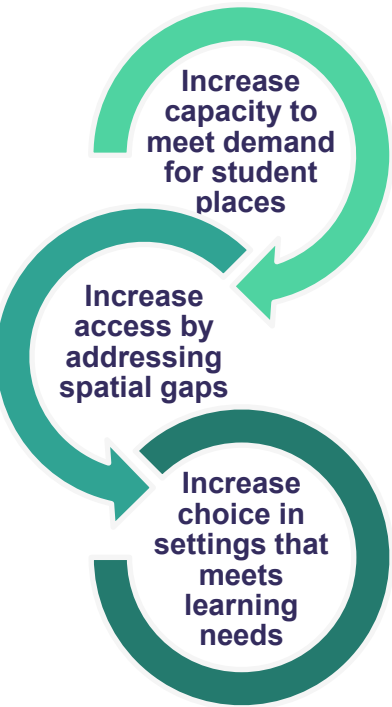


# Network Plan for Specialist Settings 2026 -2030



The **Network Plan for Specialist Settings 2026-2030** provides a road map for a targeted physical infrastructure response and/or non-property interventions to enhance access to specialist settings across Aotearoa New Zealand over the next five years.

- This plan will support future property investment for learning support roll growth.
- The plan that has been shaped by the 12 Education Regions responding to their own challenges, realities and infrastructure, which has been brought together nationally for the first time

### Key Priorities for the Network Plan for Specialist Settings:

- ✓ **Increasing parental choice for specialist settings that best support and meet child's needs**
- ✓ **Responding to immediate pressures and concerns with overcrowding.**
- ✓ **Improving access in areas where there are high numbers of ORS-supported students but specialist settings are limited or unavailable.**
- ✓ **Planning for future anticipated demand from population growth.**

### Next steps:

- The release of this plan will initiate conversations with the sector on future network requirements.
- This plan is iterative and will be updated annually.
- All opportunities identified are subject to further confirmation of evidence of demand and is expected to be put forward to be prioritised for funding in future Budgets.
- Separate individual network plans are proposed to be produced for both Sensory and Regional Health Schools.

### Increasing demand for specialist settings

- There is an increasing number of students seeking enrolment in day specialist schools, of which, majority are funded through Ongoing Resource Scheme (ORS).
- Whilst overall school-aged population is expected to plateau, the number of ORS supported students are projected to increase.
- Between 2023-2025 there has been a 11.2% increase in the number of ORS supported students attending specialist schools. This increased demand equates to an additional requirement of nearly 50 teaching spaces, and is placing pressure on existing capacity
- As of 1 July 2025, 38.1% of all ORS supported students were attending a day specialist school across the country.

| National (enrolments)    | 2023    | 2025    | 2030 Projection | Change to 2030  |
|--------------------------|---------|---------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Total student roll       | 823,468 | 845,712 | 839,275         | -6,437 (-0.76%) |
| Total ORS supported roll | 11,112  | 12,129  | 13,610          | +1,481          |
| Specialist schools       | 4,160   | 4,609   | 5,192           | +583 (12.65%)   |
| Day Specialist Schools   | 3,985   | 4,432   | 4,992           | +561 (12.66%)   |

## Opportunities to increase access to specialist settings

- Up to seven proposed **new specialist schools** to be further investigated and planned for. These are likely to also include a network of satellites
- Over 80 **new specialist school satellites** are proposed to be planned / established/delivered between 2025-2030

- Specialist settings should be included in the **planning and delivery of school expansions and new school builds**, especially in areas where there are currently no specialist settings

- Budget to be sought for 30 projects that are awaiting **additional funding to progress** to the next stage
- Funding required for expanding and delivering new property for **Sensory Schools** at locations of demand

- Consider **expanding/refurbishing satellites** in 19 areas
- Investigate the **potential relocation and/or expansion of 4 specialist school base sites** to respond to growing demand

- Further investigate, explore options and engage with **schools to potentially host a specialist satellite** in 15 localities/learning support catchment areas.
- Work together with Pacific Language Partners to explore **Māori Medium and Pacific learning support opportunities**

- National consistency in **enrolment practices** for specialist schools to ensure equitable access across the country.

- Develop a process and engage with 10 schools that have **expressed an interest in becoming fundholder schools**.
- Work together with local kura & Māori Education Peak bodies to explore **Māori Medium learning support settings**.

- Explore **Innovative opportunities for specialist settings** in 15 **rural/ remote areas** with limited access to specialist settings.

### Property investment

### Non-property interventions

### Additional opportunities to increase access and enhance specialist settings

- Understand **demand** for specialist settings, by working closely with specialist schools to understand community demand from families who have expressed an interest for enrolling in specialist settings.
- Exploring innovative options and solutions to better service **remote and rural areas**, where distance current prohibits access to specialist settings, and/ or numbers of ORS supported learners are too small within current settings.
- System improvements, including **timely and quality data collection** for planning; and seeking **consistency in size and capacity of teaching spaces** as this ultimately impacts capacity and the number of students that can be accommodated in specialist settings.
- Working together with specialist schools to explore **innovative approaches for specialist settings** to leverage resources to support local schools.
- Establishing **processes for local schools** who have expressed an interest in becoming an **ORS fundholder school**, and/ or **learning support special programme** as part of their enrolment scheme.

Key reasons for Regional opportunities identified in the plan will fall into one, or more, of the below categories:

- ✓ **Risk of overcrowding**
- ✓ **Anticipated population growth**
- ✓ **Travel distance**
- ✓ **Access to specialist settings**

### Student Pathways

Student pathways are a key consideration when planning for additional specialist settings. This ensures that as a child progresses through their schooling, there is an age - appropriate setting for them to learn in, alongside their peers.

Some of the opportunities identified by the regions are intended to complete existing student pathways, or address gaps in areas where there may be limited specialist settings currently.

Clear pathways for students

Growing pathways – may not be complete across all parts of the catchment

Gaps in pathways – solutions yet to be determined

No specialist settings