



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

*Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga*



# Success for all

## SPECIAL EDUCATION

BRIEFING TO INCOMING MINISTER

Friday 19 September 2014



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## Guide to this document

### Part 1: Making education inclusive improves outcomes for all children and young people

Part 1 sets out how important special education services are for a wide range of children and their families, whānau and communities. About one in ten children and young people in early learning centres and schools receive special education support each year. Without this additional support, these children and young people will struggle to achieve their potential.

Part 1 also looks at outcomes delivered through special education provision. These outcomes are positive and show:

- ▶ New Zealand succeeding as an international leader for inclusive education with 99.6% of students in regular education settings
- ▶ the majority of parents satisfied with the overall quality of the Ministry services they receive.



## Part 2: We fund and deliver a wide range of tailored services

Part 2 sets out the range of support we fund for 80,000 to 100,000 children, young people and their families and whānau. Government invests approximately \$530m a year in special education, to meet hugely variable levels of need. Every young person's needs are different, so our ability to tailor services to need is key. Ministry services include:

- ▶ early intervention support to help young children in the critical first six years of their lives
- ▶ communication services for children who have difficulties talking, listening and understanding language
- ▶ the Severe Behaviour Service that helps children learn how to cope with situations and relate positively to others
- ▶ the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme to support children with high and very high needs throughout their schooling
- ▶ the Intensive Wraparound Service for the small number of children with the highest needs.

We support schools to access specialist teaching resources and help teachers to work most effectively with children with special education needs. We also work in partnership with parents and whānau when we provide support.

## Part 3: Needs and expectations are changing and support needs to change with them

Part 3 identifies the key challenges that we need to address to continue to deliver for children with special education needs. We are finding that demand is increasing because:

- ▶ children and young people with special education needs are identified earlier and more effectively
- ▶ there are more children and young people with special educational needs
- ▶ there are more children and young people with acute and complex needs
- ▶ parents, families, whānau and communities have higher expectations for all children and young people to be present, participating and learning in school and early childhood education.

To meet increasing demand and rising expectations within our allocated resources, we need to examine again how we fund and deliver special education services to achieve the best possible outcomes. To do this, we need to look at different models of both funding and delivering services. We also need to make the best use of new technology and work closely with families, whānau and experts in the education and disability sectors.

## Working with you

This section outlines how the Ministry of Education is ready to work with you to improve outcomes for children with special education needs, delivering on your priorities as Minister.









**Making education inclusive improves outcomes for all children and young people**

## Part 1: Making education inclusive improves outcomes for all children and young people

### Special education services provide vital support

Special education includes a wide range of services and activities that are intended to ensure all children, regardless of their needs, are present, participating and learning in schools and early childhood education alongside their peers.

Special education services and support are part of the broader education system for all children and young people. Students with special education needs have the same rights to enrol and receive an education in a state school or early childhood education facility as students who do not have special education needs.

Special education is vital if we are to ensure all children achieve their potential. When we deliver the right services and support for children and young people to be present, participating and learning in education, they go on to have better lives and require less support as adults.

New Zealand also has a binding obligation to provide an inclusive education system under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the New Zealand Disability Action Plan 2014-2018, supported by the New Zealand Curriculum, Te Whāriki (the early childhood education curriculum) and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa.



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**New Zealand is a world  
leader in providing  
inclusive education, with  
only 0.4% of children  
in special education  
settings separate to  
regular schools**

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## New Zealand is a world leader in providing inclusive education

Under the Education Act 1989, “people who have special education needs (whether because of disability or otherwise) have the same rights to enrol and receive education at state schools as people who do not”. We are supporting schools to deliver fully inclusive education. An inclusive school is one where *all* students participate fully in the life of their school, feel they belong and are learning.

New Zealand is a world leader in providing inclusive education, with only 0.4% of children in special education settings separate to regular schools. A 2010 review of international trends in special education found that between 1999 and 2003, this rate ranged between 0.5% and 6% in other OECD countries.<sup>1</sup>

Inclusive education can benefit all students, not only those with special education needs. Students learn to value diversity and to appreciate that success looks different for different people. Experiencing inclusive education also reduces additional demand for more specialist services later on.

The Education Review Office (ERO) has a set of indicators for reviewing inclusive practices in schools. Indicators include enrolment, links with families and whānau, coordination of services and support, classroom teaching, school culture, professional development, and support and achievement.

The data we have indicates that schools are becoming more inclusive. We established a baseline in 2010 and found that 50% of the primary and secondary schools reviewed were demonstrating mostly inclusive practices. A 2012 review found mostly inclusive practices among 77% of the primary schools examined. We have a target that 100% of primary and secondary schools will be demonstrating inclusive practices in 2014.<sup>2</sup>

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## We are supporting schools to deliver fully inclusive education

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1 Mitchell, D. (2010). Education That Fits: Review of international trends in the education of students with special educational needs.

2 Note: 2010 data are from a baseline sample of 199 primary and 30 secondary schools; 2012 data are from a snapshot of 254 primary schools (report released in 2013). The 2014 target is for 80% of schools to be demonstrating mostly inclusive practices and 20% demonstrating some inclusive practices.



## Inclusive education and quality teaching go together to get results

All students, including those with special education needs, benefit from their parents, whānau and teachers having high and realistic expectations of them and their educational potential. It is not enough for children with special education needs to be present in school. Parents and whānau, teachers and specialist support staff all need to work together to ensure children and young people are achieving and experiencing meaningful success.

Quality teaching and inclusive schools go hand-in-hand. Schools need to create environments and support (in and out of the classroom) that meet the educational needs of all the children and young people in their school community. Teaching must be responsive to the needs of all students. We need to ensure that the ability to teach students with special education needs is a core part of teaching within every classroom.

This extends to ensuring that those providing professional learning and development (PLD) are helping to deliver inclusive teaching. For example, PLD providers can talk about how lessons on a particular topic or subject area can be adapted and tailored to meet a range of student needs and abilities.

## Awapuni School – inclusive practice in action

At Awapuni School in Gisborne, the board of trustees, school leadership and staff are working together to raise the achievement of every child in their school.

The school has prioritised staffing to enable a full-time specialist teacher to provide a leadership role that supports, coaches, mentors and develops classroom teachers to assist them to plan and adapt their teaching to include the diversity of student need in each classroom.

Policies, processes, relationships and conversations focus on respecting the unique nature of each student. Staff also make use of data and analysis to inform teaching and learning across the school.

At any one time, over half of the school may be on the special needs register which is used to monitor, evaluate and report on progress.

Effective transitions in, across and out of the school are carefully planned. The principal works collaboratively with other agencies and schools to ensure a focus on children belonging in their families, whānau and community.



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**“Thank you for a wonderful service as my son has improved greatly.”**

***(parent – CSS 2013)***

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Our special education services are delivering for parents. The client satisfaction survey (CSS) provides a national picture of how satisfied parents and educators are, across our four core Ministry services (early intervention, communication, behaviour and complex needs (Ongoing Resourcing Scheme)). The CSS has run over the last three years. Parents' satisfaction with the overall quality of special education service delivery has remained stable, but we want to see satisfaction increase. For 2013:

- 
- ▶ 76% of parents were satisfied with the overall quality of service delivery
- 
- ▶ 16% gave a 'neutral' answer (a three on a five-point scale)
- 
- ▶ 9% were dissatisfied.<sup>3</sup>
- 

*“Without a joint effort from various parties I don't think [my child] would have come as far as he has. Special education has played a huge part in [my child's] progress.” (parent – CSS 2013)*

*“Over the years working with special education, we have found the service extremely valuable to [our child's] overall progress. We would not like to be without it.” (parent – CSS 2013)*

*“Thank you for a wonderful service as my son has improved greatly.” (parent – CSS 2013)*

Our information and data on inclusive schools is improving, but more needs to be done to ensure that schools are able to embed inclusive practices in their schools, and services and support are meeting outcomes for students with special education needs.

We also need to make sure that schools and early childhood services are becoming more inclusive in a way that is collaborative with principals, the education and disability sectors, parents, whānau and communities.

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<sup>3</sup> Note: totals do not add to 100% due to rounding



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We fund and deliver a wide range  
of tailored services

## Part 2: We fund and deliver a wide range of tailored services

### Inclusive education is the goal of all special education services

The provision of special education in the school and early childhood system today is guided by the policy framework set out in 1998 as part of the international move towards the inclusion of all children with special education needs in local education settings. The policy framework is designed to ensure access to all services and support that a child is eligible for, no matter which school they attend.

Inclusive education is a goal that underpins all aspects of the special education continuum. To achieve their potential, students need to receive the right support at the right time, as well as be included in all aspects of school life. We can maximise the presence, participation and learning of all students by using the right combination of school policies and processes, leadership, expertise, teaching practice, evidence and data, additional support, community, family and whānau relationships, attitudes and resourcing.



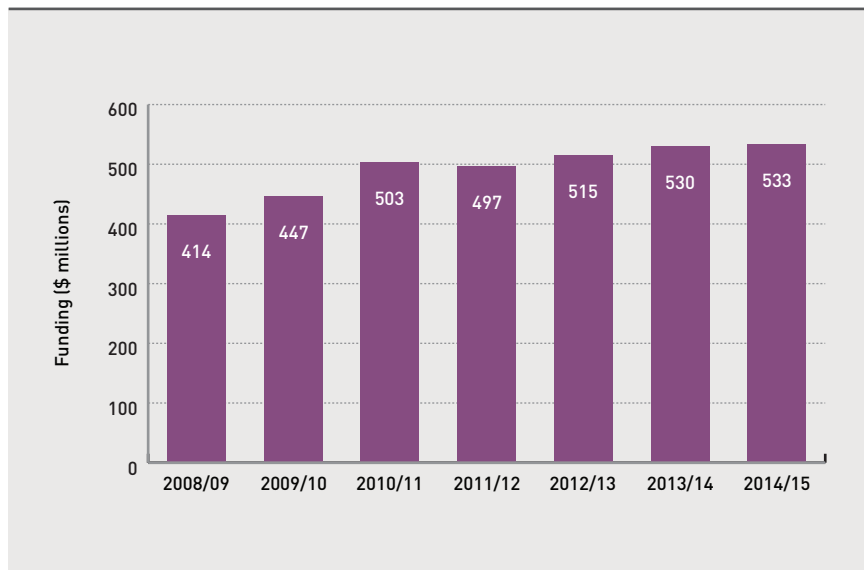
### Special education services support nearly one in ten of New Zealand's children and cost around \$530m

In New Zealand, an estimated 80,000 to 100,000 children and young people in early learning or school receive some form of special education support each year. This equates to around one in ten children and young people in early learning centres and schools. These children and young people need additional support to achieve their potential. This includes:

- ▶ specialist services for the 3% of the school population who have the highest levels of need
- ▶ services and programmes for 4-6% of students and groups of students with moderate needs
- ▶ early intervention services for 5% of children aged 0-6
- ▶ broader based interventions and programmes targeted at schools and groups of students.

The government currently invests approximately \$530m annually in special education services and support. Approximately two thirds of this funding is for services and support provided by the education sector. The rest funds Ministry provision of specialist services to about 30,000 children and young people with special education needs per year. A more detailed breakdown of special education funding estimates can be found in Appendix 1.



**Figure 1. Special education funding**


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**Most children and young people with special education needs attend their local school with around 2,500 students attending day special schools and 350 attending residential special schools**

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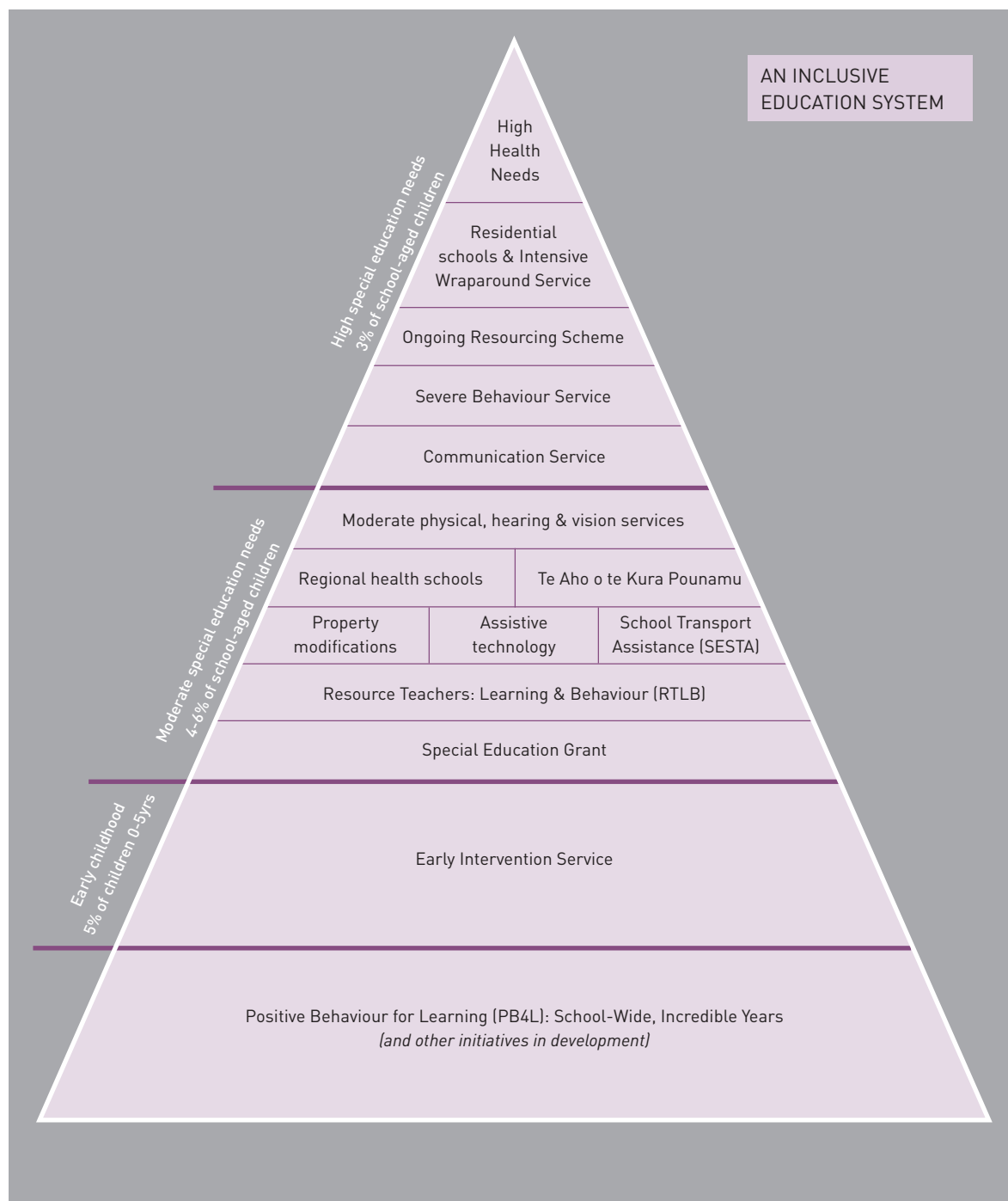
### **We fund and provide a wide range of services to meet differing needs**

There is a continuum of support in the education system for children and young people with special education needs, from attending the local school to attending one of the 28 special schools across the country. All special schools have satellite classes in local schools in their vicinity. Some schools have units offering a mix of inclusive experiences and separate learning spaces for students with special education needs.

Most children and young people with special education needs attend their local school, with around 2,500 students attending day special schools and 350 attending residential special schools, regional health schools and vision or deaf education centres.

Figure 2 shows the structure of special education services and support based on the level of need of the child. High and very high need services such as the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme and the School High Health Needs Fund are targeted to a small number of students who need long-term support. Programmes and services such as Positive Behaviour for Learning: School-Wide and Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour provide support to schools, students and groups of students with shorter-term or moderate needs.

**Figure 2. Continuum of supports and services for children with special education needs**



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## The Ministry of Education employs around 800 full-time equivalent, specialist staff with a wide range of expertise

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The range and level of need is hugely variable, from a deaf teenager who uses New Zealand Sign Language to communicate, to a child who behaves aggressively towards his or her peers; or from a child with language and reading difficulties, to a child who uses a wheelchair and needs help with toileting. As a result, the range of services required is highly varied. Services are designed to recognise the individual needs and circumstances of the children and young people who receive support.

A student who is just starting school may need support for a term as they transition into the new environment, while another student may need support throughout their schooling. Support can also vary in intensity, from minimal (for example, a student with behaviour issues checking in with an adult each day) through to intensive learning and behaviour support.

To deliver these services, the Ministry of Education employs around 800 full-time equivalent, specialist staff with a wide range of expertise, including psychologists, speech-language therapists, advisors on deaf children and early intervention teachers. We also fund about 140 education, behaviour and communication support worker roles to work alongside specialist staff and educators.

Our specialists are supported by 170 other special education staff. These people help our front-line specialists to do their job. They do this by carrying out a range of roles, from professional practice support, to service design and policy advice, to Positive Behaviour for Learning initiatives and verification of Ongoing Resource Scheme applications. Our group is overseen by a newly created National Director for Special Education – Dr David Wales. Our regional services are led by four regional managers of special education.



When delivering our services and support to children and young people we aim to:

- ▶ provide quality services
- ▶ intervene early
- ▶ remove barriers to learning and create productive partnerships at all levels
- ▶ ensure our services and support are based on strong evidence of what works.

The Ministry works closely with parents, families, whānau, other agencies, non-government organisations, other specialists, schools and early childhood education services to ensure that specialist support is appropriate to the needs of the child and enables them to reach their full potential.

Technology is becoming increasingly important to enable students with special education needs to learn and succeed in school. Using digital technologies, educators can provide more flexible learning options that reduce the need to adapt the curriculum for individual students. School learning networks also increase opportunities for students with special education needs to interact with others and access a range of 'virtual' learning environments.

The range of assistive and adaptive technology (including specialised learning software devices) is expanding and these technologies are becoming increasingly affordable. We are continually seeking opportunities to make better use of technology to make education more inclusive of students with special education needs.



## We fund and support a range of programmes

### We support children as early as possible

Our Early Intervention Service supports young children (from 0-6 years) who have special education needs due to disabilities, delays in development or communication, or difficulties with behaviour – or often a combination of these.

Our Early Intervention teams work closely with families, whānau and educators to build their knowledge, skills and confidence to support the child at home and in early childhood education settings. We contract specialist services to support a further 500 children with the highest needs.<sup>4</sup>

**“I feel valued at school when people are nice to me and when they listen to what I say.”**

**(student – CSS 2013)**

The **Early Intervention Service** provides specialist support for children, like *Tama*, aged 0-6 years who have delayed development, a disability, a behaviour difficulty or a communication difficulty that significantly affects their learning.

*Tama* is three years old and was referred to the Early Intervention Service by Plunket when he was two. He has complex learning needs and has been diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Tama has limited play skills (he does the same thing over and over) and finds transitions between home and his early childhood education centre difficult. He does not eat independently. Tama prefers being alone and is not yet able to communicate his wants and needs.

#### Specialist support – Early Intervention Service

*Tama* receives both home- and centre-based support. Our Early Intervention teacher has fortnightly contact with *Tama*, alternating between home and early childhood education centre visits. *Tama*'s play skills are improving and he now tolerates peers playing alongside him for short periods. He is learning to feed himself and is beginning to look at books with an adult. *Tama*'s Early Intervention teacher works collaboratively with his parents and teachers to support their use of strategies. *Tama*'s teachers also receive support from an Education Support Worker to implement his individual plan.

In the last year, we provided an **Early Intervention Service** to **13,687** children and families and whānau.

Our Early Intervention teams include early intervention teachers, educational psychologists, speech-language therapists and Advisors on Deaf Children and kaitakawaenga.

We work closely with health professionals such as audiologists, physiotherapists, paediatricians, dieticians and occupational therapists.

We invest \$39 million annually in the Early Intervention Service.

<sup>4</sup> Contracted early intervention services are provided by: CCS Disability Action (Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin); Champion Centre (Christchurch); Conductive Education (Hamilton & Christchurch); Ohomairangi Trust (Auckland); McKenzie Centre (Hamilton); and the Wellington Early Intervention Trust.

## We support children and young people to communicate

The Communication Service's speech-language therapists support children who have difficulties with talking, listening and understanding language. They also provide parents, whānau and teachers with advice and practical ways to make a difference. The service helps children with high communication needs who are aged five to eight years.

Communication support might include:

- ▶ individual therapy that is followed up at home
- ▶ help from a teacher's aide at school/kura
- ▶ work in small groups
- ▶ classroom strategies for teachers
- ▶ advice and guidance to all those who work with a child to ensure their plan is on track and that they are making progress.

The **Communication Service** helps children like *'George'* whose speech is hard to understand, or who have a significant language delay or disorder, difficulty with social communication, or a stutter or other voice difficulty.

*'George'* is five years old and started school this year. He had a series of ear infections that affected his speech and language development. *George's* parents were advised that he would 'grow out of it' and he was referred to special education only when he started school. *George* gets frustrated when others can't understand him and ask him to repeat things. He keeps mainly to one-word responses and spends a lot of time alone. *George* struggles with learning to read and write. His parents and teacher are looking for advice to help him with his speech, as well as with literacy skills.

### Specialist support – Communication Service

*George's* teacher and parents are learning strategies to help him and he has teacher's aide support in class. *George* is practising his speech sounds and his speech is becoming clearer. He is learning to express his feelings and ideas and to form sentences. He is making progress with reading and is joining in with his peers more.

In the last year, we provided a **Communication Service** to **6,909** children. The service is primarily targeted to children aged 5-8 years with high communication needs.

Speech-language therapists support children who have difficulties with talking, listening and understanding language. The Ministry employs **262 speech-language therapists** (FTE, June 2014).

We invest **\$16 million** annually in the **Communication Service**.

## We support children and young people with severe behaviour difficulties

The Severe Behaviour Service is based on evidence that shows good behaviour can be learned. Our behaviour teams provide advice and support to help parents, whānau and teachers make changes to a child's environment, both at home and in school or an early childhood setting. These changes help the child learn how to cope with situations and relate positively to others. Having the right strategies in place makes a real difference to children's behaviour, and the extent to which they engage and learn.

**"I feel valued at school when my teacher praises me for my work and she gives me encouragement."**

**(student – CSS 2013)**

The **Severe Behaviour Service** helps children in Years 1-10 like *John* who are experiencing behaviour difficulties. The service also helps schools to manage behaviour crisis situations.

*John* is nine years old and is in year 5 at primary school. He has challenging behaviours that affect his ability to learn and succeed at school. *John* can be violent towards staff, students and family members. In school he can lash out, shout and throw things. At home *John* yells and screams, punches holes in the walls, hits family members and has threatened to burn the house down. *John* has witnessed family violence and experienced physical and emotional abuse and has been diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). He had a head injury as an infant and is in the borderline range for intellectual ability.

### Specialist support – Severe Behaviour Service

*John* receives teacher's aide support in class and has a modified learning programme with a focus on small group work. He is participating in a social skills group and an after-school programme. With this support *John* is making progress – managing his behaviour better and developing relationships with other children.

In the last year, we provided a **Severe Behaviour Service** to **3,622** children and young people.

Our specialist staff provide advice, strategies and support for parents, families, whānau and teachers. We employ **180 psychologists, 104 special education advisors and 26 kaitakawaenga** (FTE, June 2014).

We invest **\$34 million** annually in the **Severe Behaviour Service**.

We provide programmes to schools, teachers and parents to promote positive behaviour in children as part of **Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L)**. For example, more than 500 schools are now implementing **PB4L: School-Wide**.



## We support children and young people with complex needs

Students with high and very high needs can receive support from the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) throughout their schooling. Children and young people receiving ORS funding have access to additional teacher time, specialists, teacher's aide support and a small grant to cover necessary costs.

Students' applications for ORS funding are assessed by an independent team of experts. Those who are

accepted are identified as having 'high' or 'very high' needs. This determines how much additional teacher time they will receive (0.1 FTE or 0.2 FTE) and the level of funding for specialist services and teacher's aide support.

The Ministry is the main fund-holder for about 5,000 students receiving ORS funding, while 54 special schools and secondary schools are fund-holders to an additional 3,000 students.

The **Complex Needs Service** supports students like *'Jessica'* who have 'high' or 'very high' needs under the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS).

*'Jessica'* is 17 years old and has cerebral palsy. She is verified as 'high needs' under the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme and uses an electric wheelchair. She is studying towards NCEA Level 2 and wants to be a librarian.\* *Jessica* has already passed three subjects, including English, this year. She finds writing by hand difficult and needs extra time to complete assigned tasks. *Jessica* cannot access the school gym and needs help with personal care (toileting). She is enrolled in a tertiary course and is participating in relevant work experience.

### Specialist support – Complex Needs Service

Specialist Ministry staff will meet with *Jessica's* teachers to help them understand and accommodate her needs. Property solutions are being worked on so *Jessica* can access the gym. She is also working with Ministry staff to find ways to manage her personal care needs independently. *Jessica* receives support and advice from the Ministry's assistive technology services.

\* Most students supported through the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme do not achieve NCEA qualifications due to the level and complexity of their needs.

In the last year, we provided a **Complex Needs Service** to **5,275** students, and high health needs funding to another **741** students.

We employ **20 physiotherapists**, and **35 occupational therapists** (June 2014).

We invest **\$151 million** annually in the **Complex Needs Service**. Students in ORS receive specialist teacher time, specialist support, and teacher's aide support throughout their time in school.

Our **assistive technology** services enables students to trial and use ICT devices and software, as well as vision equipment, hearing devices and specialised seating. More than **1,400 students** received assistive technology support in the last year.



### We provide intensive, individualised support

The Intensive Wraparound Service provides individualised support for children and young people in years 3-10 (aged 8-14 years) with highly complex and challenging behaviour as well as social and education needs or an intellectual impairment.

The Intensive Wraparound Service is currently supporting around 280 children. The majority of these children attend and learn in their local school, although some with the most complex behaviour and learning needs may attend a residential special school for a time.

Early indications are that most students in the Intensive Wraparound Service are achieving their goals for school presence, participation and learning. Their rates of suspension and exclusion are also decreasing, particularly for Māori students.

### We support children with high health needs

The School High Health Needs Fund (SHHNF) ensures children with high health conditions can attend school safely and helps children to become independent in managing their own care. Some children might need the Fund's support throughout their schooling.

The SHHNF is for students who:

- ▶ have a high health need that requires care at school
- ▶ require care for supervision, physical help, crisis response, or to ensure they receive the appropriate treatment or intervention
- ▶ require care that is essential to access their usual educational environments and is expected to maintain or improve their attendance at school and their health status
- ▶ have a high health need of such intensity, and/or frequency, and/or duration, that care is required to:
  - i. preserve life
  - ii. prevent severe effects on physical health
  - iii. prevent accidents or injury to the student, or
  - iv. control infection.

We currently provide support to 550 children through the School High Health Needs Fund. The Government allocated additional funding in Budget 2014 for a further 80 students to access the Fund each year.

### We provide funding so schools can put locally-responsive support in place

All schools receive a Special Education Grant (SEG) to support students with special education needs. The SEG is designed to allow schools to be responsive to students with special education needs in their own school.

The amount each school receives is based on how many children it has and its decile ranking.

Schools have flexibility over how they spend their grant, based on the needs of the children in their school. Schools might use their grant for resources and materials, relevant training for teachers, extra specialist services or additional teacher or teacher's aide time.

## We fund and provide specialised advice and expertise

Special education funding and support help schools access specialist teaching resources in several ways. For example, special schools share their expertise with teachers who have students with high needs in their classes (the Specialist Teacher Outreach Service). Teachers who have students with vision and hearing impairments can get support through resource teachers of the deaf (100 FTE teachers around the country) and resource teachers: vision (50 FTE teachers).

Schools, parents, whānau, and other agencies can access a range of other support and services through special education funding, for example:

- ▶ assistive technology, which helps children with disabilities in their learning and may include computer hardware and software, specialised furniture or hearing devices
- ▶ Youth Justice Assessments, which identify educational needs to help re-engage young people in education and move away from offending (almost 250 in the year to June 2014)
- ▶ support from our Traumatic Incident teams, which help schools to manage serious incidents and reduce the potential emotional harm that can immediately follow an incident such as an earthquake or fire, the death of a student or a serious threat to the safety of students or staff.

When a traumatic incident occurs, people managing the event are in crisis mode. **The Traumatic Incident** team supports schools and early childhood services to manage the situation and return to normal routines as soon as possible.

### Traumatic incident

A student took his own life and the body was found on school grounds by members of staff. The principal called the Special Education Traumatic Incident Coordinator for support to ensure the school managed the situation safely.

### Support – Traumatic Incident team

The Traumatic Incident team met with the school's Crisis Management Team (CMT). As the school had good procedures in place, much of the response was to affirm what had already been done. The team members listened for gaps and advised on what more could be done. They supported the CMT to strengthen systems to appropriately respond to students, teachers, parents and media. They also supported the principal at a meeting to inform staff about what had happened, what systems were in place, and how to respond to questions, speculation and rumour.

After the team had been in the school for four days, the school felt confident they could manage independently. Traumatic Incident team members continued to check in over the next few weeks to see how things were going and were available to talk things through by phone.

Our **Traumatic Incident teams** attended **138** incidents in 2013.

We help schools strengthen systems to identify and monitor students who are at risk and make sure they get the support they need.

The **Traumatic Incident teams** can help with coping strategies, problem-solving, and how to communicate about an incident.

We work alongside school and early childhood education teams.



## We fund and support services for students with learning and behaviour needs

The Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLb) service supports students in years 1 to 10 with learning and behaviour needs (and their teachers and schools). The service is provided by teachers with specialist postgraduate teacher qualifications who travel within their cluster of schools. Drawing on their extensive teaching experience and specialist knowledge, they help other teachers to adapt their teaching practice and use of the curriculum to be more effective for students with learning and behaviour needs.

The RTLb service also works with schools to strengthen systems and practices so that students with learning and behaviour needs are fully included within school programmes and activities. Approximately 900 RTLbs work across all state, state-integrated and partnership schools and kura, in English and Māori immersion settings.

There are 40 lead schools across New Zealand that govern and manage the service on behalf of clusters of around 60 schools each. The lead schools employ the RTLb and work collaboratively across their cluster to make sure the service meets all schools' needs. The service works closely with Ministry special education staff, providing a seamless special education service for schools.

## Inclusive Education Taskforce

Schools that have the right policies, systems and capability in place to be fully inclusive are able to ensure better outcomes for all students.

In 2012, we established the **Inclusive Education Taskforce** to support schools to build their capability and confidence in identifying students with special education needs and put the right supports in place.

We are working with representatives from the education sector, disabled people's organisations, families and whānau and in some instances, disabled students themselves to develop relevant and meaningful support for teachers. Such work includes: **Inclusive Practices Tools; professional learning and development** for teachers; and an **Online Knowledge Centre** with guides, strategies, tips and research on inclusive education.

## We are working to build the capability of schools

Preventative programmes and strategies improve outcomes for all students and allow children and young people who need additional support to receive it sooner. A focus on prevention includes identifying students who may be struggling in particular areas and putting the right support in place. This also ensures additional demand for higher need resources is not created later on, and that these resources can be targeted to students in a way that is sustainable.

We have already put a series of programmes in place to help schools and early childhood providers take a preventative approach. These lift the capability and confidence of staff in identifying special education needs and providing the support, systems and environment that children need.

We will continue to deliver programmes that support schools and early childhood providers to take a preventative approach for students with special education needs. Initiatives under the Inclusive Education Taskforce and the Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) portfolio of programmes are examples of how we are supporting the sector in this way.

## Positive Behaviour for Learning

When kids are disruptive, it affects their learning and their classmates' learning. Disruptive behaviour reduces children's chances of getting a good education and doing their best in the world.

In 2009, principals and teachers were telling us that disruptive behaviour was a real problem in New Zealand schools. There isn't one simple solution to disruptive behaviour, so the Ministry pulled together people from across the sector and we agreed on a combined, proactive effort.

What came of this was an ongoing commitment to PB4L to take a long-term preventative approach.

PB4L includes initiatives that target particular aspects of problem behaviour, with formal evaluation to make sure the results are clearly captured and taken into account. A portfolio of nine initiatives has been introduced or piloted since 2009. This has required a coordinated, cross-sector effort. The Ministry is steering the programme, working alongside key partners in the education, government and community sectors.

In a sample of PB4L: School-Wide schools, retention rates have improved, stand-downs have reduced, and more students are achieving NCEA Level 1.

## We work closely with parents and whānau

We engage directly with the parents and caregivers of about 31,000 children who receive our specialist services each year. Parental consent is needed to access any of our services, and the planning for programmes of support is done jointly with parents. Kaitakawaenga (Māori cultural advisors) work with teams and whānau if a student identifies as Māori. The kaitakawaenga helps everyone to work in culturally-appropriate and responsive ways.

Partnership with parents is the cornerstone of our service delivery. Parents are always encouraged to be involved in the planning and setting of learning goals collaboratively with teachers and the special

education team. Parents and caregivers have a key role to play in supporting their children to reach their learning goals.

Many districts have parent reference groups to discuss what is working well and what could be improved. This gives parents a voice in special education decision-making and service provision.

There are also two more formal ways we ask parents for feedback: the national client satisfaction survey (CSS) and the district-level service survey. We also provide the opportunity for parents and caregivers to contact us on the special education 0800 number and the special education mailbox. Parents can quickly get advice about services and strategies and be put in touch with the right local support.

## Getting it right for Māori and Pasifika

We work to ensure that our services work for Māori and Pasifika children, as well as their whānau or 'aiga. This remains a priority and we need to continue to ensure that:

- ▶ there is equitable and early access to services, especially in early intervention
- ▶ immersion settings (including kura and wharekura) understand our services and that we shape our services so that they work for them
- ▶ we look for opportunities to address feelings of stigma or shame that may traditionally be associated with disability
- ▶ our services are culturally responsive, and respond to the unique cultural circumstances of each whānau or 'aiga
- ▶ programmes and services are shaped so that they address the referred needs of the child or young person, and look for opportunities to enhance identity, language and culture
- ▶ we continue to monitor access to services and the effectiveness of our services to Māori and Pasifika.

3







Needs and expectations are changing  
and support needs to change with them

## Part 3: Needs and expectations are changing and support needs to change with them



### Demand is increasing for special education support

Over the last decade, demand has increased for special education services and specialist support. We are providing special education services and support to a greater number of children and young people than ever before. We are finding that demand is increasing because:

- ▶ children and young people with special education needs are identified earlier and more effectively
- ▶ there are more children and young people with special education needs
- ▶ there are more children and young people with acute and complex needs
- ▶ parents, families, whānau and communities have higher expectations for all children and young people to be present, participating and learning in school and early childhood education.

### We are identifying needs earlier and more effectively

We have implemented initiatives in recent years so we can identify students with special education needs earlier, and more effectively. This includes the universal newborn hearing and early intervention services, as well as B4 School checks. More children are being identified, which increases the expectation of support.

### There are more children and young people presenting with special education needs

We are seeing increasing pressure on our services because there are more children and young people presenting with special education needs across different levels of service provision. This is stretching resources across a wider range of services.

Population growth is also driving increasing demand. Between 2001 and 2013, the 0-4 year old population in New Zealand has grown by 11%. Over the same time, school rolls have increased by 3.1%.

Participation in early childhood education has increased from 93% in 2004 to 95.9% in 2014, and is expected to reach 98% in 2016. With increased participation, we are seeing more hard-to-reach families and whānau in early childhood education, who are more likely to require support from the Early Intervention Service.

Over the last few years, delivery of early intervention services has grown to 13,700 children, and our waiting lists are still growing. The most common referrals to the Early Intervention Service are for speech-language issues, which have increased from 5,900 in 2011/12 to 7,130 in 2013/14.

We are also seeing increases in the number of students receiving ORS support. The Review of Special Education in 2010 targeted an increase in ORS numbers of 1,125 and it is likely that the number will continue to increase. There has been an average 3.1% increase in the number of students in ORS every year since 2010. An increase in the number of births since 2005 appears to be associated with the increase in ORS students.



## There are more children and young people with acute and complex needs

There is a growing incidence of children and young people with neuro-developmental conditions such as Autism Spectrum Disorder and Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder. Also, advances in medical technology may mean that more children with developmental issues are surviving complications at birth and in early childhood. These children are likely to have special education needs once they enter the education system.

Children and young people with neuro-developmental issues will require support throughout their education. Many of these children do not currently meet the criteria to receive high or very high needs services such as ORS. These students are supported through services like Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour, the Special Education Grant and the Severe Behaviour Service. However, parents, teachers and advocates are concerned the current interventions are too short-term to be effective. We need to improve access to services for those with neuro-developmental issues and do better at monitoring their needs.

## Parents, families, whānau and communities have higher expectations

There are higher expectations from parents, families, whānau and communities that children and young people with special education needs are not just attending early childhood education and school, but that they are learning along with their peers. The Ministry of Health's B4 School screening checks in 2013 found that parents of about 5,500 children registered their concern about their child's developmental progress or behaviour. However, many of these children were not receiving support for the issues identified.

There have been ongoing complaints to boards of trustees, the Ministry, advocacy groups and the Human Rights Commission from parents concerned about their children with special education needs and their schooling. Many of these complaints have not been resolved through negotiation or mediation as parental expectations have been higher than current services and support can provide.

Students with special education needs are taking part alongside their peers in formal assessments – including at NCEA level. While some students

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## Students with special education needs are taking part alongside their peers in formal assessments – including at NCEA level

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with special education needs are achieving NCEA and University Entrance, rates have decreased over time. This may be linked to increasing needs and is something we need to examine further.

There is also growing pressure from multi-agency agreements to respond to requests for vulnerable children. Initiatives such as Children's Teams and Gateway assessments are placing our specialist skills in increasing demand.

Apart from ORS, our special education services do not currently provide support for children and young people over the age of 14. This is increasingly becoming an issue as students are expected to stay at school for longer and participate in formal qualifications such as NCEA. We are also recognising the need to support young people with issues around mental health and behaviour.

## We need to make best use of our resources

In the face of rising demand, we need to maximise the impact of current resources. In recent years, we've worked with schools and education providers to lift their capability to identify and better manage children and young people with special education needs. For example, signs of behavioural issues can be identified before specialist, one-on-one support is needed. This allows support to be given to children much earlier, at a lower cost, and with greater likelihood of resolving the difficulty. The PB4L programme has been a valued approach in responding to these issues. This approach helps the school or provider and, more importantly, the child.



However, the significant resourcing pressures that arise from increasing demand will require us to look differently at how we deliver special education services, and whether the current level of resourcing will be sufficient to support children and young people with special education needs.

The Ministry of Education aims to provide the right support to all students with special education needs, within our funding allocations. As demand increases, we may see increases in waiting times to access services, service provision spread thinly across a large number of children and young people, and some gaps in service provision.

We need to adapt the way we provide special education services and support so we are meeting, rather than managing demand. The unintended impact of managing high demand is that services become process-driven in order to ration support, and children and young people do not receive the level of support they need. Improving this situation is likely to require additional resources.

## We need to review the provision of special education services

We need to ensure that the education system, including both the Ministry and the sector, provide excellent services and support for students with special education needs. To be confident in this, we believe we need to review the provision of special education services and support. A review of this kind is timely, considering the increasing demand for special education services and support.

We want to make sure the processes for allocating resources are right, that the Ministry and the sector provide the right mix and flexibility of services to meet individual needs and that the processes to allocate and make decisions on service provision are made at the right level, by the people best able to make them.



At the same time, we need to identify opportunities to make service improvement and take into account:

- ▶ the need to work with the knowledge and expertise of the education sector, disability sector and other agencies
- ▶ the information and resources becoming available to assist schools to provide for children and young people with special education needs
- ▶ technology that has the potential to increase the opportunities for students with special education needs to access the education system, interact with others and have better learning outcomes.

We also need to consider:

- ▶ how services can be shaped at a more local level, working across groups of schools and early learning services
- ▶ how we ensure that specialist teachers, specialist services, schools, families and whānau are working together
- ▶ testing new models of service provision, including those that have worked in other countries and for other client groups.

## Working with you

Special education is important for the future success of New Zealand and New Zealanders. It helps all children and young people achieve their potential, leading to better outcomes for them, their communities and wider society.

Special education services are delivering for children, young people and their families and whānau. But significant challenges are emerging due to higher demand for services, rising expectations and resource requirements. We need to look again at how we deliver special education services to meet demand and provide the best outcomes. The system, and our providers, need to be better supported to adapt to and take advantage of changes ahead.

The Ministry of Education works with its partners in government, and with the sector, to improve the outcomes for children with special education needs. We will work with you to ensure that what we do delivers on your priorities as Minister. We can provide further briefings as a basis for decisions you may wish to take on the issues and actions we have raised.

We look forward to working with you.

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**We will work with you  
to improve outcomes  
for children with special  
education needs**

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## Appendix 1: Special education funding estimates

Programme	Description	\$ million						
		2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
High and very high needs (3% of school-aged children)								
School High Health Needs Fund	For children with high health needs to attend school safely	6	6	6	6	6	6	7
Ongoing Resourcing Scheme	Funding and support for students with high/very high special education needs	128	130	138	146	149	152	152
ORS Verification	Assessment of ORS applications	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Complex Needs (excluding ORS)	Specialist services for children who have complex needs, but are not eligible for ORS funding	3	7	7	6	6	7	7
Residential special schools	Schools for students with high and complex needs (alongside Intensive Wraparound Service)	13	12	12	12	10	8	8
Special schools class funding	Funding for special schools	3	2	2	2	2	2	2
Severe Behaviour Service	Support to children with severe behaviour issues, and schools to cope with situations	25	33	33	32	33	33	33
Communications Service	Speech-language therapy support for children with high communication needs	9	10	10	17	17	17	17
Moderate special education needs (4-6% of school-aged children)								
Moderate physical disabilities	Funding for contracted providers	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Moderate hearing disabilities	Funding for contracted providers	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Moderate vision disabilities (BLENNZ developmental orientation and mobility)	Funding for contracted providers	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Programme	Description	\$ million						
		2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Regional health schools	Funding for teachers to work in regional health schools, hospitals or in homes if children are unable to attend school due to illness	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
Property modifications	Funding to make school property modifications to accommodate students' physical needs (e.g. wheelchair access)	17	16	58	24	21	18	18
Assistive technology	Provides equipment for children with disabilities	3	3	3	3	3	4	4
School Transport Assistance	Funding assistance for children with disabilities to get to and from school	36	36	36	36	36	36	36
Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour	Work with schools and teachers to support year 1-10 students with learning and behaviour difficulties	58	60	62	65	71	75	75
Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (Operational Funding)		4	4	5	5	5	5	5
RTLB Operations years 11-13		4	4	4	4	4	4	4
RTLB Learning Support Funding		7	7	7	7	7	7	7
Special Education Grant	Funding provided to all schools for students with special education needs	33	35	36	37	36	37	37
<b>Early childhood (5% of children aged 0-5)</b>								
Early Intervention Service	Support for children who have developmental/ learning delays, a disability, behaviour difficulty, or communication difficulty	32	41	41	39	40	40	40
<b>Other</b>								
Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L)	Includes School-Wide, Incredible Years, Wellbeing@School, Intensive Wraparound Service, and other programmes for teachers and parents	2	11	13	23	34	39	39
Sensory schools	Schools and outreach services for students with vision and hearing impairments	9	8	8	10	10	11	11



## APPENDIX 1

Programme	Description	\$ million						
		2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Tips for Autism	Professional learning and development programme	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Supplementary Learning Support	Specialist learning services for students with high learning needs	4	4	4	4	5	4	4
Cochlear Implant Trusts	Support for cochlear implant habilitation	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
New Zealand Sign Language initiatives	A range of initiatives to strengthen New Zealand Sign Language in schools							1.8
Special Education Study Awards	Study awards and scholarships to support further study in special education	3	3	3	4	5	4	4
Other specialist teacher salaries (RTV,TOD etc)	Resource teachers vision, and teachers of the deaf						6	6
<b>Total</b>		<b>414</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>503</b>	<b>497</b>	<b>515</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>533</b>





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