

# Ruru Specialist School

19 Ruru Street  
Invercargill  
(03) 2159379



Principal - Erin Cairns  
erin@rurued.school.nz  
www.rurued.school.nz

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16 November 2017

Dear Families/Whānau and Team,

Today the Ombudsman has released his opinion into the use of seclusion rooms in some New Zealand schools together with a complaint about the use of a safe area at Ruru in 2011. Regrettably, there may be more media coverage about our school.

The report marks the end of a process that began more than three years ago and on behalf of everyone at Ruru, I'd like to thank the school community for its ongoing full support over this time.

While we strongly disagree with a number of the Ombudsman's conclusions, we are thankful he has clarified that the safe area built by the Ministry of Education in 1999 never existed as described in the media.

The Ombudsman also notes there were no clear guidelines from the Ministry of Education about this complex issue until 2016 when a Guidance was issued to all schools.

Schools followed what was considered best practice at the time. We are very pleased that all schools now have clear guidelines for managing challenging behaviour. Our staff are trained in Safe Crisis Management de-escalation techniques to ensure student safety and staff best practice.

Working with students who require learning support can be challenging. Their education and welfare is always our priority.

With the learnings from this report, we now have a clear set of guidelines and support available to assist our staff and students. Our policies and procedures have been thoroughly vetted by a number of agencies and I'm confident the administrative changes identified in the report are regularly reviewed as part of our ongoing processes.

We agree with the Ombudsman that the family involved in this report have been instrumental in effecting change at a national level and we wish them all the very best for their future as we all move forward from this process.

I am very proud of the work we do at Ruru and of the professionalism and dedication of our staff who work to support students to reach their full potential in a safe and supportive environment where learning is both stimulating and enjoyable.

As always, I am available for any of your queries.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Erin' followed by a period.

Erin