



# Working in special education

Physiotherapists  
in education





## Meet Hera Cooper, a physiotherapist in Otaki

Hera Cooper has worked for the Ministry as a physiotherapist since September 2010.

### Hera's story

Hera's background is in health, having worked in hospitals, mainly in rehabilitation of the elderly. She has also been a community physiotherapist, as well as working as a cardio-respiratory clinical educator with physiotherapy students.

### Hera's day-to-day

Hera is in and out of schools most days, meeting and talking with teachers and families, while observing children and young people in the school environment. "I give feedback and advice to schools and families around how children and young people can best move around and be included in daily school life."

### Reflecting cultural values in her work

Hera is Māori, "so I share a Māori world view with students and whānau. I am passionate about raising the level of achievement of our Māori students and see my work as a small but vital part of these continued efforts."



### Rewards and challenges of the role

Hera likes that there is always something new to learn and plenty of variety in her role. “Whilst I enjoy the autonomy of my role, I also really like being part of a highly skilled team of specialists with such a range of different knowledge.”

For Hera, the challenge of the role lies in needing to prioritise her work – “The reality is there is only one of me and sometimes there is a lot going on. I always need to be able to manage my time well.”

### Future aspirations

“I’d like to just continue doing what I’m doing,” says Hera, “learning from my students and colleagues, as well as supporting them with my knowledge.”

## Nature of the work

The Ministry of Education is a significant employer of physiotherapists.

### Physiotherapists within the education sector:

- › observe, assess and work closely with children and young people with physical needs who have been referred to the Ministry
- › support children and young people to be able to manage themselves in their daily lives
- › identify, set up and provide advice about the environmental changes, support, equipment and technology a child or young person may need
- › work collaboratively with children and young people, their parents and caregivers, schools and other specialists to support them to participate and achieve educationally.



## Qualifications

To become a physiotherapist in education you will need:

- › a Bachelor's degree in physiotherapy or its equivalent
  - › to be registered with the Physiotherapy Board of New Zealand
  - › a current Annual Practising Certificate.
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## Skills and knowledge

In addition to the qualifications a physiotherapist in education must have knowledge of or skills in:

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

## Career development

Becoming a physiotherapist 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
- › share and extend your knowledge and skills.

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 physiotherapists

### Special education careers and professional development

For more information about the role of physiotherapists 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 a physiotherapist? Give us a call or drop us an email.

### Ministry of Education – Special Education

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