

March 2011

## Information for parents and caregivers



# Welcome to the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS)

Supporting children and young people with high and very high special education needs.

The following information outlines the support available to you and your child if your child has just been accepted for ORS. It explains how ORS works, the services and funding available, the people who will be working with your child and what everyone's roles are.

The Ministry of Education, Special Education will work with you, your child and their school to support your child to join in with other children and learn.

### What is ORS?

The Government funds schools to provide extra support for children with special education needs. For those with the highest needs, such as your child, Special Education provides direct support to individual children *at school* through ORS or other services. These services are funded by the Government and are free.

ORS can be used for:

- ▶ extra support from an additional teacher
- ▶ support from specialists
- ▶ support from a teacher's aide
- ▶ funding for small items your child might need (known as consumables).

### High or very high needs – what this means

The letter you received will explain whether your child's needs are high or very high. This determines how many hours an additional teacher will work with your child and the level of funding for specialist services, small items your child needs

### Daily support

Each student receiving ORS gets a different amount of teacher's aide hours each day depending on their need.

### Weekly support

If your child has high needs they will get half a day a week of additional teaching and support.

If your child has very high needs they will get one day a week of additional teaching and support.

**Funding for a teacher's aide**  
to support your child's teacher to include them in class programmes and activities.

**Additional teacher support**  
used by the classroom teacher to work directly with your child and to prepare resources for them.



**Consumables Grant**  
given to your child's school to cover the cost of items that only your child needs, such as computer software, extra-size pens and pen grips, Braille machine paper, laminating pouches or toileting products.

**Specialist services**  
— specialists employed by Special Education, such as speech-language therapists, psychologists, occupational therapists or physiotherapists, might work with your child and/or the team supporting your child at school.

Anything bought with the **Consumables Grant** should remain with your child until they leave school or they no longer need it.

### Support as needed

Specialists will work with your child and/or their school when needed, if your child requires more intensive support.

*“I think easily the greatest thing I’ve achieved is being head boy. Here I am today and I’ve done what I thought I couldn’t do. If I could go back in time and talk to myself when I first started high school I’d probably say to myself if you think you can’t do something just think the complete opposite.”*

*Zane, student previously receiving ORS*

at school and teacher’s aide support. (You can find more detail about this in the *additional teacher* section.)

## **What happens now that your child has been accepted for ORS**

### **Initial team meeting**

Now that your child has been accepted for ORS funding, there will be a meeting with you and all the people who will be involved with your child. This might include:

- ▶ teachers from your child’s school
- ▶ the team already involved with your child – such as an Early Intervention team
- ▶ any other therapists who might be working with your child.

Some things that might be discussed include:

- ▶ your child’s strengths and needs
- ▶ questions you might have
- ▶ who will make up the team surrounding your child and their names and contacts
- ▶ the roles of each of these people and how they will work with your child

- ▶ what specialist support might be available for your child
- ▶ how you will establish and continue communications between home and school
- ▶ who you can approach if you need information or to clarify anything or if there are any problems.

### **Other helpful information about your child**

It can be helpful for the people working with your child to have written information about your child’s likes, dislikes, special skills and other useful personal information. Ask Special Education staff for a copy of the *Family File* briefing from our parent information kit that you can fill out and give to your school or take to school and team meetings.

### **Developing an Individual Education Plan (IEP)**

At your first meeting, or in a follow-up meeting, your child’s team will develop an Individual Education Plan (IEP). This is similar to the Individual Plan your child will already have if they’ve been receiving

support from an Early Intervention service. The IEP or Individual Plan is a written plan that outlines your child’s goals and how your child can reach those goals.

Your child’s school organises the IEP meetings. You can talk with the school about who you want at IEP meetings. They will usually include you, your child’s teacher, and any Special Education staff or other specialists. You can have as many or as few people at IEP meetings as you wish. You’ll play an important part in this team because you’re the person who knows your child best and what’s happening in their life.

Before the meeting you might want to make a list of the things you want to talk about. You might hear new education terms that mean very little to you. If you don’t understand something, please ask.

During this meeting you’ll be able to talk to the team about your child’s strengths so that you can set short- and long-term goals together.



Your child's IEP will also identify:

- ▶ teaching strategies that will support your child to learn
- ▶ resources or special equipment your child needs
- ▶ who will be working with your child and what their role will be
- ▶ how you and family/whānau members can support your child's learning at home
- ▶ the time it's likely to take for your child to reach their goals and ways to check that they're making the progress you'd like to see them make.

At IEP meetings it's also important that you, the school and the Special Education team agree on the specialist services your child needs most at that time.

Your child's IEP should be reviewed at least twice a year. You can ask the school for a review of your child's IEP if you wish. Reviews should be done in a meeting with you, your child's teacher, and any other support people or specialists involved with your child. This meeting will record your child's learning progress and what their next goals will be.

You will receive a copy of the updated plan from your child's school after each meeting. If you have any concerns about what was discussed, talk to either the teacher or the key worker.

### **Your involvement in decisions**

Your child's best interests are at the heart of all the discussions

school and Special Education staff will have with you. Your involvement is essential. It's important that everyone works together to decide on your child's goals and the best ways to support them to reach their goals.

Your child's school will work with you and staff from Special Education to decide on the *amount* of support your child receives. This depends on what resources are available (specialists and funding) and how many other children require support and their levels of need. Your child's support might vary from year to year.

### **The team that will work with your child**

#### *People at school who will work with your child*

All staff at your child's school should be aware of your child's needs and be willing to support the classroom teacher and teacher's aide if necessary. You will be welcome at the school to help support your child and have the same right as any other parent to talk with the principal or the school's board of trustees.

#### **Classroom teacher**

Your child's teacher is the person responsible for making sure your child is learning what they need to learn – the New Zealand Curriculum – just as they are for all their students. Their role is to work with the additional teacher and teacher's aide and any specialists to develop your child's learning programme based on their IEP.



### **Additional teacher**

On top of the teaching time all children receive, ORS funds an additional teacher whose main role is to support the classroom teacher to give your child the extra support they need to learn and to achieve.

The additional teacher might spend some of their time working with your child, usually in the classroom, and some of their time planning your child's learning programme.

Schools might use additional teacher time in different ways. In some schools, a teacher works with all the students in the school receiving ORS. In other schools, the additional teacher takes the main class, giving the classroom teacher time to work with the student or students in their class receiving ORS. Talk with your child's school about how they're using additional teacher time.

Ask who the additional teacher is and get to know them as they will be an important member of your child's team.

### **Some of the things your child's additional teacher might do:**

- ▶ help organise your child's Individual Education Plan meetings
- ▶ work with the classroom teacher to adapt what's being taught to all the class so your child can join in and learn alongside their classmates
- ▶ show the teacher and teacher's aide ways of working effectively with your child and help them plan activities both in and out of the classroom, so your child is included
- ▶ make sure your child has the right equipment to support their learning and that it's being kept in good condition
- ▶ train the classroom teacher and teacher's aide in how to use any specialised equipment your child needs
- ▶ develop special resources, such as laminated instruction cards
- ▶ check that your child is learning what they need to learn and making the progress that's expected – as written in their IEP

- ▶ help everyone supporting your child to keep in touch and up-to-date with what's happening.

### **Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO)**

Many schools have a SENCO who manages all the special education needs programmes in the school. For students receiving ORS, this person can make sure the teachers, home and specialists all know what's going on. Sometimes the SENCO works as the additional teacher.

### **Teacher's aide**

The teacher's aide will support your child's classroom teacher by working with your child, providing them with support for their learning programme or working with a small group of children. This is done under the direction of their classroom teacher. Your child's learning programme is based on their IEP and developed by the teacher and additional teacher. The teacher's aide plays a key role in supporting your child to learn alongside and join in activities with other children the same age.

*“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*

### *Special Education specialists who might work with your child*

Specialists support schools to develop and put in place a programme that supports your child to join in with other children and learn alongside them.

The amount of time specialists spend on supporting, monitoring and updating your child's IEP goals will depend on your child's needs.

Decisions will need to be made about which specialist services your child needs most and when. You will be involved in the discussions and might be asked to sign 'service agreements' about the amount of specialist time your child will get.

**The lead worker or key worker** will help coordinate all the services your child gets from Special Education, attend relevant meetings and training and handle any funding issues. They are one of the people you can talk to if you have concerns about your child's support.

**Psychologists or special education advisors (SEAs)** work with your child if they have behavioural or learning needs. They can help work out what might be contributing to your child's difficulty and what support they'll need. They can help you and your child's teachers develop strategies to improve their social and other skills.

**Advisers on deaf children (AODC)** can help if your child is deaf or hearing impaired and needs to use hearing aids or special equipment. They can provide information about the full range of options for developing language and communication, including New Zealand Sign Language. They might work with you and your child and give your child's teacher advice on learning programmes and equipment.

**Speech-language therapists (SLTs)** can help if your child has difficulties talking, listening and understanding and using language. They will assess your child's abilities

in order to work out what kind of support they need. Speech-language therapists might work directly with your child as well as offer advice to both you and your child's teachers. They might also provide a programme of activities for each of you to work on with your child.

**Kaitakawaenga** or Māori cultural advisors can work together with your child's team and your whānau if you or your child identify as Māori. They support everyone to work in culturally appropriate and responsive ways.

**Occupational therapists (OTs) and/or physiotherapists (PTs)** work with your child if they have a physical disability. They can assess your child's needs and provide advice to teachers and your family/whānau.

### **Other support available** **Support with transport**

If your child needs help with transport between home and school for mobility or safety

*“Probably one of the things that I was most worried about was that I wouldn't be able to make friends and people would make fun of me because of the way I acted. I was scared that no-one was going to care about me, I wasn't going to be supported in any way. If I had just known there was that support maybe I wouldn't have been as scared as I was.”*

*Zane, student previously receiving ORS*

reasons, they might be able to get Special Education School Transport Assistance (SESTA). In many cases, Special Education will look at your child's need for help with transport when first assessing their needs. For more detail see the factsheet on *Special Education School Transport Assistance (SESTA)*.

### **Assistive technology – resources and equipment**

Assistive technology is specially designed equipment such as computers, keyboards, special seating, software and other devices or technology that might support your child to do something that would otherwise be difficult or impossible.

Special Education can buy this equipment if your child needs this to be able to learn. Your child's team will need to apply for this and your child might need to try out a range of equipment to find what works best for them. Special Education staff will be involved and will help your child and their teachers or specialists learn to use

the new equipment and with any ongoing support.

If your child is at an independent (private) school, or is home schooled, they might still be able to receive assistive technology funding. Assistive technology support is for individual students, not groups of students.

### **Making sure your child can get around their school**

If your child uses a wheelchair, needs to use handrails or requires other changes to school buildings in order to be able to get into classrooms, toilets, the library or other school areas, the school needs to know about this well before your child starts school.

The school is responsible for making the necessary changes and will follow a process that involves you, the Property team at the Ministry of Education and a physiotherapist or occupational therapist from Special Education.

## **Common questions about ORS**

### **Q: How is my child's teacher's aide support decided?**

**A:** The process for working out how much teacher's aide support your school will receive is called the moderation process. It takes place when your child first starts on ORS then once a year – usually during Term 3.

Your school and Special Education will work together with you to determine your child's needs for support and to fill in a *Request for teacher's aid resource* form. All requests for teacher's aide support in your district are then considered by Special Education staff and often a reference group of local principals, teachers and parents. They will use benchmarks to ensure children with similar needs receive similar levels of support. The decisions they make must be within the district's budget.



You need to be aware that your child's teacher's aide support might change and you might not get the exact amount your team requested. After discussing this with your school and key worker anyone on your child's team can ask for a review of the decision. Every region or district will have a review process. If your child changes schools their support needs will be reviewed.

**Q: What support is there when my child is starting school?**

**A:** There will be several changes or 'transitions' for your child as they grow up. When you're making decisions about which school you'd like your child to go to, Special Education staff can give you information on the options so you can make an informed choice.

When your child starts school, someone from our Early Intervention team will work with your child until school support is in place.

Children receiving ORS can stay at school until the end of the year

they turn 21 if they have a Section 9 Agreement. All children can start school at five years but must have started by the time they turn six years.

**Q: Does my child have to be at school all day, every day?**

**A:** Once a child turns six it is compulsory to go to school all day, five days a week.

However, some children with special education needs might find it a struggle to be at school full time. This might be because of health problems, because it's too stressful and exhausting for them or because they've just moved from an early childhood education centre to school, which is a big step. You, the school and any specialists must all agree to your child only attending school part time. This must be the right thing for your child and should be reviewed frequently until they can attend school full time.

If the school wants to send your child home early, for example, when a teacher's aide is not around, or has told you that your

child can only attend for certain hours, and this differs from their classmates, then they might be breaching the Education Act 1989. Discuss this with the school principal. If this is unsuccessful, you can contact a district manager at your local Special Education office.

Special Education needs to know when schools are not meeting their legal obligations. Your child has the right to be at school full time.

When your child is at secondary school they're expected to be at school during exam time and for Term 4 just as all students are. If your child isn't sitting an exam, their school needs to provide them with another programme.

**Q: If my child changes schools what happens to their ORS funding?**

**A:** The teacher time and teacher's aide funding provided through ORS moves with your child to their new school. Your child is likely to have a different teacher's aide and the amount of teacher's aide support might change. You can

*"We all had a very clear idea about where we were with James. We knew all his various sensitivities to noise and crowds and we put careful plans in place. We had his visual timetables, he had his own special desk ready with a screen around it in case he needed to be taken somewhere secure and quiet and calm, with pictures of us all around. So it was all in place from day one."*

*Annabel*





*“The meetings are very crucial to success. One big meeting has its place and it’s helpful, but smaller, regular, relationship building meetings are really important. It steps up trust of the communication pathways which are best for your child.”*

*Support Worker*

help things go smoothly by letting the school and Special Education staff know as soon as possible that you will be moving.

**Q: What does an IEP look like?**

**A:** You can find a copy of the *IEP Guidelines* on the Ministry of Education website: [www.minedu.govt.nz](http://www.minedu.govt.nz). In the *IEP Guidelines* you will find examples of several children with different needs and what their IEPs look like, as well as more detailed information about the IEP process. If you don’t have access to a computer to read the *IEP Guidelines*, ask someone from Special Education to get you a printed copy.

**Q: What is a Section 9 Agreement?**

**A:** A Section 9 Agreement is a formal agreement between the Ministry of Education, and you as parents/guardians. There are different agreements that allow your child to:

- ▶ enrol at a special school
- ▶ enrol at school before the age of five
- ▶ stay at primary school past the age of 14
- ▶ stay at secondary school until the end of the year they turn 21.

**Q: What is a fund holder?**

**A:** The money for children funded by ORS does not necessarily go directly to their school but is held by a fund holder. In some districts Special Education is the fund holder. In other districts, schools with a number of students on ORS are the fund holder for their school and others nearby.

These schools hold the funding for children receiving ORS and organise and pay for specialist services themselves. They buy these services either from Special Education or from specialists working in the community.

The fund holder makes sure the money is used fairly and pays schools their teacher’s aide and Consumables Grant money each term.

**Q: Do I have a say about who is employed to work with my child?**

**A:** Your child’s school is responsible for employing its teachers and support staff. While the final say lies with the school it’s likely the school will discuss such issues with you before making a decision, particularly if you say you want to be involved. If you have any concerns, talk firstly with your school principal.

**Q: What support is there to prepare my child for life after school?**

**A:** As part of their education every child is encouraged to think about the wider world and where and how they fit into it.

At least two years before your child leaves secondary school your child, you and the team working with your child will develop an Individual Transition Plan. This plan will sit alongside your child's Individual Education Plan. These plans focus on what your child wants to do after they leave school and the steps and support they need to take to get there. You and the school might begin working with community support agencies to support their move. For more detailed information see our booklet *Preparing to leave school*.

**Q: If I have any worries about my child who do I talk to?**

**A:** The first person you should talk to is your child's key worker or classroom teacher. You can also talk to your school principal.

**Q: What happens if there's a problem?**

**A:** There might be times when you're concerned about the services or support your child receives. Please discuss your concerns with the person directly involved as soon as you can. If this feels difficult for you, take someone with you – a family/whānau member, a friend, a kaumatua or iwi representative or another parent or someone from a support group, such as Parent to Parent.

It's important that you tell someone as soon as a problem arises. If you're unable to speak to the person directly involved and your concern relates to a staff member or service that the school is responsible for

then you should talk to the principal. If your concern is about a Special Education service or staff member, contact your local Special Education service or district manager.

Special Education and the school will both have their own complaints procedures. You can ask for a copy of these.

**Contacting specialist staff**

Specialist staff work in schools and they're often out of their office – leave a message and they will get back to you as soon as they can.

If your child is not able to make their appointment with their specialist, please let someone at the office know and they will pass the message on.

*“We wanted to know what sort of support he'd get, as in teacher aide support, and I wanted to make sure that they understood Patrick's needs as well as I did. I went in there and said I'd like to help choose the teacher aide and be on the interview panel and things like that which they usually agreed with. I think the most important thing to me is who's going to be working with Patrick and have the most to do with him and are they able to... not do their job... but are they effective in doing their job.”*

*Jenny*



## Contact us

If you're unclear about any part of our service or have questions about the support your child receives, please ask. Start by talking with those who work most closely with your child. You can also talk with staff at your local Special Education office or call the Special Education information line on 0800 622 222.

You can get more detailed special education information on our website:  
**[www.minedu.govt.nz/Parents/YourChild/SupportForYourChild/ExtraSupport](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/Parents/YourChild/SupportForYourChild/ExtraSupport)**.

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

Your feedback is important. By letting us know what's going well – and what we can do better – we can improve what we do to support all children with special education needs.

Contact details for the people on my child's team:

My local Special Education office:

School phone number:

School/teacher's email:





## New Zealand Government

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