



10/12/2025

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

OIA: GEMS-45716 – Information related to delivery of education to neurodivergent learners

Thank you for your email of 12 November 2025 to the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) requesting the following information:

I've realised that I don't have a clear picture of how the Ministry's learning support structure works, particularly around roles, responsibilities, and accountability for meeting a student's needs.

I'd appreciate some guidance on the following:

- 1. How does the Ministry ensure that a school is adequately meeting its obligations to provide inclusive and accessible education for neurodivergent learners?*
- 2. What are the respective responsibilities of the school, the SENCO/Learning Support Coordinator, and the Ministry?*
- 3. Who determines whether a child's needs are being met, and what happens if the school and parents hold different views about this?*
- 4. What mechanisms exist for accountability if a school is not meeting a child's needs, despite good intentions?*
- 5. What specific supports or services (e.g. learning support funding, specialist input, case coordination) might be available for children whose needs extend beyond what the school can manage internally?*
- 6. How can additional support be initiated or escalated when gaps appear — and who should I be working with at each stage?*
- 7. And finally, what support can families access directly from the Ministry (e.g. advocacy, information, or guidance) rather than relying solely on updates passed on by the school?*

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

How does the Ministry ensure that a school is adequately meeting its obligations to provide inclusive and accessible education for neurodivergent learners?

All schools are required under the Education and Training Act 2020 to provide inclusive and accessible education. School boards are accountable for meeting these obligations, and the Education Review Office (ERO) monitors compliance. The Ministry supports schools through guidance, resources, and professional learning to help create environments where every learner can thrive.

What are the respective responsibilities of the school, the SENCO/Learning Support Coordinator, and the Ministry?

Schools are responsible for creating and delivering inclusive teaching and learning, developing Individual Education Plans (IEPs) in partnership with families, and using internal resources effectively. Learning Support Coordinators (LSCs) and/or SENCOs coordinate support within the school, liaise with specialists, and work with teachers on strategies to meet diverse needs. For example, if schools (LSC/SENCO or teachers) identify that additional supports are required they can request support from Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLb) funded by the Ministry: <https://www.education.govt.nz/education-professionals/schools-year-0-13/learning-support/resource-teachers-learning-and-behaviour>

Ministry supports

The Ministry provides Inclusive Education guides and resources to help schools design accessible curricula and environments for diverse learners, including those who are neurodivergent. These are available on the Ministry's Inclusive Education website at the following link: <https://inclusive.tki.org.nz/guides/>

The Ministry also provides a range of additional supports so learners with additional needs can access and succeed in education. This includes for targeted programmes, specialist services delivered by speech-language therapists, psychologists, occupational therapists, and physiotherapists, as well as assistive technology and property modifications for accessibility.

Who determines whether a child's needs are being met, and what happens if the school and parents hold different views about this?

School boards are legally responsible for meeting inclusion obligations. If parents have concerns, they should first discuss them with the principal. If the matter remains unresolved, they can escalate to the school board and, if necessary, to the Ministry of Education. The Education Review Office also monitors schools' performance in this area.

What mechanisms exist for accountability if a school is not meeting a child's needs, despite good intentions?

Reviewing needs and escalation

Whether a learner's needs are being met is typically reviewed through IEP meetings, which bring together whānau, school staff, and the team around the child/ākonga to agree on goals and supports. These meetings are designed to be collaborative and solution focused. If whānau and the school cannot reach agreement, concerns can be raised with the Ministry's Learning Support team for further discussion and assistance. You can find the list of your local Ministry offices at: <https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/about-us/contact-us/regional-offices>.

What specific supports or services (e.g. learning support funding, specialist input, case coordination) might be available for children whose needs extend beyond what the school can manage internally?

Children are referred to the Ministry for support services such as core services – Behaviour, Communication Services and Early Intervention Services. The Ministry has a range of specialist staff available including speech-language therapists, psychologists, occupational therapists, kaitakawaenga, special education advisors and physiotherapists. Specialist support is also available through services like Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLb). For students with the most complex needs, the Intensive Wraparound Service provides highly individualised support to help them engage in learning and participate in school life. There are also additional supports such as the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS), High Health Needs Fund, and assistive technology grants. You can find more information about these supports here:

<https://www.education.govt.nz/parents-and-caregivers/schools-year-0-13/learning-support/supporting-your-child-if-they-need-extra-help-their-learning>

For more information about the range of supports offered through the Ministry you could contact the local Service Manager Linda Youl, at linda.youl@education.govt.nz or by phone on 03 378 7772.

How can additional support be initiated or escalated when gaps appear — and who should I be working with at each stage? And finally, what support can families access directly from the Ministry (e.g. advocacy, information, or guidance) rather than relying solely on updates passed on by the school?

How to initiate or escalate support

Start by working with your child's classroom teacher and the LSC/SENCO or the principal as they will know of support within the school. If additional support is needed, you can seek information about programs and activities provided by the school, request an IEP meeting and involve specialists like the RTLb service: <https://rtlbt.ki.org.nz/The-RTLb-service/What-RTLb-do>.

You can access information and guidance through our website and your regional offices here: <https://www.education.govt.nz/parents-and-caregivers>. Our staff can provide advice on funding, services, and advocacy options. We also work closely with community organisations that offer independent advocacy and support. Please refer to **Annex One** below for an overview of the Ministry's learning supports.

Nāku noa, nā



Lynda Pura-Watson
General Manager Ākonga and Community Outcomes
Te Mahau | Te Pae Aronui (Operations and Integration)

Annex One – Ministry of Education Learning Support Services that you may find useful

- Communication Service <https://www.education.govt.nz/parents-and-caregivers/schools-year-0-13/learning-support/supporting-your-child-if-they-need-extra-help-their-learning/speech-language-and-communication-support-your-child>
<https://www.education.govt.nz/education-professionals/schools-year-0-13/learning-support/speech-language-and-communication-support-children>
- Early intervention: [Learning support in the early years - Ministry of Education](#)
- Behaviour Services: [Behaviour and support: Learning support needs - Ministry of Education](#)
<https://www.govt.nz/browse/education/learning-support/help-for-children-with-behaviour-problems/>

Other learning supports include:

- In class support <https://www.education.govt.nz/education-professionals/schools-year-0-13/learning-support/class-support-funding>
- The School High Health Needs Fund <https://www.education.govt.nz/education-professionals/schools-year-0-13/learning-support/who-school-high-health-needs-fund>
- Bilingual assessment service <https://www.education.govt.nz/education-professionals/schools-year-0-13/learning-support/bilingual-assessment-service>
- Assistive technology <https://www.education.govt.nz/education-professionals/schools-year-0-13/learning-support/who-assistive-technology>

Children with Very High or High needs (such as extreme or severe difficulty hearing, learning, or with mobility) could apply for the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS). The ORS Guidelines contain the eligibility criteria, guidance, and the application process, and are available here: https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fweb-assets.education.govt.nz%2Fs3fs-public%2F2025-03%2FORS-Guidelines-January%25202025.docx%3FVersionId%3Dg0e_IqErT5r2ubArtxK.iqZNnpPshQu3&wdOrigin=BR_OWSELINK. More information on when to apply, and how to submit the form, can be found at: <https://www.education.govt.nz/education-professionals/schools-year-0-13/learning-support/apply-ongoing-resourcing-scheme-school-students>.

The School High Health Fund (SHHN) is available for children who require support to manage high health needs at school. This is a short-term provision to support attendance at school and to develop independence in managing their health needs. The eligibility criteria for the SHHNF can be found here: <https://www.education.govt.nz/education-professionals/schools-year-0-13/learning-support/who-school-high-health-needs-fund> and how to apply here: <https://www.education.govt.nz/education-professionals/schools-year-0-13/learning-support/apply-school-high-health-needs-fund>.

<https://www.education.govt.nz/parents-and-caregivers/schools-year-0-13/learning-support/specialist-schools#day-specialist-schools-1>

Information about eligibility and the referral process for Te Kahu Tōi | Intensive Wraparound Service can be found here: <https://www.education.govt.nz/education-professionals/schools-year-0-13/learning-support/te-kahu-toi-intensive-wraparound-service>.