

EDUCATION AND SCHOOLING IN NEW ZEALAND



QUEEN CITY LAW

If you immigrate to New Zealand with young children, finding a good school and getting them settled in will be high on your priority list. According to the 2015 OECD report, New Zealand is one of the top 20 nations for the quality of our schools. In addition all eight of New Zealand's universities are ranked in the top 500 QS World University Rankings 2015/16.

According to Immigration New Zealand, over 90% of parents from a 2015 survey say that the quality of New Zealand education is "the same" or "better" than their native country. Nearly 70% of the parents interviewed also commented that their children are more confident and "well-rounded" due to their time spent in New Zealand.

Attending school is compulsory in New Zealand for all children from the age of 6 to 16 years old. Most children start school when they turn five. New Zealand schooling is in four stages:

1. Early learning/ early childhood – for ages 0 to 6 years;
2. Primary Schools – for ages 5 to 12 years;
3. Intermediate and Secondary Schools – for ages 13 to 19 years; and
4. Further/ tertiary education – for ages 16+.

There is a choice of three different types of school in New Zealand – Public schools (funded by the government), state integrated schools and private schools. Public Schools are the choice for the majority of children in New Zealand as schooling is free for domestic students. Parents are asked for contributions to help cover costs of activities outside the core curriculum and other charges apply for sports, school trips, special tuition, exam fees and other course related costs. Public Integrated schools are schools with special character such as religious faith or use specialist education methods like Steiner or Montessori. Public Integrated schools are also funded by the government but schools may charge fees for various facilities which are usually around NZD\$1,500.00 per year. Finally, Private Schools are not government funded and charge around NZD\$20,000.00 in fees per year. There is a mix of co-educational as well as boys or girl only schools around the country and some schools also have "boarding" facilities so students are able to live there during the school terms.

Most children in New Zealand are enrolled at school on their fifth birthday and must be enrolled from their sixth. Children start school at different times throughout the school year, depending on their birthday, or when it suits the family. Unlike other countries, New Zealand has no set date for when students can start primary school.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION ("ECE"):

In New Zealand, most children receive some form of ECE, usually for 20-22 hours a week. For three and four year olds the first 20 hours are government funded. There are various government bodies that set a national curriculum, ensure that standards are maintained in every centre and control teacher quality.

There are over 4,000 childcare and pre-school facilities around the country. These centers fall into two main groups:

1. Teacher-led services – these include kindergartens along with education and care services. In this group 50% of the supervising adults must be qualified and registered ECE teachers.
2. Parent-led services – these centers can be government licenced Playcenters or Kohanga Reo which are where parents, families or caregivers educate and care for their children. There are also Playgroups which may or may not be government certified.

As mentioned earlier, the first 20 hours per week of ECE is government funded for children three and four years old and largely free for children from age three until they start school. This program is called 20 ECE Hours and applies to all children in New Zealand regardless of their visa situation. Government funding covers compulsory fees but many early childhood education centers have separate charges which may be charged per hour, per day, per month or per term basis.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS:

When it comes to state schools, children are generally expected to attend the school that is geographically nearest to them. The Ministry of Education has a "school finder" tool on their website to assist with locating the nearest school for you known as "zones". This does not stop you from applying for a school outside of your "zone" but if the school you are applying for is popular those children applying within the schools local zone will get preference and any

remaining places for new students will go into a ballot. School zoning is an important factor for those immigrating to New Zealand with young children.

The Ministry of Education website states that if your child starts school in the first half of the calendar year then they will be in Year 1 and if they start in the second half of the calendar year then they will be Year 0 (moving into Year 1 in the next calendar year). You should check with your preferred school as each school has their own policy with some schools stating a specific cut-off date while other schools decide in conjunction with the parents what year their child will start at.

The use of Year levels continues through to secondary school where a student who graduates finishes their schooling at Year Thirteen (formerly known as Seventh Form). It is important to remember that when deciding what year to enroll your child at as there are implications for the child always being younger or older in their class and this can be especially problematic as children reach their teens and may have children in their class nearly a year older or younger than them. Because each situation is different it is best to contact the school your child will be starting at and talk with them about what year is best for your child.

INTERMEDIATE AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS:

After Primary School children are required to attend Intermediate and High School from the age of 13 to 19 years. Some schools take students all the way through to graduation while other schools are only "Intermediate" schools and take students for two years before they move on to High School.

New Zealand's main national qualification at secondary level and beyond is the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). Each year students study a number of courses (compulsory and selective) which covers traditional academic subjects as well as courses that will count towards other qualifications that are on what is called the National Framework such as tourism or engineering. In each subject, students are assessed through internal assessments/assignments and final external exams. Marking is broken down into standards (not achieved, achieved, achieved with merit and achieved with excellence) which award the students with credits. Once they have achieved the required number of credits they are awarded an NCEA Certificate for levels 1, 2 and 3. The higher the level the more advanced the topic.

University Entrance certificates are awarded to those students who have obtained:

- 14 credits in three approved subjects at Level 3; and
- 10 credits at Level 2 literacy made up of 5 credits in reading and 5 credits in writing; and
- 10 credits at Level 1 or above numeracy made up of either specified achievement standards available through a range of subjects or a package of three numeracy unit standards 26623, 26626 and 26627.

For more information on NCEA we recommend that you visit the Careers New Zealand or New Zealand Qualification Authority websites.

TERTIARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING:

In New Zealand tertiary education covers all education after secondary school so it includes both higher education and vocational training. Tertiary education in New Zealand is widely available in New Zealand with providers in each of the main cities and many satellite campuses available in smaller areas. Tertiary education is delivered by providers from Universities to Institutes of Technology, Polytechnics, Private Training Establishments and Industry Training Organisations. These providers offer qualifications at every level – certificates, diplomas, graduate and post graduate degrees – all of which are ranked on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. For more details on the different levels of qualifications available we recommend that you visit the New Zealand Qualification Authority website.

New Zealand also offers many options to train for trades and other occupations. This is known as vocational training which often runs alongside a job whereby students train while they work and sometimes form part of an apprenticeship. Training qualifications are developed and managed in New Zealand by industry groups called Industry Training Organisations (ITOs) and there is over 30 such groups operating in New Zealand covering industries such as trades, service, manufacturing and primary industries. Careers New Zealand's website contains an excellent summary of the workplace training and apprenticeship opportunities in New Zealand.

To study at a New Zealand tertiary education students will generally need NCEA Level 3 or University Entrance as mentioned above. Students from overseas need to be able to show that they've achieved a similar University entrance level education and prove their English skills. Students can take short term foundation studies or pre-university

orientation studies at Private Training Establishments or universities to prepare for university-level study or improve English skills. Domestic students over 20 years old are not required to obtain a formal qualification to apply for entry.

The Universities New Zealand website has more information in regards to admission requirements for students with overseas qualifications.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

For further information on education and schooling opportunities for your children or to discuss student visa applications, please contact the Immigration Team at Queen City Law – <http://qcl-immigration.co.nz/>

DISCLAIMER:

We have taken care to ensure that the information given is accurate, however it is intended for general guidance only and should not be relied upon in individual cases. Professional advice should be sought before any decision or action is taken.