



## Waipu Primary School

### Cohort Entry Procedure & Information

#### What is Cohort Entry?

Cohort entry is an enrollment policy where new entrant children start school together in structured groups (cohorts) at specific points during the school year, rather than individually on their fifth birthday.

The Ministry of Education determines eight fixed cohort entry dates per year—two per term (the first day of the term, and a mid-term date). If this policy is adopted, children turning five will start school at the next available cohort entry date following their fifth birthday, or at a later date chosen by their parents up until their legal mandatory starting age (six years old).

#### Crucial Legal Constraints under the Education and Training Act 2020:

- **No Early Starts:** Children cannot under any circumstances start school before they turn five years old, even if the cohort entry date falls just days before their birthday.
- **Not Compulsory at Five:** Enrolment in school remains optional until a child turns six. Parents retain the legal right to delay their child's school start until any subsequent cohort date, or until their sixth birthday.

#### Entry Timetable

The matrix below outlines how birth dates align with Ministry-mandated entry points. Children would start on the following timeline:

Child's Fifth Birthday Falls...	Earliest Permissible Cohort Entry Point	Operational Framework
<b>Before the Mid-Term Date (in a given Term)</b>	<b>Mid-Term Cohort Date of the current Term</b>	Child starts with a group midway through the term, provided they have already turned 5 by this date.
<b>After the Mid-Term Date (but before Term ends)</b>	<b>Start of Term Cohort Date of the following Term</b>	Child remains at their ECE service or home until the conclusion of the term and starts fresh at the start of the next term.

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During a School Vacation

**Start of Term Cohort Date  
of the upcoming Term**

Child starts on Day 1 of the new school term along with all other children in that holiday cohort.

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## Cohort Entry Impact Analysis

### For the Children

- **Enhanced Social Transition:** Children start school alongside a peer group, instantly establishing a sense of belonging, mutual support, and shared familiarisation.
- **Minimised Disruption:** Rather than a continuous cycle of new pupils arriving weekly, classrooms settle faster, leading to structured, uninterrupted learning blocks.

### For Parents and Whānau

- **Structured Induction:** The school can organise targeted welcome, orientation, and transition-to-school visits collectively, strengthening home-school partnerships.
- **Clear Planning:** Parents have unambiguous timelines for transition visits and purchasing uniforms, school stationery, and organising logistics.
- *Note:* Some parents may experience an extended period where their child remains at home or ECE if their birthday falls just after a mid-term cut-off.

### For School Staff and Classroom Management

- **Strategic Resource Allocation:** Teachers can plan cohesive 4–5 week introductory curricula tailored to an incoming group, rather than constantly re-teaching routines to single additions.
- **Administrative Efficiency:** Systems for processing enrolments, organising learning resources, and coordinating with class teachers become batches rather than ongoing daily tasks.

### For Local Early Childhood Education (ECE) Services

- **Predictable Transitions:** ECE centers can plan their roll management, space availability, and transition programs with high accuracy, knowing exactly when cohorts will exit.
- **Continuous Communication:** Direct dialogue between the school and local ECE providers is streamlined when managing groups rather than individual, ad-hoc student departures.

## Funding for 5 to 6 year olds

In New Zealand, early childhood education (ECE) funding **is available** for children between 5 and 6 years old, provided they are not yet enrolled in primary school.

The primary funding mechanism is the **20 Hours ECE** scheme. While it is often talked about as a subsidy for 3 and 4-year-olds, it officially extends to 5-year-olds right up until their 6th birthday, or until they start school.

Here is exactly how the funding and rules apply to children in this age bracket:

### 1. The 20 Hours ECE Subsidy

If your child is 5 years old and you choose to delay their start to primary school, they remain fully eligible for the 20 Hours ECE scheme.

- **The Limit:** It covers up to **6 hours a day** and a maximum of **20 hours per week** of free early childhood education.
- **When it ends:** Eligibility strictly cuts off on either **the day before their 6th birthday** or their **first day of primary school**, whichever happens first.

## 2. General ECE Funding Subsidy (Up to 30 Hours)

Even if you use more than 20 hours a week, the government still provides a baseline **ECE Funding Subsidy** directly to licensed childcare centres for any child up to the age of 6. This subsidy is paid for up to 30 hours a week and helps keep the overall hourly fees lower for those extra hours.

## 3. What About Other Subsidies?

If you are looking at additional financial help outside of the universal 20 Hours ECE, the rules shift slightly once a child turns 5:

- **WINZ Childcare Subsidy:** This income-tested subsidy normally stops once a child turns 5. However, there are exceptions. You can still get it for a 5-year-old if they are attending an ECE service while waiting to start at a **cohort entry school** (where new entrants start together on a set date after turning 5), or if you receive the **Child Disability Allowance** for them.
- **FamilyBoost:** This tax rebate (which allows families to claim back a percentage of their fees) applies to families with children aged 5 or under attending a licensed ECE centre, depending on household income.

**Important Reminder:** In New Zealand, education does not legally become compulsory until a child turns 6. However, if you choose to enrol your 5-year-old in a primary school, they are officially considered a school student from their first day of attendance, and all ECE-specific funding stops immediately.