the confirmed staffing rolls for each school, if Central New Brighton, Freeville and North New Brighton Schools merged, the FTTEs for the newly merged school would be 29.7. This would represent a drop of 1.9 FTTE. This figure is based on the assumption that all children currently on the rolls of the three schools will go to the newly merged school.
88. Based on the confirmed staffing rolls for each school, if Freeville and North New Brighton Schools merged the Full Time Teacher Equivalents (FTTEs) for the newly merged school would be 24.5. This would represent a drop of 1.2 FTTE. This figure is based on the assumption that all children currently on the rolls of the two schools will go to the newly-merged school.
89. Should the final decision be that the schools merge or that Central New Brighton School closes, permanent teaching and support staff at the school/s will be eligible to access the provisions of their relevant collective agreements.
90. The Ministry recognises that the merger process is difficult for staff, and will work with Boards to ensure that adequate and appropriate support for staff is in place throughout the process.
91. The Ministry has developed a plan for supporting staff which offers provision for developing CVs and other skills, should that be requested.

Support for children

92. The Ministry's Education Wellbeing Response team is available to work collaboratively with the schools and the Boards to identify strengths and needs across Board of Trustees, staff, and children. The team can work with the school management and Board to problem-solve issues related to wellbeing and develop a plan for ongoing support. This may include direct support from Ministry resources, as well as facilitating engagement with a wide range of activities and agencies. Specific children and teacher programmes are also available as part of a school plan e.g. FRIENDS¹.

Enrolment Scheme

93. North New Brighton and Central New Brighton Schools do not have enrolment schemes and children are currently able to enrol in those schools regardless of where they live.

¹ This is a programme that helps children build resilience during times of transition. More details can be found in the report: *Outcomes of Consultation on Proposed School Closures and Mergers in Greater Christchurch* (Metis 770370).

94. Freeville School has an enrolment scheme. Should you proceed with the proposed merger the Ministry will implement a special temporary enrolment scheme at Freeville School under the Canterbury Earthquake (Education Act) Order 2011. This scheme will operate from the day of your announcement, and will allow the siblings (not yet at school) of out-of-zone children enrolled at Freeville School on the date of your announcement entry to Freeville School.
95. This special temporary enrolment scheme will be replaced by a normal enrolment scheme following the date of merger. This normal enrolment scheme will be developed by the Board which will consult with neighbouring schools and community about what the normal enrolment scheme home-zone should be for enrolments from 2015 onwards.
96. This normal enrolment scheme would give entry to the newly merged school to siblings (not yet at school) of children enrolled at any of the three schools involved in the merger who live outside the normal enrolment zone of the newly merged school.
97. South New Brighton School currently has an enrolment scheme and has requested an amendment to the scheme. The Ministry believes that an amendment to the scheme would pre-empt your decision on the configuration of greater Brighton schools, and has informed the school that the zone can be reviewed under the normal process in 2014, once you have made your final decision.

Conclusion

98. The Ministry recommends that you should agree to a merger between Central New Brighton School, Freeville School, and North New Brighton School on the North New Brighton School site, and that the merger should occur on 27 January 2015. As a second preferred option the Ministry recommends that this merger should occur at the start of Term 2, 2014.
99. The children from Central New Brighton School would move to the North New Brighton and/or Freeville School sites, depending on the configuration of the two sites at the discretion of the appointed Board, at the effective date of merger. All children would attend school on the North New Brighton School site at the beginning of 2016 which is when the merged school's new buildings are planned to have been completed.

Next steps

100. Once your decision is known, the Ministry will prepare letters to the Boards of Trustees, and local Members of Parliament, advising them of your decision, and Gazette notices will be provided for your signature.
101. If you agree to the proposed merger, the Ministry will work with the Boards of the affected schools to develop recommendations for the appointed Board. The recommended composition and details of the recommended appointees will be provided for your consideration. The Ministry will also appoint a change manager/s, residual agent/s and governance facilitator to support the process.

List of Appendices

Appendix One	Education Report: Proposed merger of Central New Brighton School (3311) and South New Brighton School (3508)
Appendix Two	Education Report: Proposed merger of Freeville School (3344) and North New Brighton School (3448)
Appendix Three	Education Report: Consideration of Mergers of Central New Brighton (3311) and South New Brighton School (3508), and Freeville School (3344) and North New Brighton School (3448): Feedback from the second consultation period