

# Quick Guide

# Starting school



Starting school can be an exciting time but can also create some worry.

## How to pick a school

Visit a variety of schools to find out if they will meet your child's needs. Things to consider:

- Is the physical environment suitable?
- Have they supported children with similar needs to your child before?
- Do they specialise in areas of interest to your child?
- Do you feel welcomed?

See if you can spend some time in a class to feel how welcoming it is, and how inclusive it feels.

See if you can spend time during a morning tea or lunch break to see how the school feels at playtime and if your child enjoys the environment.

Consider if you want your child to go to a mainstream school or a specialist or satellite school (if available in your area).

There are many parents chat groups on Facebook where you can find out about other parent's experiences. If you can't find one, try your local community groups.

## What are your rights

Section 34 of the Education and Training Act 2020 says, "people who have special educational needs (whether because of disability or otherwise) have the same rights to enrol and receive education in state schools as people who do not".

All children have the right to attend their local school, and schools have an obligation to enrol those students, regardless of learning needs.

## Some of the supports available

**Communication Service:** provides support if your child has high communication needs

**Severe Behaviour Service:** provides advice and support for your child, the school, and your family/whānau if your child has severe behaviour difficulties

**Ongoing and Reviewable Resourcing Schemes (ORRS):** provides extra teaching, specialist programmes, therapy, and education support if your child has high or very high needs and meets certain criteria

**School High Health Needs Fund (SHHNF):** provides a teacher's aide for your child's teacher so that your child can attend school safely (if they meet certain criteria).

## Who else might be involved with your child at school

Depending on your child's support needs, you may also have support from:

- SENCO (Special Education Needs Co-Ordinator)
- Teacher aids
- Therapists: occupational, physio, speech and language
- RTLBs (Resource Teachers, Learning and Behaviour)
- LSTs (Learning Support Teachers)
- Advisors (e.g. for Deaf children)

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## Getting to and from school

In some cases, your child may qualify for a subsidy or allowance to travel to the closest local school.

## When things don't go right at school

Things don't go to plan sometimes. Some common concerns people have include:

- **Bullying:** If bullying is occurring you need to raise this with the teacher in the first instance, and then elevate as needed to school management.
- **The school sending your child home:** If a school sends your child home because support workers are not available, or if they are requesting your child attend different hours to their peers, they might be breaching the Education Act 1989. Discuss this with the school principal. If unsuccessful you can contact the Special Education Office.
- **You can discuss with a school having your child attend during different hours to support your child in coping with school.** This needs to be agreed with you, the principal, and any specialists involved.

## Transitioning into school

Before starting school, you will likely want to visit many times so your child becomes familiar with the school and ready for the change to their routine. You might want to consider using social stories to help them understand what to expect.

- These visits may start months before starting school and the frequency of visits determined based on need
- Consider having the teacher visit the early childhood centre to see how your child is in a familiar environment
- Discuss with the school your child's strengths and where supports will be needed
- You may want to create an "about me" information sheet for the professionals that will interact with your child, and a version for their classmates including what they like, what their hobbies are, who is in their family, any pets etc
- Your early education support team will assist with any funding applications for ORRs or similar that need to be completed.

## Quick checklist

- TBC

## Want to know more about starting school?

If you have any questions or concerns, contact the Ministry of Education.

- Phone: +64 4 463 800
- Fax: +64 4 463 8001
- Email [enquiries.national@education.govt.nz](mailto:enquiries.national@education.govt.nz)