

Information for parents and  
caregivers of children with  
special education needs

# Choosing and starting

at an early childhood  
education service



TE KŌWHIRI ME TE TĪMATA I TĒTAHI  
RATONGA MĀTAURANGA KŌHUNGAHUNGA

This booklet is to help your child get off to a good start in early childhood if they have special education needs.



It outlines what to look for when choosing an early childhood education service and explains your choices. It sets out how your child can be supported so that they can be safe, nurtured and join in and learn alongside other children.

### Contents:

3. Types of early childhood education services to choose from
4. What to do if you think your child needs extra support
5. Support available for young children with special education needs
6. Choosing an early childhood education service
8. What to look for when visiting a service
10. Questions to ask when choosing a service
14. Working in partnership
15. Settling your child into the service
17. How to prepare the service
18. More details about types of services
23. How to contact us



# Types of early childhood education services to choose from

New Zealand has many types of early childhood education services to choose from. Each type has its own way of working with children and with you as parents.

Some offer all-day education and care, some only part day.

There are two kinds to choose from:

1. teacher-led – where registered teachers provide the education and care
2. parent-led – where parents, whānau or caregivers provide the education and care for their own and other children. This might be in a community setting or other people might provide education and care for your child in their home.

Teacher-led services include:

- ▶ education and care centres
- ▶ kindergartens
- ▶ home-based education and care services.

Parent-led services include:

- ▶ playcentres
- ▶ Te Kōhanga Reo
- ▶ playgroups
- ▶ Ngā Puna Kōhungahunga
- ▶ Pacific Island early childhood groups.

We've included detailed descriptions of each of these types of services at the back of this booklet.

## Regulation of early childhood education services

All licensed early childhood education services and certificated playgroups are regulated by the Ministry of Education. This means they must meet minimum standards set by the Government

for their property, health and safety, staff, education and care programmes and management. They receive funding from the Government to help meet their running costs.

Licensed services can include teacher-led services, such as childcare centres, kindergartens, Pacific Island early childhood groups, Montessori, Rudolf Steiner schools, home-based early childhood education; or parent- and whānau-led services, such as playcentres and kōhanga reo.

Playgroups are the only early childhood education service that are certificated rather than licensed. This means they need to meet fewer regulatory requirements.

All early childhood education services licensed by the Ministry of Education are expected to be welcoming of all children.



### Government funding for 20 hours of early childhood education (20 Hours ECE)

All teacher-led early childhood education services, kōhanga reo and playcentres are able to offer 20 Hours ECE for your child, funded by the Government. It is available to all three-, four-, and five-year-old children.

Ask your early childhood education service if they offer 20 Hours ECE. It can be used for up to six hours a day and up to 20 hours a week of early childhood education for which early childhood education services cannot

charge fees. You can choose which of your child's enrolled hours will be covered up to these amounts.

You will need to complete and sign an enrolment agreement, and complete the attestation confirming the days and hours you will claim as 20 Hours ECE. The attestation is a legal document and will be included in the enrolment agreement. Your early childhood education service should give you this shortly before your child turns three (or when enrolling your child) and can help you complete it.

ME AHA MĒNĀ KI Ō WHAKAARO ME WHIWHI TŌ  
TĀMAITI I ĒTAHI ATU TAUTOKO

## What to do if you think your child needs extra support

Every child learns in a different way and at a different rate. If your child seems to be learning at a much slower rate than other children, or is having difficulty with talking, hearing, moving about, or with their behaviour, you can talk to:

- ▶ your doctor
- ▶ staff at your early childhood education service, if your child goes to one
- ▶ your Plunket nurse or call

PlunketLine for free advice  
24 hours, 7 days on 0800 933 922

- ▶ your iwi health authority
- ▶ someone in your local Ministry of Education, Special Education office – ask to speak to someone who works in early intervention.

You can discuss your concerns with any of these people. They can tell you if there might be something that needs looking into, and work out what needs to happen next.

# Support available for young children with special education needs

The Ministry of Education, Special Education provides support for children with special education needs. Our Early Intervention Service provides specialist support for children who have a developmental or learning delay, a disability, a behaviour difficulty or a communication difficulty that significantly impacts their ability to participate and learn at home or at an early childhood education service.

Early Intervention staff can work with you, your child and your family/whānau, and your child's early childhood education service at any time from birth until your child starts school/kura. The service is funded by the Government and is free.

Early Intervention staff might work with you and your child at home or somewhere that suits you.

They will usually use play activities to focus on the areas where your child needs extra support.

People from the team might also work with your child and your child's teachers at their early childhood education service, if your child goes to one.

Young children learn best through play, which is how they learn about the world and how to relate to others. One of the main aims of your child's Early Intervention team will be to make sure your child has the same opportunities to play, learn and develop as other children.

They can make this happen by:

- ▶ working out what type and how much support your child needs
- ▶ working with you to develop a programme to provide that support
- ▶ keeping an eye on the programme to make sure it helps your child over time
- ▶ providing you with information and answering your questions
- ▶ helping to plan for transition to school.

Specialist support, if needed, might be from one or more of the following:

- ▶ speech-language therapists
- ▶ early intervention teachers

- ▶ psychologists
- ▶ advisers on deaf children
- ▶ kaitakawaenga (Māori cultural advisors).

If needed, Early Intervention teams include specialists from the Ministry of Health, such as neuro-developmental therapists, audiologists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists.

- ▶ Education support workers (ESW) may work with your child in their early childhood setting alongside teachers for a few hours a week. Guided by the early intervention team, the ESW will support your child to achieve the learning goals in their individual plan through play and other activities.

See our information sheet, *The Early Intervention Service* for more details about this service.

# Choosing an early childhood education service

When you choose an early childhood education service you need to think about a number of things.

## Practical considerations

- ▶ Do I need a service that is close to home or close to work?
- ▶ Is it open for the hours that suit me?
- ▶ Is my child the right age for the service?
- ▶ Is it a service I can afford?
- ▶ Do they have an opening for my child?
- ▶ What involvement will be expected of me?
- ▶ Do I want a service where I can stay with my child?

## The feel of the service

- ▶ Do I like the service?
- ▶ Does the service have a welcoming attitude towards my child?
- ▶ Does my child like the service?

## Specific needs for my child

- ▶ How suitable and adaptable is the service's physical environment to my child's needs?

- ▶ What experience do the staff have in supporting children with similar needs to my child?
- ▶ How will they engage with the things my child is passionate about?
- ▶ How will they ensure my child is welcomed by the other children and can learn alongside them?
- ▶ If relevant, what experience have other parents of children with special education needs had with this service?
- ▶ Is there suitable access to rooms and toilet facilities?
- ▶ What are the grounds like – level or steep and uneven; is there good off-street parking for easy access?
- ▶ Is the service close to anything that may cause noise distractions, such as an airport or main road?

It's best if you look around for a service before you actually need one, because there are waiting lists. It can take a while for your child to settle in so you might need to visit several times before their first day.

## Finding a place

To find a suitable early childhood education service it pays to do a bit of research.

Your local newspaper, council or community boards may have information.

Ask others about services they would recommend.

Try talking to:

- ▶ the service you're interested in
- ▶ other parents or neighbours
- ▶ your Plunket nurse or doctor
- ▶ community service organisations that support children with disabilities (see our information sheet *Support organisations and useful contacts*)
- ▶ early childhood education organisations (you can look up their websites – see [www.lead.ece.govt.nz/GeneralInformation.aspx](http://www.lead.ece.govt.nz/GeneralInformation.aspx))
- ▶ your child's Early Intervention team who can give you the information you need to help you work out the best option for your child.



*“My hopes and dreams for Patrick are the same as for my other children – that he reaches his full potential and he’s happy and well balanced.*

*I don’t ever want to limit him to what I think he might be able to do. I want to keep dreaming big.”*

*Jenny*

### Next steps

Phone the service you’re interested in to find out:

- ▶ where it is
- ▶ what hours it’s open
- ▶ if they’re teacher-led or parent-led
- ▶ if you’re able to leave your child
- ▶ if they have any age restrictions (eg, do they take babies?)
- ▶ if they have a particular way of teaching (eg, Montessori, language immersion, etc)
- ▶ how much it costs
- ▶ what is expected of you as parents
- ▶ if they use Government funding
- ▶ if there’s a waiting list
- ▶ if you can come and visit.

### Visits

You’ll get a better idea of whether a service is right for you and your child if you visit.

Phone the service and ask to come and see the service or, if it’s a home-based service, to meet with the coordinator.

It’s best to set a time when there are children at the service.

Ask for time with the person in charge so they can answer any questions you may have.

Take your child with you when you go, and watch closely what’s going on in the service and how your child reacts. Pick a spot where you can spend some time to see what’s going on. While your child might not be ready to leave your side, they should feel comfortable there.

If you’re visiting a home-based service you will need to meet with the coordinator. They will be able to answer any questions you have and will arrange for you to meet potential home-based educators. Take your child with you when you go and watch how your child responds.



# What to look for when visiting a service

You might want to make several visits to the centre or home-based setting to meet the staff or home-based educator and observe the children and how the service works.

## The feel of the service

- ☐ Get a feel for whether the service is a happy place.
- ☐ Are the children happy? Look at their faces. Are they laughing? Are they busy and engaged?
- ☐ Do children with special education needs get to play alongside the other children?
- ☐ Is the place well cared for?
- ☐ Is the service keen to have visitors?
- ☐ Are they happy for parents, whānau and caregivers to take part in activities?
- ☐ Are children keen to learn, to try new things, to have a go and persevere?
- ☐ Are they provided with opportunities, experiences and play materials that support and encourage a wide range of learning?
- ☐ Is there lots of room for active play?
- ☐ Can the children play with their friends and the toys they like?
- ☐ Are children playing together?
- ☐ Do children have time to explore and discover, time to get on with their own play? Do adults encourage children to work things out, but provide help when needed?
- ☐ Are there quiet times and rest times?
- ☐ Do the children get on with each other easily and positively?
- ☐ Are the children encouraged and supported by adults to express their feelings?
- ☐ Do adults help children resolve problems?
- ☐ Are there suitable toileting and showering facilities if your child requires these?
- ☐ Is the place clean, with good heating, lighting and airflow?
- ☐ Is there space for wet, messy or creative play, a quiet space for books, stories, puppets and music, enough space for active movement? Are there display areas, (such as a science table) that have things to touch and explore?
- ☐ Are there tables and chairs for children to work at? Can they also work on the floor?
- ☐ Is the place safe? Are the playing areas safe? Can children be easily seen in the bathroom?
- ☐ Does the service practice good hygiene to lessen the spread of bugs and illness?
- ☐ Where can children rest or sleep if they need to?

## Indoor areas – things to look for

- ☐ Is the equipment in good condition? Is there enough equipment? Is there a wide range of equipment?
- ☐ Is equipment well displayed? Are children free to choose from a range of toys and equipment?
- ☐ Are the rooms pleasant and colourful?
- ☐ What equipment is currently available to help your child or what equipment will the service need to get?
- ☐ Is there somewhere your child can go if they need to be in a quiet place for a while?

## Differences for under-twos

Babies and toddlers have different play needs.

- ☐ Is there a soft carpeted area for them to crawl and explore?
- ☐ Is there a raised area for them to practise crawling up?





- ☐ Are there balls and containers, scales and other objects for children to manipulate, put in and out of containers?
- ☐ Is there messy play? How do teachers manage this?
- ☐ Are there cushions to sit or lie on; safe, firm surfaces to climb on?
- ☐ Are there trolleys to push and wheelies to pull?
- ☐ Can you see toys and mobiles strung across for children to reach out to and touch?
- ☐ Are there places for adults to sit on the floor?
- ☐ Are there peaceful places?
- ☐ If you're interested in routines – do children sleep/eat at set times or when they need to?

### Outdoor areas – things to look for

Outdoor play teaches children different things from indoor activities. Services manage indoor and outdoor play differently. Some mixed age services have separate play areas for under-twos. Others, such as playgroups, are not required to have an outside play area. If outdoor space is not available, playgroups must provide alternative arrangements for children to have physically active play.

- ☐ Are the adults involved with children's play outdoors? This is important to look for.
- ☐ Can children move freely between inside and outdoors?
- ☐ Is the area safe, well maintained and inviting?
- ☐ Are there places for running, climbing, swinging, lifting and digging?
- ☐ What opportunities are there for children outside – sand, water, carpentry, junk construction, gardening, being physically active?
- ☐ Are there plenty of grassy areas?
- ☐ Can children create their own play spaces with materials such as boxes, ladders and planks?
- ☐ Is there a safe soft-fall surface under climbing equipment?
- ☐ Are there areas where children can use their imagination to play at building caves, huts and boats?
- ☐ Are the children being supervised at all times?
- ☐ Is there a quiet area to sit or to 'hide'?
- ☐ Are there animals? Are they well controlled and looked after?



# Questions to ask when choosing a service

Ask about anything you want to know. If it's a licensed centre, the licence should be displayed in the centre, and it will give you some details about the service. Many services will have an information sheet they can give you. If not, you might want to ask some of the following questions.

## ...about how the service is run

- Q:** Who owns and operates the service?
- Q:** How many children are enrolled?
- Q:** Is there a waiting list to get in?
- Q:** What qualifications do the teachers have?
- Q:** What experience do the teachers have with children with special education needs?
- Q:** How will the service work with my child's Early Intervention team around the planning and support my child needs?
- Q:** Are teachers regularly updating their knowledge and practice?
- Q:** Am I welcome to be involved in my child's learning?
- Q:** How will the service keep me informed about what's happening for my child?

- Q:** Does the service separate under-tuos from older children?
- Q:** How big are the groups?
- Q:** How will I know how my child is getting on?
- Q:** What are the service's expectations of me?
- Q:** Can I help decide how the service is run?
- Q:** Can I have a copy of the service's policies?
- Q:** Can I see the Education Review Office (ERO) reports?

## ...about how learning is supported

- Q:** What sort of activities, experiences and opportunities does the service provide to encourage learning?
- Q:** How are the needs of different children met?

- Q:** How do they help children settle in?
- Q:** How do teachers guide and respond to children's behaviour?
- Q:** How do teachers respond to upsets, especially those caused by other children?
- Q:** What will the service do to ensure my child feels safe, welcome and accepted by the staff and other children?
- Q:** How will the service identify and work with the things my child is interested in and good at?
- Q:** How will my child be included in all the activities the others take part in?
- Q:** Are teachers available to give my child extra support if they need it?
- Q:** What is the daily routine?

## Other questions I'd like to ask...

**Q:**

**Q:**



**Q:**What will the service do to make sure my child is included in the same activities as all the other children?

**Q:**Can children sleep when they want or at set times only?

**Q:**What happens if my child gets ill or has an accident?

**Q:**Who can collect my child?

**Q:**What is the process for giving children medicines and how does the service manage medical needs?

### ...about culture

- ▶ How does the service reflect and support the values and customs of its families?
- ▶ How does it provide opportunities for children to learn about other cultures?
- ▶ Is it sensitive to differences in culture and heritage?
- ▶ Is it a comfortable place for people of all cultures?

### ...about costs

- ▶ What are the costs?
- ▶ How do I pay?
- ▶ Are the costs lower if two or more of my children attend?
- ▶ Do I have to pay for public holidays or if children are sick or on holiday?
- ▶ Does the service use Government funding?
- ▶ If the service uses the Government funding, will there be any optional charges or donations?
- ▶ Am I able to apply for childcare subsidies from the Ministry of Social Development?

### ...about food

- ▶ Do they provide snacks and lunch or do I provide them?
- ▶ If they provide food, what sort of food do they have (ask to see a menu to check it includes foods your child eats)? Do I have to pay extra?
- ▶ Do they cater for special food requirements?
- ▶ Are there set meal/snack times or can children choose when they want to eat?
- ▶ Can children serve themselves or can they choose themselves how much they eat?



*“I want Jade to be happy and have friends, to be included in society and actually belong.”*

*Michelle*



### Staff in the service

For your child to get the most out of their early childhood experience they need to be with people who can accept them as individuals and guide and support their learning at a level that's right for them.

When you can't be with your child, qualified and experienced teachers know how to help children progress towards their goals and can improve the skills of children of all ages. Younger children need to be cared for by teachers who know how infants develop and how to meet their special needs.

The method of teaching, the number of teachers and their qualifications, will be different depending on the kind of service you choose. But there are some things that are common to good practice, whatever the service type, such as:

- ▶ do they sit down and work with the children?
- ▶ do they talk to the children?
- ▶ do they listen to the children?
- ▶ what do they do when children are misbehaving?

Children do best where they can form bonds and relationships with people who care, have plenty of time for them, enjoy having fun and who give clear guidelines that can be backed up with reasons. Younger children especially, need time to build these bonds so teachers need to work both with individual children and the group.

Many services operate with one or two key teachers working with and caring for your child each day as this is more likely to provide a secure learning environment. Talk to your service about the systems they use and why they do things the way they do.

### Observations of teachers and staff

- ▶ Are the teachers warm and helpful? Are the children comfortable with them?
- ▶ Are children easily able to approach them eg, for a story or to ask questions?
- ▶ Are the children listened to with respect?
- ▶ Do the teachers get down to the children's eye level to speak to them?

- ▶ Is there lots of laughter?
- ▶ Do children respond well to teachers' directions?
- ▶ What does the licence say about the number of teachers required to supervise the children?
- ▶ Do the teachers enjoy their work and work well together?
- ▶ Do the teachers know individual children and respond to their particular needs?
- ▶ Do the teachers recognise each child's culture while treating them all equally with warmth and respect?
- ▶ Are children encouraged to be as independent as they can be; to choose their own activities?
- ▶ Are the teachers professional when guiding children's behaviour – do they teach them to change how they behave rather than punish them?
- ▶ Do the teachers encourage the children to be happy and involved in play and to be cooperative and pleasant with others?
- ▶ Do any of the teachers speak languages other than English?



*“I couldn't conceive how she was going to cope in the environment, I couldn't see how it was going to work well. I had huge fears about her safety, and how would she be supported. There were so many question marks about it.”*

Steph

From The Transition Process DVD, NZ Down Syndrome Association

### Do the numbers add up?

Children do best when they get individual attention from adults. A high number of teachers to children is good for:

- ▶ making sure activities suit each child's needs
- ▶ helping children bond and form stronger relationships with their teachers
- ▶ helping children get along with each other better.

A good quality early childhood education service will have enough teachers so that good relationships can develop between the teachers and the children. This is especially important for infants and toddlers. They need more adult attention because they have more immediate needs and rely on adults more to play and talk with them.

Licensed services will have listed on their licence the minimum number of adults that must be with the children at all times. Many services will have more teachers than this number. You should see the licence on display in the service.

### What are the children doing?

A quality early childhood education service will have a planned programme that both cares for and educates your child. In New Zealand, Te Whāriki, the early childhood curriculum, sets out the learning experience goals for children up to school age. It identifies what a child needs to know and use later in life.

A good learning programme will:

- ▶ have a clear written statement of how the service will educate and care for children (this needs to be based on the curriculum, and should include assessing, planning and evaluating what happens for children at the service)
- ▶ keep a record of each child's learning and development
- ▶ set new programmes to extend the child based on these records
- ▶ involve children and parents in setting realistic short-term goals for the child, based on their needs and interests

- ▶ involve teacher discussion
- ▶ involve teacher and parent discussion
- ▶ be changed as needed.

The type of service you choose might place more focus on some learning elements than others and carry out the learning programme in different ways. It's important you choose a service that offers a programme that will suit your child and how you want them to grow and develop.

### Size counts

Many children are more comfortable and can learn more in small groups. They get on better with others and can express themselves better, which helps them feel good about themselves. In small groups, teachers can more easily treat children as individuals. Often there's greater cooperation between adult and child.

# Working in partnership

Parents, whānau and caregivers are children's first teachers and much of a child's learning will take place in the home. Look for an early childhood education service that encourages your involvement in your child's learning and that builds links with you in your child's development. It might be that you and the service you choose have different cultures, values, customs and beliefs. But you can still agree on the way your child is encouraged to grow and learn.

## In teacher-led services:

- ▶ Do teachers accept and support the values of parents, whānau and caregivers?
- ▶ Are teachers positive towards parents, whānau and caregivers and their children?
- ▶ Do they talk with parents, whānau and caregivers about issues, such as what food is eaten and when, how to handle toileting and discipline?
- ▶ Do teachers keep parents, whānau and caregivers fully informed on the running of the service?
- ▶ Do teachers keep parents, whānau and caregivers fully

informed about their child's daily activities and any changes in their health or eating habits?

- ▶ Do they regularly update parents, whānau and caregivers on how their child is developing?
- ▶ Do they encourage parents, whānau and caregivers to make decisions and be involved in their child's learning?

## In parent-led services:

In these services, it's the parents, whānau and caregivers who run the sessions and the learning programmes. Find out:

- ▶ what values will be encouraged
- ▶ how the sessions will be run

- ▶ how parents, whānau and caregivers are to be involved
- ▶ how children's learning and development is supported
- ▶ what behaviours are encouraged and discouraged
- ▶ how information is shared
- ▶ what's expected of you.

## Being involved

You might not have much spare time but, if you can, spend even a few minutes at the service regularly, joining in and just having fun. You'll be enjoying and sharing in an important part of your child's life.





# Settling your child into the service

Although many children settle happily into a new environment, being away from you and other family can be a difficult time for some children.

Having to deal with people they don't know and a group of other children can be frightening. If you've decided on an early childhood education service where you're not around all of the time, there are a number of things you can do to help your child settle in.

## Make a good start

### Visits

Children usually settle better if you visit the service several times before you leave them for the first time. This will also help you see how teachers relate to your child and other children, what the routines are and how the programme works.

### The first day

- ▶ When you think your child is ready to stay on their own, begin by leaving them for only a short time for the first few days. If you can, come back early until your child is settled.
- ▶ Before leaving your child at the service for the first time, allow some time to stay with them to help them become familiar and comfortable with the new

environment. This may take a few weeks before you both feel happy about this.

### Leaving your child

It's normal for your child to be upset or unwilling for you to leave, especially in the early weeks. This can be an upsetting time for parents and whānau, too.

These things can help children settle in and reassure you:

- ▶ be positive about the day ahead and the things they will be doing
- ▶ give yourself plenty of time to settle your child in
- ▶ establish a short routine, such as reading a story together or waving to each other through the window
- ▶ always tell your child when you're leaving and that you're coming back later
- ▶ say goodbye, and then leave straight away. Once you say goodbye you should then leave – staying around to check if they're happy could confuse them. If you leave without saying goodbye your child could

become very upset once they discover you've gone. This makes it harder for them to feel secure and settled in the long term

- ▶ if you're worried, arrange to phone later and see how they are
- ▶ always pick your child up at the time you have promised. For the first week or so try to be a bit early
- ▶ be regular in the times you arrive and go home – your child will feel more secure
- ▶ bring a special comfort object if it will help them to settle in (talk with the service's staff about this – for example, can other children play with it and how will it be kept safe?).

Some children will settle into the new environment straight away, others take longer. The teachers have lots of experience with this and will have suggestions about the best ways to help your child settle in.



## Talk to the teachers about your child

If you're planning to leave your child in a service, talk with the teachers about how you can work together to best support your child. Talk to them about your child's:

- ▶ special words and ways of communicating
- ▶ favourite ways of being comforted
- ▶ sleep routines – when and how they like to go to sleep
- ▶ toilet training
- ▶ favourite foods and special food needs
- ▶ favourite colours, toys, music and songs
- ▶ life and family – important things that may be happening and anything that might be upsetting them
- ▶ equipment they currently use
- ▶ medication and allergies
- ▶ things they:
  - like
  - don't like
  - are good at
  - find a challenge
  - need help with
  - can get upset about
  - can do by themselves.

# How to prepare the service

The staff will need to work with you on the best way to help your child fit in and thrive. Staff will want to liaise with other professionals involved in supporting your child, such as Early Intervention staff from Special Education and any other specialists involved with your child.

The service will need to know:

- ▶ specific information about your child's needs
- ▶ details of any medicines your child takes
- ▶ the names of parents, caregivers, family/whānau and other significant people involved with your child and who to contact in an emergency
- ▶ information about your child's ethnicity and the language you speak at home.

## Health

You can talk to the teachers about your ideas on health and nutrition for your child. You can also ask them for advice. If your child has any special needs, take time to talk about these with the teachers so that you – and they – are happy your child will receive what they need.

## Culture

The staff may not be familiar with your religious or cultural traditions and beliefs. Talking to them about this will help them understand your

values and views so they can develop activities to suit your child. They might even celebrate an event from one of your traditions so all children attending the service can take part in, and learn from, the experience.

## Complaints

If you're unhappy with anything happening at the service, check with the service for a complaints process. In a licensed centre this should be displayed on a noticeboard beside the licence. You can also contact the Ministry of Education.



Ask Special Education staff for a copy of our *Family File* briefing that you can fill out and give to the service or take to team meetings.



# More details about the types of early childhood education services available

## Teacher-led services

### Education and care centres

Education and care centres are licensed by the Ministry of Education to offer either all-day or part-day services. Education and care centres may include church-based, workplace and childcare centres, which focus on a particular language and culture, which may be run by either community or private owners.

Some services may be based around certain beliefs about, or methods of, education, such as Montessori or Rudolph Steiner centres.

Depending on the centre, they may accept children from birth to school age or children of specific ages.

At least half of the teachers in charge of the centre must be registered teachers who hold a Diploma in Teaching (ECE) or similar qualification. Other staff in the centre may have different qualifications or experience.

Education and care centres usually charge fees. As parents, whānau or caregivers, you may have an opportunity to be involved with management committees or as voluntary helpers or fundraisers.

## Kindergartens

Kindergartens are a type of education and care centre run by a kindergarten association, and licensed by the Ministry of Education. Most kindergartens offer services to children aged between two and five years. Kindergartens may organise their services so that:

- ▶ older children attend morning sessions five-days-a-week
- ▶ younger children attend afternoon sessions three-days-a-week.

*“My son was so happy there and just enjoyed it and was keen to go and there were never any tears or never any not wanting to go.”*

Anthea



However, some kindergartens arrange their sessions differently, to allow siblings to attend together. Some kindergartens offer sessions from 9am to 3pm or all-day sessions and may take children under two years.

Early childhood education teachers working in kindergartens must all be registered teachers who hold at least a Diploma in Teaching (ECE) or similar qualification.

Each kindergarten is run by a committee of parents and people from the community. This committee reports to a local kindergarten association. As a parent, whānau or caregiver, you may have the opportunity to be involved with the committee or association or as a voluntary helper or fundraiser.

Kindergartens usually ask for a parent donation or fee.

### **Home-based education and care services**

Home-based education and care services involve an educator providing education and care for small groups of up to four children under the age of six in a home setting (theirs or the child's) as part of a Ministry of Education-funded and regulated home-based care service.

Educators in home-based services provide all-day or part-day education and care. They may also provide emergency care. The work of the educator is supported by a coordinator who is a qualified and registered early childhood education teacher. Some coordinators may help parents choose the right educator for their child and this person will support the child's learning programme. The coordinator visits the home-based caregiver/educator regularly to check on the child's safety and wellbeing and their learning progress.

Home-based care services usually charge fees.

### **Parent-led services**

#### **Playcentres**

In playcentres, parents, whānau and caregivers meet together to support their children's early learning. Playcentres offer learning through play for children from birth to school age. Most playcentres are licensed by the Ministry of Education.

Each playcentre sets the times for its own sessions and children can attend up to five sessions a week.

People become members of a playcentre when they enrol their child. They are then involved in running the centre and taking part in the daily programme. Each centre is linked to a regional association, which belongs to the national New Zealand Playcentre Federation. The associations provide parent education programmes. Parents, whānau and caregivers are encouraged to take part in playcentre courses to help them enhance their child's learning.



Playcentres usually charge fees or request donations. Because parents, whānau and caregivers are so involved in this service, these fees or donations are generally lower than in teacher-led services.

### **Kōhanga Reo**

Kōhanga Reo are services licensed by the Ministry of Education and build young children's and parents' knowledge of te reo Māori (language) and tikanga (culture). Parents and whānau are closely involved in the child's learning and development. Parents and whānau are responsible for the management and operation of their kōhanga reo and are encouraged to take part in the daily programme.

Kōhanga reo have a whānau contribution system, which may vary according to the needs of the whānau. This contribution can be koha, donations for food and/or paying fees.

Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust is the umbrella organisation for all kōhanga reo. The Trust's role as the kaitiaki (guardian) of the kōhanga reo kaupapa is to ensure the quality and revitalisation of the Māori language. It does this by providing support and advice to kōhanga reo and advocating on their behalf. The Trust provides whānau-based learning to kōhanga reo whānau including Whakapakari Tino Rangatiratanga, a three-year training course for kaiako (teachers). It also provides training courses for whānau in te reo Māori, computer training, Te Whāriki and business administration.

### **Playgroups**

Playgroups are groups that give parents, whānau and caregivers the opportunity to meet together and provide play programmes for their children. To be a playgroup, more than half the children attending must have a parent staying with

them and no child can attend for more than four hours per day. The playgroup sessions are often set up in community halls where equipment is put out before each session and cleared away afterwards.

There are many different types of playgroups. Some have a focus on maintaining culture and language (eg, Ngā Puna Kōhungahunga, Pacific Island playgroups). Others have specific philosophical approaches (such as Montessori or Steiner groups) or other features, such as multiple birth playgroups. Playgroups can be rural or urban.





Certificated playgroups that meet certain requirements can receive a small amount of Government funding to help pay for equipment and hall hire. Parents, whānau and caregivers involved in running the sessions receive information, support and training from the Ministry of Education to help them.

### **Ngā Puna Kōhungahunga**

Ngā Puna Kōhungahunga are a type of playgroup that builds learning in te reo Māori and tikanga. These groups help parents and whānau to shape learning programmes to meet their children's needs. Learning may be in both English and te reo or in te reo only.

Parents and whānau are involved in running the sessions and receive information, support and training from the Ministry of Education to help them do so.

### **Pacific Island early childhood groups**

Pacific Island early childhood groups build young children's knowledge of their own Pasifika language and culture. These groups include many Pacific cultures from countries such as Samoa, Tonga, Cook Islands, Niue, Tokelau, Tuvalu and Fiji.

Learning may be in both English and a Pacific language or in the Pacific language only. These groups are often church or community-based and parents help run the sessions.



### Te Kura (The Correspondence School)

Your child might also be eligible to enrol at Te Kura. Te Kura offers learning programmes for children aged three to five years who:

- ▶ live too far away from early childhood education services
- ▶ can't attend other services because they are ill or have a disability
- ▶ shift homes at least once a term.

Your child can receive the early childhood education correspondence service and also attend a regular service for up to two four-hour sessions per week.

Te Kura's early childhood education teachers work with you, whānau or caregivers to develop a programme to meet the needs of your child.

You can also receive information and programmes to help you plan play activities and learning experiences to support your child's learning.

Te Kura also has a range of books, puzzles, educational games, audiotapes, posters and art materials that you can borrow.

## ĒTAHI ATU ĀWHINA KA HIAHIA PEA KOE

### Other support you might need

It's important to form a circle of supporters/friends around your child who are focused and committed to them. The combined energies of a group of people can become a powerful force in your child's life. They can also give you as parents energy, and help you remain connected and supported within your whānau and community. Check out our information sheet *Support organisations and useful contacts* to connect with other organisations in your community.

# How to contact us

Below are the contact details for Special Education offices around New Zealand.

For special education information or advice you can also call the free Special Education information line on 0800 622 222, or email us at **special.education@minedu.govt.nz**.

If you're deaf or have a hearing impairment, you can also contact us through the New Zealand Relay Service on 0800 4 711 711 or go to [www.nzrelay.co.nz](http://www.nzrelay.co.nz).

Select the area that's closest to you:

## **Tai Tokerau District Office**

10 Awaroa River Road  
PO Box 911  
Whangarei 0140  
Ph: 09 436 8900  
Fax: 09 436 8902

## **Northwest District Office**

Level 1, 102 Rosedale Road  
Albany, North Shore City  
PO Box 305160  
Triton Plaza  
North Shore City 0757  
Ph: 09 487 1100  
Fax: 09 487 1187

## **Manukau District Office**

Unit I, 16 Bishop Dunn Place  
Botany South  
PO Box 217046  
Botany Junction  
Manukau 2164  
Ph: 09 265 3000  
Fax: 09 265 3199

## **Auckland City District Office**

Level 3, Eden 5 Building  
12–18 Normanby Road  
Mt Eden  
Private Bag 92 644  
Symonds St  
Auckland 1150  
Ph: 09 632 9400  
Fax: 09 632 9401

## **Waikato District Office**

19 Home Straight, Te Rapa  
PO Box 774  
Hamilton 3240  
Ph: 07 850 8880  
Fax: 07 850 8998

## **Bay of Plenty East District Office**

Level 3, Regional House  
1 Elizabeth Street  
Tauranga 3110  
Ph: 07 571 7800  
Fax: 07 571 7864

## **Bay of Plenty West District Office**

Level 3, 1144 Pukaki Street  
PO Box 701  
Rotorua 3040  
Ph: 07 343 1371  
Fax: 07 349 2560

## **Gisborne District Office**

2nd Floor Rockforte Tower Building  
Cnr Gladstone Rd & Grey St  
PO Box 658  
Gisborne 4040  
Ph: 06 869 1520  
Fax: 06 869 1521  
Free ph: 0508 656 565

## **Hawke's Bay District Office**

8 A Lever Street, Ahuriri  
PO Box 147  
Napier 4110  
Ph: 06 833 6730  
Fax: 06 833 6731

## **Taranaki District Office**

Level 4, PWC Centre  
54 Gill Street  
PO Box 8158  
New Plymouth 4342  
Ph: 06 757 6400  
Fax: 06 758 4135

## **Central District Office**

1–3 Oxford Street  
(cnr of Ferguson and Oxford Street)  
PO Box 1154, Palmerston North 4440  
Ph: 06 350 9850  
Fax: 06 355 0503

## **Greater Wellington District Office**

Level 2, 19 Market Grove  
PO Box 30 177, Lower Hutt 5040  
Ph: 04 439 4600  
Fax: 04 570 3667

## **Marlborough/Nelson/West Coast District Office**

19 Haven Road  
PO Box 282, Nelson 7040  
Ph: 03 546 3470  
Fax: 03 539 1501

## **Canterbury District Office**

39 Princess Street  
PO Box 2522, Christchurch 8140  
Ph: 03 378 7300  
Fax: 03 378 7302

## **Otago District Office**

414 Moray Place  
Private Bag 1971, Dunedin 9054  
Ph: 03 471 5200  
Fax: 03 479 0541

## **Southland District Office**

190 Forth Street, PO Box 887  
Invercargill 9840  
Ph: 03 211 8000  
Fax: 03 211 8001





**New Zealand Government**

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