

Hon David Seymour



MP for Epsom

Deputy Prime Minister (from 31 May 2025)

Minister for Regulation

Associate Minister of Education (Partnership Schools)

Associate Minister of Finance

Associate Minister of Health (Pharmac)

Associate Minister of Justice (Treaty Principles Bill)

14 OCT 2024

Chris Higgins

c/- [REDACTED]@raredisorders.org.nz

Ref: DSCOR4016

Dear Chris Higgins

Thank you for your letter of 3 October about the Stepped Attendance Response (STAR) and its impact on the Rare Disorder Community.

The STAR is a framework for schools to improve regular school attendance by responding consistently to student absence. The STAR supports schools to take early action to investigate student absence, understand the reason for absence, and provide the support required to return the student to regular attendance as soon as possible.

The thresholds include all types of absence – including justified. This sets the expectation that all absences require an investigation, although the level of investigation and type of response would be tailored to the reasons for absence.

Medical appointments will continue to be recorded as a form of “present” and therefore will not be counted towards the thresholds. Prosecution will not apply to parents of children who are absent because of chronic illness or health conditions associated with a child’s disability.

The STAR provides guidance for proportionate and appropriate responses to levels of absence. For students with chronic illnesses, I expect the school to use the STAR to recognise and take steps to address barriers to school attendance by considering individual circumstances. The STAR approach may include, where appropriate, moving students onto well-being and transition plans or to health schools to support students to continue learning.

If a student is unwell and cannot attend their usual school for more than 10 days, they may be able to go to a regional health school. Health school teachers can teach a child anywhere in New Zealand. The student stays on the role of their usual school while they get the support from the health school.

The STAR has been developed with the needs of students with learning support needs and disabled students in mind. As schools will be expected to tailor responses to the reasons for absence, I do not intend to introduce an exemption process.

I am very keen to hear your views. Please feel free to contact my [REDACTED] [REDACTED]@parliament.govt.nz) for a meeting.

Kind regards

Hon David Seymour
Associate Minister of Education