



Student Support

Budget 2026 | Fact sheet

Budget 2026 provides \$268 million operating expenditure (opex) over four years to a range of programmes designed for students with specific needs.

This Fact sheet does not include the funding provided for learning support property modifications, which are in the School Property Fact Sheet.

Key initiatives

- **\$22 million** to continue to support students with a significant health condition to attend school, including through teacher aides.
- **\$10 million** to help schools meet increased demand for the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programme.
- **\$3 million** to address cost and volume pressures for deaf education services in schools and for deaf parents (of children in early learning and schools).
- **\$8 million** to deliver mandatory training to 20,000 core children’s workers in response to the recommendations of the Dame Karen Poutasi review.
- **\$213 million** for the Healthy School Lunches Programme to support children’s wellbeing. This funding supports the provision of daily lunches for over 240,000 students in 1,014 schools and kura, and food for 8,500 children in 323 early learning services and Kōhanga Reo.

Initiative	Funding	Facts
Learning Support - School High Health Needs Fund volume pressure	\$22 million opex	<p>This will respond to volume pressure, providing teacher aide support for students with a significant health condition to attend school.</p> <p>It includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An additional 100 eligible students for teacher aide support, funded at 17 hours per week, and • 1 FTE for an advisor to support the increased volume of applications, reviews, assessments and information requests.

Initiative	Funding	Facts
Learning Support - English for Speakers of Other Languages volume pressure	\$10 million opex	<p>This will help schools meet increased demand for the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programmes. This demand is from new immigration and New Zealand-born children of migrants and refugees.</p> <p>It provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$10 million for ESOL funding, bringing the annual budget to \$73 million, and • funding for schools to purchase targeted resources and/or specialist teachers/teacher aides to support students to learn English.
Ready to Learn	\$12.1 million opex	A new pilot programme, aimed at supporting children and young people to attend and engage in school, improving stability and qualification outcomes.
Dame Karen Poutasi Response – Training for Core Children’s workers	\$8.2 million opex	<p>This establishes a tagged operating contingency to deliver mandatory training for core children’s workers in response to the recommendations made in the Dame Karen Poutasi review.</p> <p>The funding includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development and delivery of training modules; • training for 20,000 workers over the first 2 years; and • evaluation and monitoring of the initiative.
Learning Support – Deaf Education cost and volume pressure	\$3 million opex	<p>This will address cost and volume pressures for deaf education services in schools and for deaf parents (of children in early learning and schools).</p> <p>It includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 31 additional places in First Signs and a reduction in the six-week waitlist for services, • 20 additional students being supported within NZSL immersion hubs, and • additional funding for interpreter services for deaf parents to enable them to participate in their children’s education.
Healthy School Lunches	\$212.4 million opex \$0.9 million capex	Funding the delivery of the Healthy School Lunches programme and some programme innovations which delivers lunches to 240,000 students in over 1,000 schools and 8,500 students in early learning.