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Principals seek clarification on rules for return to school

Source: NZ Principals Federation

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Perry Rush, President of the New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) said he is confused at today's announcement that under Covid-19 level 3 rules, schools would be open to accept students up to year 10, although attendance would be purely voluntary.

"Level 3 rules include many of the restrictions in place at level 4, including the requirement to mainly be at home in your bubble, to limit contact with others and work from home if you can," he said.

"The school term is now underway with all children doing their learning under home learning plans prepared by their schools. Right now they can, and are learning at a distance," he said.

"Although attending school under level 3 would be voluntary, that does not give schools the right to limit the number of children they could accept, in order to maintain social distancing," he said.

"If businesses can operate under level 3 only if accessed by staff and without customer facing functions and can open only under strict health and safety and physical distancing rules, then translating that into the school environment, we cannot have children attending school under level 3 at all," he said.

"This appears to be an inconsistent approach".

"For teachers to accept children back at school, they would have to be separately assigned as operating under level 1 or 2," he said.

Rush also expressed his concerns for vulnerable teachers, including those over 70 years of age and those with compromised health conditions.

A meeting is scheduled with the Ministry of Education tomorrow and he is looking forward to discussing how a de-escalation of the alert levels can be operationalised.

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For further commentary please contact Perry Rush, NZPF President
Mobile: 021 490 079

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For more information contact:

Liz Hawes | Communications Manager, NZ Principals Federation

Email: esm@nzpf.ac.nz, Tel: +64 (0)4 471 2338, Mobile: +64 (0)21 847780