

# **An information pack for migrants: Early childhood and schooling in New Zealand**



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### **Introduction**

This information pack is intended for migrant parents who want to know more about education in New Zealand. It is a brief explanation and in simple language that should be understood easily.

### **Teaching and learning philosophy in New Zealand (NZ)**

In NZ, students are the centre of learning and teaching. Education is about how students experience and discover what they are learning. Students' active participation is very important in the learning process because the learning and teaching are based on discussion and interaction between students and teachers, students and students, and students and their environment. A passive learner who chooses not to contribute to class discussion or question the teacher, will therefore be at a disadvantage.

### **Early Childhood Education**

Most children aged 0-5 go to playgroups, playcentres, home-based care, kindergartens, education and care centres or kōhanga reo.

***Playgroups*** are community-based groups. Parents/caregivers can meet and help provide educational programmes through play for their children. To be a playgroup, half of the children attending must have a parent staying with them in the playgroup. Children can come to playgroups for a maximum of 4 hours everyday. Parents/caregivers receive information, support, training and some funding from *the Ministry of Education* (MOE) for their playgroups.

***Playcentres.*** In playcentres parents/caregivers meet together to help their children's early education through play. Playcentres are for children from birth to school age. Playcentres belong to the national NZ Playcentre Federation. A local association gives parents education programmes to operate the centres. Playcentres usually charge small fees.

***Home-based care*** is where parents/caregivers provide education and care for up to four young children in their home. It can be full day or part day education and care. The work and learning programmes of the parents/caregivers is supported by a qualified coordinator from the network who also checks the safety, wellbeing and the learning progress of the children. They do charge fees.

**Kindergartens** are run by a kindergarten association and the teachers must be registered teachers holding a recognised early childhood qualification such as a Diploma in Teaching (ECE) or a Bachelor of Education (ECE). Older children usually go to kindergartens every morning while younger children go for three afternoons. Children usually start kindergarten at 3 years old but some children are now starting at 2. Some kindergartens now run all day sessions. Kindergartens usually ask for a parent donation or fee.

**Education and care centres** offer all day or part day services. They can be run by community or private owners and may be based on a specific culture, beliefs or methods of education. The teachers must be registered teachers holding a recognised early childhood qualification such as a Diploma in Teaching (ECE) or a Bachelor of Education (ECE). Depending on the centre, children from birth to school age can go. They charge fees.

**Te Kōhanga Reo** is a total immersion Māori language family programme for young children from birth to six years of age.

Go to [www.ece.govt.nz](http://www.ece.govt.nz) to find out more on *early childhood education* (ECE).

### **The school system**

Schooling is compulsory from ages 6 to 16. Compulsory means that you must send your children to school from their 6<sup>th</sup> to their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. Children may enrol from their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday and may remain at school until the end of the year in which they are 19 years old.

**Primary schooling.** Primary and area schools cater for children starting school for the first time. Children may remain at a *contributing* primary school to Year 6, at a full *primary* school to Year 8, and at an *area school* until Year 13. The focus of the learning at primary school level is: listening and speaking, reading and writing, maths, developing social skills, learning by seeing and doing, and learning to ask questions and explore ideas.

**Intermediate schooling.** Intermediate schools cater for Year 7 and 8. Middle schools provide education for children in Years 7, 8, 9 and sometimes 10. If you send your child to an area school, they may stay from Year 1 until Year 13 at the same school. Area schools are usually in rural areas. Besides learning the 7 essential learning areas, students also learn how to develop thinking capacity, build self esteem, relate to others, develop self expression, as well as preparing for secondary school.

**Secondary schooling (*high school or college*)** caters for either Year 9 -13 or sometimes Year 7 -13 students. The students can be boys or girls only (single -sex) or mixed-sexes (co-educational). (See information about area schools in paragraph above.)

Types of schools:

**State schools** are government schools and they teach lessons based on the NZ curriculum. At primary and intermediate levels the students are usually in mixed classes (boys and girls), but at secondary level the students can be of the same sex, all boys or all girls.

***State integrated schools*** are schools that used to be private and have now become part of the state system. Besides teaching the NZ curriculum, they also keep their own special character such as religious beliefs and students who belong to a particular religious group get first right of entry to these schools. They may charge “attendance dues” (special fee) to cover the property costs because the property doesn’t belong to the state.

***Special schools*** are state schools that provide education for students with very high special education needs such as disabilities, learning difficulties, communication or behaviour difficulties, sensory or physical impairments. However, any student with special needs whether entitled to support from ORRS (Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Schemes) or not may enrol at state or state integrated schools.

***Correspondence School*** provides distance learning education for students who live far from the nearest school. For eligible students it is free. Go to [www.minedu.govt.nz](http://www.minedu.govt.nz) and type *the correspondence school enrolment criteria* in the search box for more information.

***Private (independent) schools*** are not government (state) schools. They are managed by their own independent boards but must be registered with the Ministry of Education. The schools can be co-educational or single-sex. These schools charge fees. Sometimes scholarships are available.

***Home schooling*** is available for parents and caregivers who want to educate their children at home. Parents and caregivers need to get approval to do so from the Ministry of Education.

### Levels of Schooling:

| <u>Schools</u>      | <u>Children's age</u> | <u>Classes</u> |
|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Primary School      | 5-10 years            | Years 0-6      |
| Intermediate School | 11-12 years           | Years 7-8      |
| Secondary School    | 13-19 years           | Years 9-13     |

**Enrolment.** Generally children go to the school nearest to where they live. There may be some restrictions on enrolment at state schools (see zoned schools below) or at state integrated schools which have limits on numbers of students.

**Zoned schools** have “enrolment schemes”. This means only students who live within the school home zone have a right to enrol. Students who live outside of the home zone can still apply to the school and if there are places available, they will go through a ballot process from time to time.

**Ballot** means if there are more students than places available in a zoned school, the school will hold a ballot to decide who can enrol.

**Education Review Office** (ERO) reviews and reports on schools and early childhood centres. Go to [www.ero.govt.nz](http://www.ero.govt.nz) to read the most recent reports on schools or early childhood centres.

**Deciles.** Most schools receive funding from the Ministry of Education. However, the level of funding for each school is different. It depends on the income of the students' families. The higher the decile the less funding the school will receive.

**Changing schools.** Let the school know as soon as possible if your child needs to change school so your child's information and school report can be sent to the new school.

### **What schools teach**

Schools in NZ give their attention to the achievement and success of all their students. With the knowledge and skills they have learned at school, students will be better prepared to face the challenges/opportunities of life.

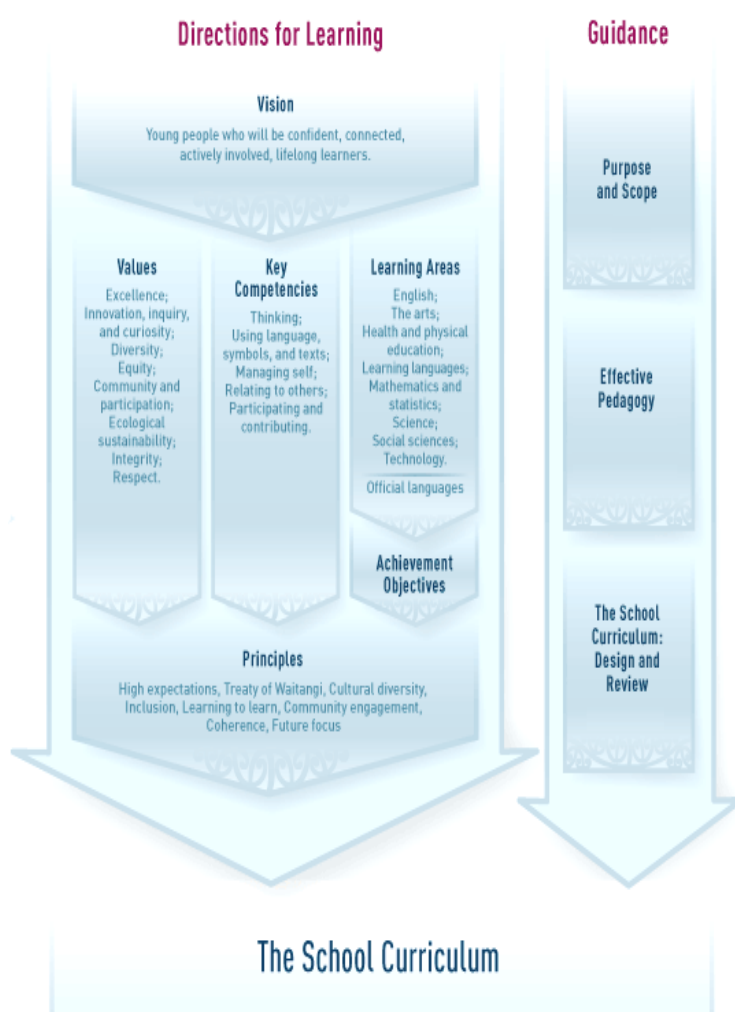
***Essential learning areas.*** From Y1 to Y6 students will learn: Health and Physical Education, Arts, Social Studies, Technology, Science, Mathematics and Statistics, and English. From Y7 to Y10 besides learning the above mentioned subjects, students will also learn another language.

***Music*** is part of the Arts curriculum which also includes dance, drama, and the visual arts. In Years 1 - 8 students will study all of these. In Years 9 - 10 students will still study at least two of these and in Years 11 - 13 students may choose one or more that will become their specialty.

***Education outside the classroom*** (EOTC) is where the learning-teaching activities are not in the classroom. Visiting a museum, marae, and camping may be some of these activities. It is common for primary/intermediate schools to have an annual camp each year for all students. Most secondary schools run camps in certain years.

***Religious education.*** In state schools, with the approval of the board of trustees, primary students may receive religious education once a week for about 30 minutes. If you don't want your children to attend the religious education, inform the principal in writing. Your children will still be under the care of an adult.

# The New Zealand Curriculum





***English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision*** is for students whose first language is not English. Students from migrant or refugee backgrounds and New Zealand born students of migrant or refugee parents will be given extra English language assistance by their school if they need it. This ESOL class may be given several times a week for at least 30 minutes each session. The exact amount depends on the student's level of English. Go to [www.minedu.govt.nz/goto/esolfunding](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/goto/esolfunding) for more information.

***Assessment.*** Throughout primary and intermediate schools, teachers use a variety of ways of assessing a child's progress. School entry assessment is used if your child is just starting school. The assessment is normally given when a child has been at school for a few weeks. From 2010 schools with students in Years 1 to 8 will measure students' progress and achievement against National Standards in literacy (reading and writing) and numeracy (mathematics). The early identification of students who are falling behind the standards will allow schools, teachers and parents to make decisions about how to improve students' achievement and to provide additional support where appropriate. Year 8 students are usually tested to see what they have achieved before they go to Year 9. It is common to have an end of year exams from Year 9. Years 11-13 students will enter *National Certificate of Education Achievement* (NCEA). The assessment does not depend entirely on exam. There are important assessment tasks throughout the year.

***Promotion through the grades.*** If the school sees that your child is doing extremely well and if the school thinks that it is for the best interest of your child, the school will allow your child to be promoted to a higher level.

***Gifted and talented students.*** Talk to your child's early childhood educator or school teacher if you think your child is gifted or talented. Schools have ways to find out if your child is gifted. Many schools have programmes or classes for these types of students.

***National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) and scholarships.*** NCEA is New Zealand's national qualification for secondary school learners. Students are assessed internally (by their schools) and externally (by NZQA=*New Zealand Qualifications Authority*) to measure their achievements. Year 11 students must achieve 80 credits to be given NCEA Level 1. Year 12 students must achieve 60 credits level 2 or above and 20 credits from any other level to get NCEA Level 2. Year 13 students must achieve 60 credits at level 3 or above and 20 credits from level 2 or above to get NCEA Level 3. For more info, please go to [www.ncea.govt.nz](http://www.ncea.govt.nz) . Scholarship is externally assessed. The exam is similar to Level 3 NCEA but the standard required is much higher. Talk to your schools/teachers to find out more.

### **How schools are managed**

In New Zealand, *boards of trustees* (BOT) govern all state and state integrated schools. All schools must operate under the provisions of the Education Act of 1989 and other legislation.

***Boards of trustees*** (BOT) include parent representatives who are elected by parents and caregivers. They work voluntarily and make important decisions about the management of a school.

***The principal's*** work is to manage day-to-day activities of the school and do what the BOT has planned.

**Charter** is a statement made by the BOT of what the school wants to do and how to achieve it. Each school has its own charter which is updated annually and it shows the board's priorities.

**Fees and donations.** State schools may not ask for school fees but parents are usually asked to give the school a donation. This donation is important to help the school run some programmes. Talk to your principal if you have questions about it.

**Uniforms.** Some schools ask their students to wear a uniform. If you enrol your child in a school with a uniform policy, your child must wear a uniform to school. Sometimes schools hold a "mufti day" when students don't have to wear a uniform. Students usually give a small amount of money during mufti day and the money is used to help people in need or for another special purpose.

**Textbooks and stationery.** The Ministry of Education provides the New Zealand curriculum for schools to follow. Schools usually select their own school texts to support with the MOE curriculum. A stationery list is given when your child starts school to tell you what your child needs to have (such as exercise books, etc).

**Homework.** Each school has its own policy on the amount and type of homework that a student should do. Talk to the teacher or principal for more information.

**Reports** are usually given at least two times a year. These school reports can be through parent teacher-interviews and must be in plain language in writing at least twice a year from 2010. The reports will discuss the student's achievement, attitude, and performance.

***Class size and class grouping.*** In most schools the class size is between 25-30 students but this will usually be smaller for very young students. Working in groups of students within a class is common in primary schools. It is common to see students sitting in groups because they have the same level of skill in maths or reading.

***Support systems.*** If you want to know more about the NZ education system, if your child needs help with learning or behaviour problems, needs guidance counsellors or careers advisors (for secondary school students), please contact your child's school or teacher.

***Discipline.*** Teachers in NZ are not allowed to physically punish (hit, cane, or slap) their students. To discipline students, schools can give more homework, keep students after school (detention) or deny privileges. Schools will let parents know if their child has to do detention. If the student's offence is more serious, they may be given a stand-down or suspension (not allowed to go to school for several days). If the offence is very serious, students can be excluded or expelled (must move to another school).

***Handling problems.*** Talk to the teacher or the principal if you have problems with your child's schooling. If you are still not happy, ask the principal to explain how to make a complaint. Parents can bring their friends to support them at any meetings to discuss their complaints.

**Attendance requirements.** Children between 6-16 years old must attend school. Parents are responsible for ensuring that their children go to school whenever the school is open. If a child cannot go to school, parents must let the school know by calling the school or writing a note, beforehand if possible.

**Terms and holidays.** There are four terms in the NZ school year. Students have about six weeks summer holiday and between each term there is a two-week holiday. Term 1 starts in early February until mid-April. Term 2 starts late-April until late-June. Term 3 starts in mid-July until late-September. Term 4 starts in mid-October until late-December (or mid-December for secondary schools). The dates can be found on [www.minedu.govt.nz](http://www.minedu.govt.nz) by searching for *Terms and Holidays*.

**Public holidays** in NZ are New Year's Days (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Jan.), Waitangi Day (6<sup>th</sup> Feb.), Good Friday (varies), Easter Monday (varies), ANZAC Day (25<sup>th</sup> April), Queen's Birthday (1<sup>st</sup> Monday in June), Labour Day (4<sup>th</sup> Monday in Oct.), Christmas Day (25<sup>th</sup> Dec.), Boxing Day (26<sup>th</sup> Dec.). Anniversary holidays are celebrated on different days around New Zealand. Usually schools are closed during these anniversary holidays.

**Schools hours.** Most primary schools start at about 9 am and finish at about 3 pm. Intermediate and secondary schools usually start at about 8:45 and finish at about 3:15. For primary schools, don't send your child before school hours because there is no adult responsible for their safety on duty. Collect your child as soon as school finishes. If you have to send or collect your child outside these hours, talk to the school. Some schools provide child care before and/or after school and there is a charge for this.

***Interval and lunchtime.*** Schools have intervals during the day. These include morning tea and lunch breaks. However, the exact times of these vary from school to school. Many schools have a café or shop where your child can order or buy their lunch, but it is common for parents to provide their child's lunch.

***Transport.*** Some students qualify for assistance with transport to get to school because of the distance they live from the nearest school or because they have special needs. Go to [www.minedu.govt.nz/goto/schooltransport](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/goto/schooltransport) for more information. Some schools provide their own buses and usually charge fees for using their buses.

***Health services*** are provided through schools by the community health services. Some services include vision testing, dental care and immunisation which is offered at various times during the school years. Talk to your teacher or school for more information.

***Parent groups.*** In many schools there are groups who get together to help and give support to each other. They also help the school particularly with fund raising activities. They are also known as Parent-Teacher Association or home-school association or friends of the school.

### **Parent-school relationship**

You can help your child's education by working with your child's teacher. It is good to have contact with your child's teacher from time to time. If you want to have a meeting with your child's teacher, speak to him/her before or after school or make contact with the school office.

#### **Parents can support their child's education by:**

- Making sure that your child doesn't arrive late for school
- Asking your child if the school has given notices/ news letters or check the school bag for school notices regularly
- Attending parent-teacher meetings
- Talking to your child about their school reports
- Helping with school activities such as school picnic, bazaar, etc.
- Joining the Parent-Teacher Association
- Becoming a member of the school's board of trustees

#### **Your home is also a good learning area for your child.**

##### **Some support that you can give:**

- Do homework first before watching TV or playing on the computer
- Encourage your child not to watch TV and play on the computer for too long
- Encourage your child to learn and read at home
- Praise your child for doing his/her homework and schoolwork
- Talk to your child about education
- Celebrate your child's achievements
- Maintain your child's first language at home. Do not concentrate on English at home if it is not your first language.

### **More readings on NZ education**

(To obtain these publications contact your local MOE or Wickliffe Ltd at 0800 660 662)

- Asttle (Assessment tool for teaching and learning)
- Be there for our students ... become a school trustee
- Choices in early childhood education
- Families Learning Together
- Gifted and talented students
- How is my child progressing
- How is your child really doing at school?
- Meeting your child's special education needs
- NCEA: the national qualifications framework in schools
- Off to a good start
- School in New Zealand: A guide
- Secondary school qualifications today
- Secondary school qualifications: A guide for students
- Team-up: Helping Our Kids Learn
- The NZ education system: An overview

### **Acronyms**

- ANZAC=Australia New Zealand Army Corps
- BOT=Board of Trustees
- ECE=Early Childhood Education
- EOTC=Education outside of the classroom
- ERO=Education Review Office
- ESOL=English for speakers of other languages
- GP=General Practitioner
- MOE=Ministry of Education
- NCEA=National Certificate of Educational Achievement
- NESB=Non English speaking background
- NZ=New Zealand
- NZQA=New Zealand Qualifications Authority
- ORRS=Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Schemes
- PTA=Parent Teacher Association
- RTLB=Resource Teacher and Learning Behaviour

***Useful websites:***

[www.minedu.govt.nz](http://www.minedu.govt.nz)

[www.ece.govt.nz](http://www.ece.govt.nz)

[www.ero.govt.nz](http://www.ero.govt.nz)

[www.ncea.govt.nz](http://www.ncea.govt.nz)

[www.nzqa.govt.nz](http://www.nzqa.govt.nz)

[www.teachnz.govt.nz](http://www.teachnz.govt.nz)

[www.tki.org.nz](http://www.tki.org.nz)

[www.edcentre.govt.nz](http://www.edcentre.govt.nz)

[www.esolht.org.nz](http://www.esolht.org.nz)

[www.teamup.co.nz](http://www.teamup.co.nz)

[www.familyservices.govt.nz](http://www.familyservices.govt.nz)

[www.leadspace.govt.nz](http://www.leadspace.govt.nz)

[www.schoolzones.co.nz](http://www.schoolzones.co.nz)

[www.nzmaths.co.nz](http://www.nzmaths.co.nz)