



## **EMERGENCY STAFFING SCHEME (ESS)**

**GUIDELINES 2026  
for School Boards**

## Overview of ESS

GovHub, on behalf of the Ministry of Education, administers the Emergency Staffing Scheme (ESS), which provides last resort help for school boards of state and state integrated schools who are unable to attract a principal.

To qualify for an ESS Principal, a board must meet the ESS criteria and demonstrate the steps taken to meet the requirements.

Boards who need ESS assistance should contact the National ESS Coordinator (not the Ministry of Education). Once criteria has been met, an application should be submitted to GovHub (note, there is a template for this on the GovHub website, located [HERE](#)). GovHub will assess the application and if approved, will make the connection between the Presiding Member (Board Chair) and ESS Principal.

It is expected an ESS Principal would be available within 24 hours' notice or at the outside, the appointment would be taken up within a maximum five-day period.

ESS Principals are not "change agents", nor are they available to resolve possible conflicts between the community and the board. They are only available to fill last resort vacancies, for a maximum of one term.

This period may be extended where the position remains unfilled despite continued recruitment initiatives. Approval must be sought in writing from the MoE through the ESS National Coordinator.

## Criteria

The following is the qualifying criteria for ESS placements:

- No one available to "act up" within the school
- Advertising locally for suitable reliever has been unsuccessful
- All reasonable efforts have been made or are underway for appointing a permanent principal where applicable
- The need is temporary (not more than 10 weeks)
- The need is to provide for last resort coverage for a situation the board cannot control, e.g., the principal has another position, major illness, etc.
- The request is not to provide for day-to-day casual relief

## Application process

1. Boards who need ESS assistance and meet the qualifying criteria should first contact the ESS National Coordinator (not the Ministry of Education). Please see GovHub information [HERE](#)
2. A request for ESS assistance is made via email using the application template which can be found at the above link from the Presiding Member (Board Chair). The request must include background information outlining the situation and the actions the board has taken to meet the ESS qualifying criteria
3. The ESS National Coordinator will then assess the ESS application and an outcome reached
4. If approved, the ESS National Coordinator will endeavour to source an ESS Principal and put them in contact with the Presiding Member
5. The ESS relieving principal will then travel to the school for the approved period of the placement
6. Placements are for no more than one term. A new request is required for each term which needs to be approved by the MoE through the ESS National coordinator.

## Role of School Boards

GovHub maintains a national pool of trained, experienced, registered principals who are available at short notice to provide emergency short-term principal services to state and state integrated schools.

Any board utilising the ESS becomes the employer of the ESS Principal on a fixed term agreement for the period of the ESS placement. At no time is GovHub the employer of any ESS Principal.

The board is required to apply the normal processes for appointing a short-term appointment. The ESS Principal must therefore receive a letter of appointment, which specifies:

- the pool member is engaged for a fixed term period with a commencement date and finish date
- the conditions under which an ESS Principal is employed [CA]
- the position the ESS Principal is engaged to fill [e.g., acting principal]
- the description of the position [i.e., attach job description]
- background details of events that led to the placement
- support or resource available to support the ESS Principal during the term of the placement.

The board is the employer of the ESS Principal, and the applicable employment agreement applies (i.e., the Primary/Secondary/Area Principals' Collective Agreement).

Due to the 'emergency' nature of the scheme, boards do not have the opportunity to screen the GovHub ESS Principals for suitability. It is a requirement on the ESS National Coordinator to screen applicants as per the MoE / GovHub contract.

Once employed by the board, the board has full responsibility for its obligation in meeting contractual provisions including managing any performance/ disciplinary issues. If there are any performance or disciplinary issues, the board must immediately contact the ESS National Coordinator and must manage the concern(s) as outlined in employment agreements by seeking the advice of the GovHub employment advisor as appropriate.

The employing board has an absolute responsibility to advise the ESS National Coordinator of any concerns/problems arising during the period of employment, and such notification must be given as soon as any issue arises.

The ESS National Coordinator's role does not include direct assistance to the board in dealing with performance issues. Notification of difficulties to the ESS National Coordinator is however essential so that the coordinator can notify the relevant GovHub Employment Advisor.

At the conclusion of the employment period, the board is required to complete a survey on the effectiveness of the emergency staffing scheme.

- this survey forms part of the coordinator's reporting to GovHub
- the survey is between GovHub and the board
- the ESS Principal does not normally receive a copy of the report but will be provided an overview

It is important that a board be precise in their comments about the ESS Principal. If there have been concerns, then the board must ensure that these concerns are accurate and well founded as the

information may be passed onto the ESS Principal concerned (any serious concerns should have already been notified to the coordinator at the time the concerns were raised).

If a report is negative GovHub will, in the interests of natural justice and fairness, inform the ESS Principal of the allegation and provide them with the opportunity to respond. The satisfaction ratings provided by boards are used by GovHub in the quarterly reports to the Ministry of Education.

If a board is not satisfied with an ESS Principals performance, they are under no obligation to employ that ESS Principal again. Unless the dissatisfaction is a competency or disciplinary matter, the ESS Principal is likely to remain on the scheme.

## Role of ESS Principals

ESS Principals are paid a retainer by GovHub to ensure their immediate availability to boards.

Principals:

- must be registered and have a recent, quality teaching and principal background
- are available at short notice, within 24 hours' notice or within a maximum five-day period.
- enter into an employment relationship with the school board engaging the ESS Principal under the ESS scheme for the period agreed
- normally undertake a period of engagement of up to ten weeks

The School Board as the employer, is required to ensure contractual provisions are met including managing any performance concerns that may arise.

Following in Appendix Two is an example of the required duties and standards of the ESS Principals.

## Salary and Expenses

### Payment of the ESS Principals Salary.

#### **Important: Please share this information with your administrator**

In most instances, positions to be covered by the ESS Principal will be vacant and their salary will be paid as per teacher’s salaries.

The following table outlines how the ESS Principals salary is to be paid:

If the position to be covered by the ESS Principal is...	then the ESS Principals salary is...
currently vacant	<p>paid from Teachers' Salaries.</p> <p>The board becomes the ESS Principals employer with the provisions of the relevant Collective Agreement applying, including the school roll-based salary component.</p> <p>ESS Principals are paid at the rate applicable to their qualifications and experience as approved by Ed Pay.</p>
to cover a principal on long-term leave with pay (and sick leave)	<p>met by the board from its operational funding.</p> <p>You can apply for additional relief teacher funding in the usual way if your situation meets the conditions outlined in the additional relief teacher funding scheme.</p> <p><a href="#">Additional relief teacher funding</a></p>

The board becomes the ESS Principals employer with the provisions of the relevant CA applying. ESS Principals are paid at the rate applicable to their qualifications and experience as approved by Ed Pay. ESS Principals are not employed by GovHub.

## Professional Development

A fund of \$500 is available for each principal per annum as a contribution towards their professional development. To access this, principals need to submit a professional development plan to the GovHub National Coordinator prior to the release of this funding. The plan should identify the specific professional development needs of the principal and the activities to be undertaken to help meet these needs.

## Expenses claimed by the ESS Principal and reimbursed by the MoE

Expense	Entitlement
Principal <b>living at normal place</b> of residence and travelling between 20 to 100 kilometres each way to placement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reimbursement of return travel (1 trip per day) between normal place of residence and the school.</li> <li>2. Mileage is reimbursed at the travel rate as per the collective agreement per kilometre</li> <li>3. Additional costs may be considered with prior approval by the Ministry</li> <li>4. For health and safety, daily travel should not exceed more than 100kms each way</li> </ol>
Principal <b>living away</b> from their normal place of residence (placement must be at least 50 kilometres away)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Travel from normal place of residence to accommodation at the start of placement and trip home at end of placement. Mileage will be paid at the travel rate as per collective agreement per kilometre</li> <li>2. If the school is more than 20km from accommodation (each way), one return trip from accommodation to school per day at the travel rate as per collective agreement per kilometre</li> <li>3. Actual and reasonable accommodation expenses including rental and power. Receipts will be required.</li> <li>4. Daily meals and incidentals allowance of \$22 per day. No receipts are required. Note: the daily allowance will not be paid for trips home during term time.</li> <li>5. Trips home during term time: Return travel between the school and normal place of residence every four weeks per placement (or maximum of 2 return home trips per 10-week placement, including trips home for public holidays). Travel rate as per collective agreement per kilometre. Accommodation costs will continue to be paid if required. The daily meals and incidental allowance of \$22 per day will not be paid for trips home during term time.</li> <li>6. Additional costs such as flights and rental cars may be considered with prior approval by the Ministry.</li> </ol>

For up-to-date allowances, please check the Ministry of Education website [HERE](#).

## Additional information

- If the placement has been approved for extension beyond 10 weeks, accommodation may be paid over the holiday period (depending on circumstances) but no daily meals / incidentals will be covered.
- Any other travel home during term time (in addition to point 5 above) will be at the expense of the ESS Principal.

## Prior Approvals

Any additional costs or extensions to initial ESS placements need prior approval from the Ministry. Requests for these must be submitted via the GovHub ESS national coordinator.

## Administration of Accommodation and Travel Claims

The board employing the ESS Principal is initially responsible for the payment of travel expenses and the daily meals and incidentals allowance. The Ministry of Education (MoE) will reimburse these expenses to the employing board.

To be reimbursed for these expenses, the school board will need to provide the Ministry with documentation / evidence that these costs were either paid by the ESS Principal and then reimbursed by the School Board to the principal, or paid directly by the Board on the principals behalf (for example, accommodation costs)

Evidence can be provided by invoices and receipts. The Ministry is only able to reimburse costs that have been directly paid out of board funds.

### *How to claim reimbursement for qualifying ESS expenses*

Stage	Description
1	The ESS Principal submits their claim to the board for any of the above expenses they have incurred. They must submit the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Receipts for travel and accommodation expenses (where applicable)</li><li>• The Emergency Staffing Scheme Claim form</li></ul>
2	The board initially pays the qualifying expenses from its operational funding.
3	The board seeks reimbursement from the Resourcing division of the Ministry for the actual costs paid. The Ministry will only reimburse expenses listed above.

Boards should send each claim for reimbursement of expenses to the Resourcing Division, Ministry of Education, [resourcing@education.govt.nz](mailto:resourcing@education.govt.nz) and include:

- the completed Emergency Staffing Scheme Claim form.
- a copy of the letter from the ESS National Coordinator to the board confirming the ESS Principal's appointment.
- evidence of payment of these expenses to the ESS Principal from Board funds, or evidence of expenses paid directly by the Board on the principal's behalf.

## Final date for claims – 31 March

The final date for processing claims for any school year will be 31 March of the following year.

Claims received at the Resourcing Division after this date will not be actioned. Nor will claims received prior to the cut-off date where appropriate and full documentation didn't accompany the claim.



## Emergency Staffing Scheme Claim Form

Application information					
School name				School no.	
Contact email					
ESS principal's name				MOE no.	
Place of residence					
Appointment details					
Period of ESS appointment	From	to	Period of this claim	From	to
For principals living at normal place of residence:					
Daily travel between normal place of residence and school (no. days x km per day @ 83c per km)			km@83c per km	\$	
Additional costs (prior approval by the Ministry essential)			Pre-approved	\$	
For principals living away from normal place of residence:					
Return travel from normal place of residence to appointment at start and end of placement			km@83c per km	\$	
Return travel to normal place of residence during term time (if applicable)			km@83c per km	\$	
Accommodation costs (includes weekends/excludes school holidays, unless an extension has been approved)			Actual and reasonable	\$	
Daily meals and incidentals allowance (includes weekends/excludes school holidays/excludes trips home during term)			\$22 inc. GST per day	\$	
One return trip from accommodation to school if more than 20km one way (no. days x km per day @ 83c per km)			km@83c per km	\$	
Additional costs (prior approval by the Ministry essential)			Pre-approved	\$	
			<b>Total claim</b>	<b>\$</b>	

**Application must include:**

- A copy of the letter from the ESS national co-ordinator confirming the ESS principal's appointment
- Evidence of payment of these expenses to the ESS Principal from Board funds or evidence of expenses paid directly by the Board on the principal's behalf

**Certification**

I certify that I have checked the information on this form, to the best of my knowledge, is true and correct in every particular

School Board Presiding Member signature:		<b>Date:</b>	
ESS principal signature:		<b>Date:</b>	

**Send to: [resourcing@education.govt.nz](mailto:resourcing@education.govt.nz)**

# Appendix one

## ESS - Example duties and standards

### **Principal**

The ESS Principal will be required to undertake the principal's role ensuring the continuation of high-quality education to the students of the school.

The principal:

- will report and be accountable to the school board through the presiding member
- has the dual role of being a board member in his/her own right whilst undertaking the role of the chief executive of the school
- will be responsible for ensuring ongoing management and leadership of the school by taking direction from the school charter, the board, and the board's policies
- manage the day to day running of the school
- undertake teaching duties where required.

## Appendix two

### GovHub Contacts and Resources

If you require assistance, please contact:

Lucienne Shelley  
ESS National Coordinator  
Phone: 021 190 7273  
Email: [lshelley@govhub.org.nz](mailto:lshelley@govhub.org.nz)

### GovHub Advisory Support Services

Call **0800 782 435** for assistance and you will be given the following options:

- Option 1** – Governance advice
- Option 2** – Employment advice
- Option 3** – Elections advice
- Option 4** – Other enquiries

### Employment Issues

GovHub maintains a free specialist employment advisory service which can be accessed by school boards. This advisory service is available to assist school boards with issues which may arise in the board's role as the employer. Boards are encouraged to utilise this service at the first sign of any employment related problem arising.

The work undertaken by the advisors ranges from answering quite simple helpdesk queries to assisting member boards through complex disciplinary or competency situations, as examples.

You can also contact us by sending an email to [eradvice@govhub.org.nz](mailto:eradvice@govhub.org.nz)