

Working in Learning Support

SPEECH-LANGUAGE THERAPIST





Meet Emma Cooke, a speech-language therapist in Wellington

Emma Cooke has worked as a speech-language therapist for the Ministry of Education since 2014 and since early 2018 she has taken part in the Oral Language and Literacy initiative (OLLi) and become the OLLi speech-language therapist for the Wellington region.

Emma's story

Emma came to speech and language therapy after studying French and Linguistics. She was very excited to find a career that matched her interest in language and her desire to have a hands-on and rewarding job.

What is the Oral Language and Literacy initiative?

Kotahitanga mātauranga sums up the work of a speech-language therapist working in OLLi. We call upon and bring together the wisdom and knowledge of many for the benefit of all.

We work with parents and kaiako in early learning services so that the whole community is supporting its tamariki to grow and flourish. This is a sustainable and self-determining model – and for a speech-language therapist, impactful and satisfying.

Our focus is on low socio-economic communities, as we know that children in these areas are more likely to experience delays in their oral language development.

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Emma's role as an OLLi speech-language therapist

Emma is a trainer, a coach, a listener and a creator of language-rich environments. She delivers the Hanen *ABC and Beyond* workshops to groups of teachers and then supports them to grow their knowledge, apply it in practice and share it with others.

ABC and Beyond focuses on how to make the most of book sharing and other everyday childhood activities to promote children's language and early literacy development. Video-feedback is an important component of the course. Emma needs to visit each participating teacher three times throughout the course to film them interacting with a group of children and using the strategies they've learnt. The teacher and Emma then watch their video back together and discuss how the interaction went and the impact on the children.

Emma also attends staff meetings at early learning services, to find out what the teaching of oral language looks like in their centre and to support them in making their environments even more language-rich.



Emma's day-to-day work

Depending on where she is up to in the programme, she could be hosting information sessions and visiting early learning services to talk about OLLI. On the other hand, if she is in the swing of running the *ABC and Beyond* programme, her days would be spent preparing for the workshops, delivering the workshop and driving around to visit centres to do video feedback sessions. On her centre visits she also catches up with teachers about children who may need more intensive support and focus.

Rewards of the role

“It’s really exciting to be able to approach early learning services and to offer them a proactive service to support their whole centre. I really enjoy being able to work with adults to influence positive changes across the whole centre for all children. It’s been really rewarding to notice the little changes in teachers, children and even physical environments as a result of the programme.”

Skills and knowledge

In addition to the qualifications required to become a speech-language therapist, an OLLi speech-language therapist must also have the following attributes:

- » be skilled and confident to independently facilitate professional learning and development for early learning services, including integrating adult learning principles
- » have sound knowledge and experience in embedding support for oral language and early literacy within the early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*
- » have excellent interpersonal and communication skills and the ability to work in a culturally responsive manner
- » understand how to deliver initiatives with fidelity and be competent at reporting
- » be competent and experienced in leading, planning and negotiating service delivery with both families and early learning services
- » have good judgement, integrity and be committed to working collaboratively as one of the team delivering the initiative, and as a member of the wider Ministry team providing support to early learning services
- » meet the Hanen *ABC and Beyond* programme training requirements.

Contact us

Want to speak to someone about a career as a speech-language therapist? Give us a call or drop us an email.



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Learning Support careers and professional development

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www.education.govt.nz/careers-in-special-education

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If you're interested in a career in learning support you may be eligible for a scholarship or study award. Find out more at www.education.govt.nz/r/sestudyawards

Career information

For profiles of different careers visit the Careers New Zealand website www.careers.govt.nz



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