

A Booklet for Non-English -Speaking Background Families  
(English Version)



# Families Learning Together



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga



## Acknowledgement

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This booklet is available in the first languages of some refugee and migrant groups.

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# INTRODUCTION

Schooling is compulsory in New Zealand for all children from their 6<sup>th</sup> until their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, although most start on their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. Schooling is free until the age of 19, or 21 for special education students.

## LEVELS OF SCHOOLING

Compulsory education is divided into primary/intermediate and secondary school.

SCHOOL	CHILDREN'S AGES	CLASSES
Primary School	5 - 10 years	Years 0 - 6
Intermediate School	11 - 12 years	Years 7 - 8
Secondary School	13 - 19 years	Years 9 - 13

Most children are put into classes according to their age, but the ability of individual children is also taken into account. This is so that they will have classmates and friends of their own age. It can however be a problem for children who have missed years of schooling before coming to New Zealand, and for children who are just beginning to learn English.



# HOW SCHOOLS ARE MANAGED

Each school is governed by a voluntary *board of trustees* which includes elected parent representatives, the school principal and a staff representative. Schools with students above form 3 (year 9) also have a student representative.

## The Principal

The role of the principal is to manage the day to day activities of the school within policies established by the board.

## Rights and responsibilities of parents and caregivers

Parents and caregivers have a number of opportunities to be involved in the education of their children. They can stand for election to the board of trustees, join the Parent Teacher Association, and help with the activities of the school. Parents and caregivers can expect to receive regular reports on their child's progress.



## Attendance

There is a legal requirement for children between the ages of 6 and 16 to be enrolled at school and to attend whenever the school is open. Parents commit an offence, and are liable for prosecution, if they do not meet this requirement.

If a child will not be attending school on a particular day, parents need to let the school know. This can be done by a note sent to the teacher in advance or through a telephone message to the school office.

Parents can ask to have a child released from school for special reasons such as medical appointments. They can also ask for their children to be excluded from religious instruction or classes in sex education.

### *Fees*

State schools may not charge fees, but may ask parents for a voluntary donation to assist in the provision of certain services. If parents receive a request for such a donation but are unable to pay it, they should telephone or make an appointment with the principal to explain the problem.

### *Dealing with Problems*

Any concerns about a child's schooling should first be discussed with the teacher or the principal.

If parents wish to make a complaint, they should ask the principal to explain the school's procedure for this type of complaint. Parents are entitled to take a support person with them to any meetings to discuss their complaint.

## Responsibilities of students

### *Uniforms*

A student who enrolls at a school which has a compulsory uniform policy will be expected to wear the uniform. If a school has an optional uniform policy, the student may choose whether or not to wear the uniform.

### *Discipline*

Teaching staff in New Zealand are not permitted to hit, cane, slap or in any way physically punish the students in their care.

Boards may approve methods of discipline such as the withdrawal of privileges, setting of extra homework or keeping a student after school (detention). In the case of after hours detention, parents should be notified beforehand.

If student misbehaviour is serious, a student may be stood down or suspended from a school for a period of time. This would only happen if a student was thought to be behaving in a way that set a harmful or dangerous example to other students or was a possible threat to their safety.

A school must follow formal procedures if a student is to be stood down or suspended. If this happens, the school must provide information about these procedures. The information is also available from the Ministry of Education.

### *Homework*

Each school has its own policy that outlines the amount and type of homework that students will be expected to do.

# SCHOOL TERMS AND HOLIDAYS

Students have a six-week summer holiday and three two week breaks between each of the four terms.

The terms:	Term 1	Late January until mid-April
	Term 2	Late April until early July
	Term 3	Mid-July until late September
	Term 4	Mid-October until mid-December (early December for secondary schools)

## PARENTAL SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

Parents are expected to create a home environment that will support their children's education. Some things parents can do to help are:



- look at, talk about and show interest in work children have done at school
- make a timetable for doing homework
- make sure TV is not turned on during homework time
- listen to children's reading



Get involved  
in your child's  
learning  
and make it fun!



# How can we help our children... to become better listeners and talkers?

## What language should we use?

If your family's first language is not English, talk with your child in the language your family knows best. This will make it easier for them to learn English outside the home.



## What should we talk about?

*Anything! Everything!*

- When your child is playing, talk aloud about what they're doing - for example, "You built a tower with five blocks, and now it's fallen down....".
- Make up stories and tell them to your child. Let them add to the story or tell you their own stories..
- Sing songs. Teach them songs, chants and poems. Encourage your child to choose and play their favourite cassettes on the cassette recorder at home or in the car.
- Watch your child's favourite TV programme with them and talk about it together afterwards.
- Encourage your older children to talk to the younger ones.
- Show them photographs. Share stories and special memories about the photos.

## How can I encourage my child to talk and listen?

- Talk, talk, talk with your child any time, anywhere.
- Help them to join in family discussions.
- Encourage them to listen to others.
- Listen and respond when your child talks to you.
- Give them information about things they're interested in as well as asking them questions.
- When you do ask your child questions, give them time to answer you.
- Encourage them to act out stories. Start a dress-up box with scarves, hats and old clothes. You can be the audience for your child's acting.

# How can we help our children... to become readers?

A little time spent reading aloud to your child will build the knowledge and skills they need for reading.

Should we read other things as well as books?

Yes. Together, read letters and words wherever you find them.

Have fun reading.

- signs and labels when you're shopping.
- road signs when you're in the car.
- instructions for toys and games.
- the TV listings in the newspaper.
- photograph captions in magazines and newspapers.
- written text on the TV and computer screens.
- party invitations, letters and notes.
- alphabet charts

Encourage your child to recognise his or her own name.

Let your child see you reading to find information as well as for enjoyment.



# Read to your child!

## Share a book together often

Find a time and place to do this. After a meal may be better than before because it's hard for a hungry child to concentrate. Find a time that doesn't compete with a favourite TV programme.

You can read together anywhere. Make sure it's somewhere that you both feel comfortable.

Look at the book together.

- Talk about the cover.
- Point at the title when you read it.
- Turn the pages together.
- Talk about the pictures.
- Read the story.
- Answer your child's questions.



Remember!

It's OK to read a favourite book again and again!

# How can we help our children... learn skills for writing?

How should I respond to my child's writing attempts?

- Be interested in their efforts. If you don't understand what their picture or story is about, ask them.
- Let your child choose what he or she writes or draws about.
- Display their work.
- Be proud of it.
- Share it with others.



You can help your child to:

- write their name on a note or letter
- make a sign for their bedroom door
- make a special card
- label things that they use
- help you write a shopping list



If your child is interested:

- say the letters in their name
- show them how words and letters are formed
- write their story under their drawing.

# How can I encourage my child... to learn skills that will help them to write?

Keep pens, felts, crayons, pencils and paper handy for your child.

Do finger-painting together.

Draw with your child:

- in the sand
- on misted-up windows
- with chalk
- anywhere

Make letters of the alphabet out of stones, blocks, buttons, shells, anything!



# How can we help children... to learn maths?

Encourage your child and remember that learning involves making mistakes!

## Counting

Young children love to count. Encourage your child to count. Get them to count real things and to use counting to solve real problems. Count forwards and backwards with them. Here are some other things you could do with your child:

- Play cards, board games and dominoes. When your child is good at a board game, you can increase the number of dice or change the pattern of dots or numerals on the dice. You could even make your own board game together.
- Use the calendar. Ask for example "What date will it be after the 16<sup>th</sup>?", "How many days until your birthday?", "What is the date three days before Sunday?", and so on.
- Encourage children to recognise numerals around them on letter boxes, road signs, price tags, and sizes on clothes and shoes.
- Write a numeral in the sand at the beach. Encourage children to find the correct number of shells to put beside the numeral.
- Make groups. Ask them to get the right number of plates or glasses when setting the table.
- Divide special food among friends or family members so that each person has a fair share.



## Matching

Ask your child to find matching socks from the laundry basket or to match a cup with its saucer.

Do jigsaw puzzles together . Play card games such as *Snap*.

## Sorting

Ask your child to:

- sort their toys into groups according to their size or colour when tidying up
- sort knives, forks and spoons before setting the table for a meal or as they are being put away
- sort nails, screws, buttons, rubber bands etc. into containers.

## Comparing

- Have your child and a friend stand back to back. Ask them to decide who is the shorter and who is the taller.
- Compare the shoes of your family members. Who has the biggest and who has the smallest? Compare the number of buttons on items of clothing.
- Who has the most buttons and who has the fewest?
- Help your child to make and display a simple chart to show these comparisons.

## Ordering

Your child could order family members, toys, or even the vegetables for dinner from tallest to shortest, oldest to youngest, smallest to biggest, or lightest to heaviest.

## Patterning

Together, find and look at patterns such as those on wallpaper or curtains. Your child could copy a pattern, repeat and extend a pattern, and make their own from anything that's handy such as leaves, flowers, pens or shells. They could also make sound patterns by playing musical instruments or clapping, and body patterns by dancing or skipping.

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