

Sector plan: Self-supplied schools and kura

Our shared goal: Students and teachers have safe drinking water every day, so they don't get sick and miss out on classroom time



The challenge: Ministry of Education-owned schools and kura make up 21% of registered drinking water supplies. Self-supplied schools provide drinking water to just 0.9% of people in New Zealand, but in 2024 they accounted for 53% of all registered supply notifications of faecal contamination (*E. coli*). That means people at these schools are at risk of getting sick from contaminated water.

Addressing a risk to students' wellbeing

Treating drinking water effectively and promptly detecting *E. coli* contamination is critical to preventing waterborne illness and helping to keep students and teachers safe and well.

E. coli are bacteria that can be found in faeces (poo). *E. coli* in drinking water signals that it is likely to be contaminated and could make people sick – causing diarrhoea and stomach cramps (gastroenteritis). That's why it's so important to treat water and test for *E. coli* regularly.

Drinking water that's contaminated can cause serious illness in individuals or an outbreak. While it can make all age groups sick, severe illness is more common for young children or elderly people. Even occasional illness caused by contamination is likely to impact attendance and disrupt learning.

Key steps to making drinking water safe

- By 2028, self-supplied schools and kura should:
- ✓ have basic treatment barriers in place that are working reliably to treat and remove contaminants
 - ✓ have the knowledge and skills they need to supply safe drinking water to students, staff, and community members who visit these schools.



How you'll know you're on the right track	Why this is important
You've got basic treatment and contamination barriers in place (e.g. filtration, disinfection and backflow prevention).	These basic barriers protect your drinking water from becoming contaminated and making people sick.
The people who manage your drinking water supply have the knowledge and skills they need to operate the supply and maintain the treatment equipment.	Once your basic treatment barriers are in place, the next step is to keep them operating effectively. Treatment systems can stop working if they are not regularly checked and maintained, leading to contaminated drinking water.
You conduct regular testing to ensure that you understand your source water quality , identify any contaminants present and recognise changes in its quality.	Most source water has contaminants in it that can make people sick. If you understand what is usually in your source water, you will know what you need to do to make it safe for drinking and be able to quickly identify if things change and you need to take action to keep water safe.
You monitor the quality of your drinking water by testing it regularly and reviewing the results.	Regular monitoring of drinking water quality helps you ensure that treatment barriers are working properly, identify contamination and resolve issues so that people do not keep drinking unsafe water.
You have a maintenance and inspection schedule and associated procedures for your drinking water supply.	Regular maintenance and inspections are critical to ensure that your supply is operating safely and effectively to remove contaminants from your drinking water.
You have a response plan in place so that you are prepared to respond to issues that affect the safety of your drinking water, and key people understand this plan.	A response plan (including a plan to communicate with the people who drink your water) helps reduce the risk of people getting sick if things go wrong.

How we'll help

- ✓ We'll keep working with you and the Ministry of Education to respond to notifications of unsafe drinking water.
- ✓ We'll monitor the Ministry of Education's progress to upgrade treatment systems at high-risk school supplies.
- ✓ We'll keep working with schools and representative bodies for the education sector to help you understand what's needed to supply safe drinking water.
- ✓ We'll provide you with resources and guidance on how to keep drinking water safe.

Note: This plan does not apply to private or state integrated schools that own their properties and assets. These supplies are part of the central government and commercial supplies group under our Compliance, Monitoring and Enforcement Strategy 2025-28, although you may find this plan useful.