



# Working in special education

Occupational therapists  
in education





## Meet Chrissy Doughty, an occupational therapist in Wellington

Chrissy Doughty has worked as an occupational therapist (OT) for the Ministry of Education since 2006.

### Chrissy's story

Chrissy began her career as an OT at Kenepuru Hospital, but changed to the education sector after being a part of the board of trustees at her children's school.

### Chrissy's day-to-day

Chrissy's role involves working alongside families, schools and other agencies to help children and young people participate in school.

"Most of my time is spent working as part of a team adapting equipment or the school environment to support a student, often through the use of technology. As an occupational therapist I can help adapt activities and tasks so the student can learn skills that become useful in adulthood. This involves using technology as one of the ways of accessing learning material and a way of capturing the student's abilities."



## Reflecting cultural values in her work

Chrissy says that having a knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity is a priority as her work involves working alongside many different nationalities.

“The Ministry provides support and resources to continue developing good practice in cultural diversity.”

## Rewards and challenges of the role

“The best part of my job is working with teachers to ensure all students are part of the class community. It is great to see the students working alongside each other, all engaged in learning together.”

Chrissy also enjoys being part of a team, where everyone works together to achieve the same goals. “This is great for sharing ideas and knowledge. I have learnt a lot from my colleagues that I have embedded into my own practice.”

## Nature of the work

The Ministry of Education is a significant employer of occupational therapists.

### Occupational therapists within the education sector:

- › observe, assess and work closely with children and young people with special education needs
- › work closely with parents and caregivers, teachers and schools, and other specialists to help children and young people participate at school
- › identify, set up and provide advice about the support, equipment and technology a child or young person may need.
- › support children and young people to develop the skills to manage themselves in their daily lives.



## Qualifications

To become an occupational therapist in education you will need:

- › a Bachelor's Degree in Health Science (Occupational Therapy) or its equivalent
  - › to be registered with the Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand.
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## Skills and knowledge

In addition to the qualifications an occupational therapist must have knowledge of or skills in:

- › schools and the NZ Curriculum/ Te Marautanga o Aotearoa
- › human and child development
- › managing assistive equipment and technology in a variety of settings
- › managing special education needs in a variety of settings
- › community and family support services
- › effective communication, teaching, research and planning.

## Career development

Becoming an occupational 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 will:

- › be supported and supervised by experienced professional colleagues
- › be kept up to date with the latest evidence
- › take part in ongoing training
- › have opportunities to share and extend your knowledge and skills
- › learn about and specialise in Assistive Technology for children and young people.

There might also be opportunities to take part in projects or working groups and in time, you might be considered for leadership roles.









## Further information about occupational therapists

### Special education careers and professional development

For information about the role of occupational therapists and working in special education, visit our special education careers webpage

**[www.education.govt.nz/careers-in-special-education](http://www.education.govt.nz/careers-in-special-education)**

### Special education scholarships and study awards

If you're interested in a career in special education you may be eligible for a scholarship or study award. Find out more at

**[www.education.govt.nz/r/sestudyawards](http://www.education.govt.nz/r/sestudyawards)**

### Career information

For profiles of different careers visit the Careers New Zealand website **[www.careers.govt.nz](http://www.careers.govt.nz)**

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## Contact us

Want to speak to someone about a career as an occupational therapist? Give us a call or drop us an email.

### Ministry of Education – Special Education

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