



Briefing Note: Reviewing Te Kura's Early Childhood Education Gateways

To:	Jo Luxton MP, Associate Minister of Education		
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Purpose of Paper

The purpose of this paper is to provide you with a brief overview of Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (Te Kura) and the various gateways in their Early Childhood Education (ECE) programme, and to outline what the Ministry can do to better utilise Te Kura as an option for children who can't access their local ECE service.

Summary

1. On Wednesday 17 May, you met with Mike Hollings and Ann Stewart of Te Kura where you discussed Te Kura's ECE programme. There was a focus on the ECE Geographic Isolation gateway. You were interested in the 6km rule and whether changing this rule would allow more children to access the available spaces which are currently at about half capacity.
2. A full review of the Enrolment Policy is planned for the second half of 2023 and is the best way for us to understand which children are not able to access ECE and what changes could be made to Te Kura's Enrolment Policy to support young children to be engaged in learning.

Proactive Release

agree that the Ministry of Education release this briefing in full once it has been considered by you.

Agree / Disagree


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19.6.23



Background

Te Kura offers a range of distance learning options to children, young people, and adults

1. Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (Te Kura) is New Zealand's only state funded distance education provider. They provide four types of learning options:
 - a. *Early Childhood Education enrolment*: to provide equitable access to ECE for children whose location, itinerancy, health, educational or personal circumstances prevent attendance at a reasonably convenient service.
 - b. *Full-time enrolment*: to provide equitable access to compulsory education for students whose location, itinerancy, educational or personal circumstances prevent attendance at a reasonably convenient school.
 - c. *Adult and young adult enrolment*: to enable individuals to gain NCEA qualifications.
 - d. *Dual tuition*: to enable students to access a full curriculum and/or specialist programmes or curriculum adaptations.
2. For each of these learning options there are multiple gateways, each with specific entry criteria that children and students need to meet. The gateways and the criteria are set out in the enrolment policy¹ that the Ministry manages with Te Kura.
3. Te Kura offers a wide range of personalised learning programmes and courses, from early childhood to NCEA Level 3. Students can enrol for a few credits in a specific course or for a full-time programme.
4. Te Kura supports over 20,000 enrolments a year. A large proportion of their enrolled students have complex social circumstances, disengagement issues, or have not been able to succeed at their local school. Many students have a history of low engagement with education prior to enrolment.

Face-to-face interactions are preferred for learning, but Te Kura provides an important option for children

5. In general, the Ministry's view is that, whenever possible, children should have the opportunity to participate in ECE where there is face-to-face interaction with their peers and kaiako. These interactions are important for children's social-emotional development, language development, and learning.
6. The purpose of the Te Kura Early Childhood Education (ECE) programme is "to provide – as far as possible – equity of access to ECE for children whose location, health, educational or personal circumstances prevent attendance at a reasonably convenient service."
7. The early learning service provided by Te Kura plays an important role for children who may otherwise be unable to access an ECE service. The ECE gateways contribute to the range of early learning provision required to meet differing needs and circumstances.
8. It is important that parents and whānau of children who may meet one of the Te Kura ECE gateway criteria are aware of the services available through Te Kura. To this end, the Ministry can help make information about Te Kura available to parents and whānau as appropriate.

¹ [Enrolment-Policy.pdf \(tekura.school.nz\)](#)

Te Kura's gateways for their ECE programme are for children unable to attend their local ECE service

9. Te Kura provides alternative access to ECE for children who experience difficulties enrolling in early learning services. Te Kura's ECE is for children aged under six years of age, who are New Zealand citizens or permanent residents, and who meet one of the eligibility criteria.
10. Eligibility criteria are related to distance, inaccessibility, itinerancy, high health needs, and other special circumstances. Children may also be referred to Te Kura by Oranga Tamariki.
11. Government-funded places in Te Kura ECE are capped via a resourcing notice at 880 Equivalent Full Time Students. Currently, ECE enrolments in Te Kura account for a very small portion (0.2%) of their total enrolments, with 428 children enrolled in Te Kura in 2022.
12. There are two categories of gateways for full-time enrolment in the ECE programme. One is the access category which allows a parent or family member to make an application for the child's enrolment. There are five gateways under this access category, these are:
 - a. Geographic isolation: for children who cannot attend an ECE service because it is more than 6km away from their home, or it is located behind a geographical barrier that prevents reasonable access.
 - b. Itinerancy: for children who will be changing location and ECE service at least once per term.
 - c. High health needs: for children with a long-term illness or medical condition that prevents ECE attendance.
 - d. Special circumstances: children who do not meet the criteria for any other ECE gateway but may be enrolled because of special circumstances.
 - e. Overseas domestic: for children temporarily travelling or residing overseas. Children residing in New Zealand are given priority over overseas enrolments.
13. The other category of gateways for full-time enrolment in the ECE programme is Referral. For this, the application for enrolment must be supported by referral documents, as specified in the criteria set out in the relevant gateway. The two gateways under this category include
 - a. Learning support needs: for children with learning support needs that are unable to be met by an ECE service near their home. This must be verified by a Ministry of Education – Learning Support report.
 - b. Special circumstances – Ministry of Education referral: for children who do not meet the criteria for any other ECE gateway. Referrals through this gateway are at the discretion of the Ministry.
14. Eligible children can attend Te Kura ECE either full-time or part-time. Under dual tuition, children can attend a licenced early learning service for up to 12 hours per week while also enrolled with Te Kura.

Full review of Te Kura's Enrolment Policy planned for 2023

15. Full reviews of Te Kura's Enrolment Policy are done approximately every 2-3 years or when there are a number of changes that need to be made. These reviews look across the Enrolment Policy to ensure the gateways are meeting the needs of all children and students who need to access Te Kura.

16. An Enrolment Policy review involves identifying what changes could be made to the gateways and whether new ones should be created, meeting with Te Kura and other stakeholders, resolving issues with existing gateway criteria, assessing the impacts of any changes, and planning for implementing the changes that will be made. This process is carried out with Te Kura and takes approximately six months.
17. There is a full review of Te Kura's Enrolment Policy planned to start in the next few months. This is the most effective way to consider how well Te Kura's ECE gateways are working, and whether any changes need to be made.
18. We will include consideration of Te Kura's ECE gateways in the upcoming review. This will enable us to see where the gaps and opportunities are for children who are not currently able to access their local ECE service in the context of the broader system of ECE provision.
19. A full updated Enrolment Policy is expected to be completed for the start of 2024.

Next Steps

20. We will discuss this with you at your next agency meeting with officials.