Choosing a school

The Ministry of Education has created for Parents; a site for parents, families, whānau, carers and anyone else involved in a child's education. It has been developed with help from parents, and is expanding based on what you tell us you want. for Parents can be found here https://parents.education.govt.nz/

for Parents includes practical information and tips on starting school and progressing through the schooling system. We recommend going to for Parents and reading the advice on-line so that you get the most up-to-date information. This download, accurate as at November 2014, has been created from pages on for Parents related to choosing a school. In particular:

1. Choosing a school

2. Choosing a secondary school

Children can start school or kura in New Zealand anytime between the ages of 5 and 6. Once they turn 6 they must be enrolled and attend a school or kura every day. Most child start school when they turn 5, although they don't legally have to start until their 6th birthday.

Many children have the option of one local school to go to. If you do have more options, then choosing the right school or kura for your child is important and can make a big difference to their happiness and wellbeing, as well as how well they do at school.

Similarly, choosing a secondary school is an important decision, and if you have a choice of secondary school it's worth you and your child taking the time together to look at possible schools and explore the options available.

What's important when choosing a school?

Think about the practical things

- How will your child get to and from school? Is there a safe route to walk or cycle, or is someone available to take them and pick them up? Is there a school bus?
- Under 14s need to be supervised before and after school. Does the school have before- and after-school care? Will your child be able to play or meet up with friends after school?
- Does the school have a uniform?
- Do you have to pay to go to the school?
- Do you live in the school zone?
- Are there any schools that family or friends have recommended?
- What schools are your child's friends going to?

**List your education priorities.**
Your priorities will depend on your child's needs and your circumstances and preferences. What are your must-haves and what could you compromise on?

Here are some examples of priorities that you might see as important:
- the school or kura's approach to supporting children with special education needs or talents
- a bilingual unit or te reo Māori schooling
- a particular education philosophy
- a strong emphasis on a particular curriculum area of interest to your child, eg music or sport
- size; would your child suit a large school or a smaller one?
- particular subjects offered at senior level that will support your child's interests and possible career path.

**Make a short list**
Make a list of schools near your home and any others you might want to consider.

To see what schools are available a good place to start is:
- Find A School
http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/find-school here you can search for a school based on a range of criteria, including geographic location, school type, medium of education, etc.
- Schooling Directory
http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/directories/list-of-nz-schools this is a spreadsheet listing every school in New Zealand with all the information included under Find A School pages mentioned above.

If you need more help to find a school or kura in your area, or a particular type of school, you can contact your local Ministry of Education office
When you've decided on a shortlist:

- talk to other families whose children go there
- read the school website
- for primary schools and intermediates in particular make an appointment to visit the school or kura and meet with the principal, and possibly your child's potential teacher
- visit the school or kura at different times of the day - see if you can observe some class time, and also visit during a break or lunch time. You can often get a good feel for the school by seeing how the children interact with each other at play and how the teachers interact with the children.
- go to the open days or information evenings
- many secondary schools will advertise open days and parents' evenings for you to find out more about the school. Secondary schools encourage you to also arrange your own meeting with the school if you are not able to go to these events
- ask for the enrolment package.

You can also check the Education Review Office (ERO) report for the schools you are considering. ERO is a government department that reviews schools as part of its work. ERO's reports provide information for parents and communities about a school's strengths and next steps for development. The reports cover things like learning environment, processes and procedures, how teachers relate to students, the commitment to bicultural practices, how they review and monitor themselves, and their vision and philosophy.

ERO reports can be located on the ERO website at this link [http://www.ero.govt.nz/review-reports/](http://www.ero.govt.nz/review-reports/).