



“For me the rewards are about using your knowledge and skills to make a difference in people’s lives, at the end of the day that’s what we’re all here to do.” – Te Mania Kottaiya (Speech-language Therapist, Hamilton)

These days 10 year old Frankie is affectionately known by his family as a ‘smooth talker’. But that hasn’t always been the case.

Frankie was referred to the Ministry of Education for speech-language therapy about two years ago. He was having trouble saying single words without stuttering. And he’d stopped contributing his ideas in class and at home.

A tailor-made communication plan was developed, featuring input from Frankie’s mum, teacher and Ministry specialists.

Over time, with a lot of hard work, Frankie’s fluency and confidence improved. In fact it improved to such an extent that he entered himself into a school speech competition – and won!

Nature of Work

Speech-language therapists, working closely with parents, teachers and other specialists, help children and young people with the development of speech (the sounds they make and how they produce them) and the expression and understanding of spoken language (the content of what they say and the way they say it).

Speech-language therapists observe and assess children and young people who are referred to the Ministry of Education by teachers, parents or health specialists for speech and language needs.

They talk to adults in a child or young person’s life and observe a child or young person’s overall development and behaviour to find out what that child or young person’s needs are.

The process can occur at a child or young person’s home or in an early childhood education or school setting, wherever is most appropriate.

As a speech-language therapist, you'll adapt the way you work to suit the individual needs of a child or young person and tailor your approaches to suit the context in which they live and learn.

"We're encouraging Rueben to develop his speech and language in everyday, real life situations. As he climbs the stairs to the front door, mum practices the 'SSSS' sound with him. When they get to the top they finish the word together – 'STAIRS!'" – Christian Wright (Speech-language Therapist, Wellington)

Speech-language therapists work with other specialists and agencies for extra support with behaviour, vision, hearing and other special education needs. As a result, they develop close working relationships with a range of education, health and community professionals.

Preparing programmes and providing them to a child or young person's support team for feedback and ideas are central to a speech-language therapist's role. Programmes become part of an individual education plan (a plan can be made up of several programmes each tailored to meet an individual's different needs). Over time, programme strategies are implemented, monitored, reviewed and adapted by a child or young person's support team.

"My ultimate goal is to help a child use speech and language to form friendships, express their needs, wants and ideas and demonstrate new learning. It's about making sure communication is not limiting their ability to learn and engage successfully." – Christian Wright (Speech-language Therapist, Wellington)

As a speech-language therapist, you'll also have the opportunity to share your knowledge and experience by developing programmes and providing training to early childhood education services, schools and community groups.

Who are we?

The Ministry of Education is a significant employer of speech-language therapists and we're looking for more.

The Ministry has offices throughout New Zealand where we aim to provide access to education and learning to all New Zealand children or young people.

Working for us, you'll help people see that children and young people with special education needs are more than their disability and, with the right support, can participate, learn, achieve and contribute.

"It's pretty hard not to feel passionate about this job when you see a child struggling and know you have the knowledge and skills to pull together a team who, together, can help them reach their potential and change their lives." – Christian Wright (Speech-language Therapist, Wellington)



Feel like a change? Now is a good time to think about speech-language therapy career opportunities with the Ministry of Education.

Still at school or studying at university? In a related career but feel like a change? Regardless of your situation, now is a good time to think about a career in speech-language therapy with the Ministry of Education.

Speech-language therapy is not just a job – it's a profession with possibilities. Why not join us?

Where can I go in my career?

For starters, there is plenty of work available in New Zealand. Speech-language therapy is on Immigration New Zealand's long-term skills shortage list.

"It's great to work with like-minded people. I've yet to meet anyone here who hasn't got the desire to move things forward and make a difference in a child or young person's life." – Christian Wright (Speech-language Therapist, Wellington)

Becoming a speech-language therapist with the Ministry of Education will give you the rewards and challenges of the job itself, as well as opportunities to develop your career.

You'll be supported and supervised by experienced professionals within the Ministry. Keeping up to date with the latest evidence, taking part in ongoing training and mixing with a wide range of highly skilled and talented professionals will keep you challenged and stimulated.

"A lot of people think it's an office job. But it's not. You're in and out of the office, on the road, in schools, kindergartens, people's homes and hospitals – you're all over the place depending on your day." – Te Mania Kottaiya (Speech-language Therapist, Waikato)

Moving into one of our fixed term, practice focused leadership roles will give you the chance to lead change and improve services from within the organisation. Other career opportunities include management, getting involved in special projects and offering supervision.

Meet Christian Wright, a *Speech-Language Therapist* in Wellington



9AM TUESDAY MORNING: Christian uses play to help the learning of speech sounds.

“Don’t take yourself too seriously... get stuck in. Kids love it when you play... so don’t be afraid to wear the fairy wings or be the pirate.”

HIS BACKGROUND: Christian Wright is a Wellington based Speech-Language Therapist with eight years’ experience working for the Ministry of Education.

He works with children from birth until they start school and has also spent five years working with students in the school sector.

He’s also got a wealth of professional development under his belt. He’s spent 15 months as a practice advisor at national office, shared the role of service manager and, right now, is co-convening the 2010 New Zealand Speech Therapy Association conference.

HIS STORY: Christian has enjoyed watching his clients’ progress, thanks to the powerful combination of therapy and natural developmental growth.

“Sometimes, you are literally bolting your therapy onto that process and riding a wave of development.”

The father of three says his ultimate goal is to help a child learn to use speech and language to express their needs, wants and ideas, form friendships and gain independence.

He works hard to integrate speech and language learning into a child’s play and believes everyday life is a great context for learning.

“We’re encouraging Rueben [one of my clients] to climb the stairs while practising the ‘SSSS’ sound with mum. When they get to the top, they finish the word together – ‘SSSTAIRS!’”

“Ultimately, it’s about making sure communication is not limiting their ability to learn and engage with the world.”

THE REWARDS AND CHALLENGES: “The best thing about my career is getting paid to make a difference in a child’s life,” says Christian.

Meeting the wide range of people who support a child and working together effectively is a major highlight too.

Christian works with mums, dads, siblings, and early childhood education centre staff. He may also work with a range of other professionals from Special Education early intervention teams, to audiologists, paediatricians and Plunket nurses.

“It’s great to work with like-minded people who share the desire to move things forward and make a difference.”

It’s not all easy. There are definitely challenges, he says. Sometimes a child’s progress can be slow and you’ve got to be patient. Forming good relationships with the adults in the child’s support team takes time and energy to develop.

HIS FUTURE ASPIRATIONS: Christian is open to what his future holds, saying he’s keen to keep building on the knowledge and experience he’s gained so far.

For others considering a future in a career like his, he advises: “Don’t take yourself too seriously, get stuck in. Kids love it when you play the games they want to play, so don’t be afraid to wear the fairy wings or be the pirate.”

A good therapeutic relationship inspires a child to engage with therapy and take the steps to be a more competent and confident communicator, he says.

Want to speak to someone like Christian about a career as a Speech-Language Therapist? Give us a call or drop us an email.

What skills and knowledge do speech-language therapists have?

- ▶ knowledge of normal and delayed speech and language development
- ▶ skill in managing speech and language needs in a variety of settings
- ▶ knowledge of the human body and its physiology, neurology and anatomy
- ▶ understanding of how speech-language needs affect how children learn
- ▶ knowledge of psychology and education theory and child development
- ▶ knowledge of community and family support services
- ▶ excellent communication, teaching, research, planning and administration skills.

What qualifications and experience do I need?

You need a Bachelor's Degree in Speech-language Therapy or an equivalent that meets the requirements of the [New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association](#).

The [University of Canterbury](#) and [Massey University](#) both offer four-year degrees that combine academic and clinical course work.

The [University of Auckland](#) and [Massey University](#) offer master's degrees in speech-language therapy aimed at speech-language therapy, psychology, education and linguistic degree graduates.

If you're studying you may be eligible for a [Ministry of Education scholarship](#) worth up to \$12,000.

If you're still at school useful subjects include maths, English, sciences and second languages.

Research and plan for your career by checking out the [Career Services](#) website.

What about my personal qualities?

You'll spend lots of time with people from a range of ages, cultures, backgrounds and lifestyles. So, you will need to listen, build trust and inspire confidence.

Being understanding, patient, supportive, creative and practical are all great personal qualities for a speech-language therapist.

"We have to be open in our thinking and practice, knowing that no one therapist has all the answers." – Christian Wright (Speech-language Therapist, Wellington)

Having a strong interest in team work and collaborating with other professionals is important.

What salary and other benefits can I expect?

Salaries for speech-language therapists vary between \$40,000 and \$74,000 per year, depending on skill, experience and the sector in which you work. The Ministry also offers reimbursement of some study related financial costs.

The Ministry of Education offers five weeks' annual leave and flexible working conditions, giving you the opportunity to balance work with child care, travel and training commitments.

Ready to go? Now's a great time to start a rewarding and dynamic career as a speech-language therapist.

Where can I find out more?

Speak to a speech-language therapist or contact the Ministry at:

- ▶ 0800 622 222
- ▶ special.education@minedu.govt.nz

Ministry of Education

- ▶ www.minedu.govt.nz/educationsectors/specialeducation.aspx

- ▶ www.minedu.govt.nz/sestudyawards

New Zealand Speech-Language Therapists' Association.

- ▶ www.speechtherapy.org.nz

Careers information

- ▶ www.careers.govt.nz