
Establishing a certificated puna kōhungahunga (Māori language playgroup)

"Te piko o te māhuri Tera te tipu o te rakau - The bow in the branch is indicative of how the tree will grow."

'Establishing a Certificated Puna Kōhungahunga' is a guide for whānau who want to set up a puna kōhungahunga.

Ministry of Education staff are available to work with whānau to set up a puna kōhungahunga and to get certification. Their focus is on quality early childhood education programmes for children.

If you are interested in setting up a certificated puna kōhungahunga contact your [local Ministry of Education office](#).

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Introduction

Playgroups are an early childhood education (ECE) option where children and families come together to provide opportunities for their children to play, learn and grow. There are many different types of playgroups in New Zealand.

Ngā puna kōhungahunga are playgroups where whānau with young tamariki meet together to play and learn. Ngā puna kōhungahunga meet in different settings all over Aotearoa but they all have one thing in common – a focus on learning te reo Māori and tikanga. Ngā puna kōhungahunga respect the tikanga and reo of the tangata whenua of their area.

Some benefits of ngā puna kōhungahunga are that they can be set up quickly, are flexible, have fewer regulations than other ECE services and can respond well to the needs of their community.

What is a puna kōhungahunga?

Ngā puna kōhungahunga are a type of playgroup that focus on learning te reo Māori and tikanga. Learning may be in both English and te reo or in te reo only. Parents¹ and whānau set up their puna kōhungahunga and are involved in running the sessions. They get information and support from the Ministry of Education to do so.

The main aim of a puna kōhungahunga is for whānau to get together and encourage tamariki to learn about the tikanga and reo of tangata whenua of the area, and to provide a learning environment that responds to the interests and learning needs of individual tamariki.

- ¹ For definition of parent see the [Glossary](#) at the end of this publication.

How often do puna kōhungahunga meet?

Some puna kōhungahunga may only have one session a week while others run 5 mornings a week.

Where do they meet?

Some puna kōhungahunga meet at marae, schools, church halls or community halls which are centrally located, easy to get to and affordable. If they are meeting at marae, this will mainly be in community buildings in the papa kāinga area. Some other puna kōhungahunga share premises with playcentres or kindergartens.

What do whānau and tamariki do at a puna kōhungahunga?

Whānau with young tamariki meet together to play and learn. Ngā puna kōhungahunga also provide an informal support network for whānau and encourage mātua to learn about the education needs of tamariki and to see the importance of their role in their child's early education. Whānau and mātua come to view play as a valuable tool for children's learning, growth and development.

What is required of ngā puna kōhungahunga?

Ngā puna kōhungahunga follow the same rules as other playgroups.

A playgroup is defined by the Education and Training Act 2020 (the Act) as a group that meets on a regular basis to facilitate children's play and that:

- a) no child attends for more than four hours on any day
- b) more than half the children attending on any occasion have a parent or caregiver present in the same play area at the same time.

The Act also states that the organiser of a playgroup can be an individual or a group of people. In many cases this will be a parent or a group of parents.

Ngā puna kōhungahunga can be run either with, or without certification. However funding and support from the Ministry of Education is only available to those puna kōhungahunga that are certificated. A puna kōhungahunga that is not funded must still operate according to the Act.

How to get started

Before you start it is a good idea to contact your local Ministry of Education office to find out if there are other puna kōhungahunga already in your area as you may want to join one of them. You could also approach your Citizens Advice Bureau, Plunket, Parents Centre or your ante-natal group for information.

You will be asked by staff at your local Ministry of Education office why you want to set up a puna kōhungahunga and what you hope to achieve. You need to be sure you have enough whānau prepared to be involved in running the puna kōhungahunga.

You need to think about what days the group will meet each week and how many hours the group will operate each day, remembering that no child can attend for more than four hours in any one day.

Finding a suitable venue

You will need to find a suitable place to run your puna kōhungahunga from – certificated puna kōhungahunga cannot operate from private homes. They can operate from places that are used by other community groups.

It is important the facilities and equipment are safe and comfortable for tamariki and whānau, and reflect the culture and purpose of the puna kōhungahunga.

Things to ask yourself and your group when choosing a venue could include:

Would our tamariki be safe here?

Would I be happy bringing my tamaiti here?

Would I feel happy here as well?

Will this venue be suitable for the type of activities that happen in a playgroup?

Is there enough space to store equipment and will it be secure?

How much does this place cost and what does this entitle us to?

When is it available?

Will we have ongoing access to this venue?

How are people going to get to this venue?

Is there parking and public transport close to this venue?

More information about what is needed to meet the requirements to become a certificated playgroup is on [More about Certification](#).

Organising the equipment and resources

There needs to be a wide range of equipment and resources available for tamariki that are fun and educational. They should be put out in a way that tamariki can choose what they want to play with based on their interests. These can include natural and recyclable resources that are free, and homemade resources.

Some puna kōhungahunga find it helpful to provide activities, equipment and resources that allow for:

family play and drama

creative play

exploring language, reading and writing, and communicating

physically active play

constructive play

exploratory play

manipulative play.

More information about choosing equipment and resources is on [Are the equipment and resources suitable?](#)

Planning the education programme

All certificated puna kōhungahunga need to have an education programme that follows the curriculum² for playgroups. This provides the structure for everything that happens, and the way in which it happens, in a puna kōhungahunga.

In a puna kōhungahunga, 'Curriculum' means all the experiences, activities and events that happen to help tamariki learn and develop. Some of these will be planned and others will happen spontaneously.

Te Whāriki is Aotearoa New Zealand's early childhood curriculum document. It explains what is seen as important learning for tamariki as well as the kinds of environments that are best for this learning. Te Whāriki's vision is for tamariki to "grow up as competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging, and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society."

How this is done will be decided by the whānau in the puna kōhungahunga, in ways that best suit their values, beliefs, interests and resources.

Things to ask yourself and your group when planning your curriculum:

What are our tamariki interested in, trying hard to understand, spending a lot of time doing, finding out about at the moment?
Are we giving our tamariki opportunities, activities and resources that support them to continue to do these things?

More information about providing an education programme that meets the requirements of a certificated playgroup is on [Does our education programme follow the Ministry's curriculum?](#)

² For definition of curriculum see the **Glossary** at the end of this publication.

What does it take to run a puna kōhungahunga?

Running a puna kōhungahunga is like running other community events or groups. The puna kōhungahunga will need enough people to share the workload and make sure all the jobs are covered. Identify the strengths and interests of the people within your group.

All certificated puna kōhungahunga will need to give the Ministry of Education the name of someone who can be contacted about anything to do with the puna kōhungahunga. The Ministry will also need a person to contact about funding matters. This person will receive funding claim forms and information.

The same person can be the contact for both jobs.

Things to ask yourself and your group about running a puna kōhungahunga:

- Have we got a group of people who are interested in meeting and making decisions about what happens at the puna kōhungahunga? For some puna kōhungahunga this will be all the whānau who attend and for others this will be a small group of whānau
- Have we got people to keep records of enrolments and attendance?

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- Have we got people to take on different roles such as equipment librarian, and roster secretary?
 - How can we create and run a programme that offers tamariki interesting and stimulating learning opportunities, and have we got people to take responsibility for the learning environment?
 - Who will do cleaning, morning teas, rosters and other day to day running tasks? How will we organise the finances and funding to make sure sufficient funding and the required documentation is in place?

More information about funding and managing finances is on [Managing the Finances](#).

Getting certification

Staff at your local Ministry of Education office can help you with the certification process. If you have any questions or need help to get started don't hesitate to contact them.

The Education (Playgroups) Regulations 2008 and the Certification Criteria for Playgroups 2008 are the documents you need to find out about all the requirements and standards a puna kōhungahunga must meet to get certification and to get Ministry of Education funding. You can find a copy of these at [Licensing criteria for ECE services](#).

There are five standards your puna kōhungahunga will need to comply with:

1. **Curriculum:** there are two criteria; one requires the puna kōhungahunga to have an education programme based on the Ministry's curriculum framework, the other requires that a procedure is in place for positive guidance of the behaviour of tamariki.
2. **Premises and facilities:** there are eight criteria; these include the design and layout of premises, outdoor space, furniture and equipment, toilet/hand washing and drying facilities.
3. **Health and safety:** there are 10 criteria; these include emergency management and evacuation procedures, hazard management and maintaining good health and safety practices at the puna kōhungahunga.
4. **Management and administration:** there are 5 criteria: these include procedures and records that deal with financial management, enrolment and attendance, and involvement of mātua in decision making.
5. **Ratios:** this requires that more than half the tamariki attending any session have a mātua or caregiver present in the same play area at the same time. At the very least there must be one adult for every four tamariki present in the same play area at the same time.

Your group must fill out an application form before the Ministry of Education can do a certification assessment. Staff at your local Ministry office will arrange to visit your venue to see whether the puna kōhungahunga meets the Ministry's requirements.

Types of certificate

There are two types of certificates:

1. **Interim:** a puna kōhungahunga must meet the ratios of parents to children standard and the premises and facilities standard. It must also be able to meet all other criteria for certification within 12 months. An interim certificate only lasts 12 months.
2. **Full:** all certification criteria must be met. You will need to apply for a new certificate every 3 years.

More about certification

Does the venue meet the certification criteria?

Before you sign an agreement you need to make sure the building meets the certification criteria:

Toilets – Are these clean, tidy and easy to get to, with hand-washing facilities?

Kitchen – Is it easy for adults to get to? Does it have a fridge, microwave, and crockery?

Heating and ventilation – Is there suitable heating? Is it safe and out of reach of tamariki? Is there good air flow? There need to be doors and windows to allow air to flow through easily.

Outdoor area – If there is an outdoor area for tamariki to play, does it have safe structures and suitable fencing so tamariki can be safe? If there is no outdoor area you will need to think about how the group will provide physically active play opportunities.

Furniture – Are the chairs, couches, tables comfortable for whānau and tamariki?

Are the equipment and resources suitable?

Choose equipment and resources that are both fun and educational. If you decide to create your own resources, or buy equipment you should check:

Is it safe for tamariki to use?

Is it appealing to tamariki?

Does it reflect children’s everyday lives and also provide new opportunities and challenges?

Can it be used imaginatively and in different ways?

Is it large and strong enough not to be broken off or swallowed?

Is it durable, washable and hygienic?

These can include natural and recyclable resources that are free, and homemade resources which can be both effective and cheap. Some businesses e.g. signwriters, carpenters or material shops have offcuts that could be useful.

Storing your equipment can be an issue if you share your premises with other groups. You will need to think about whether there is enough space to store the equipment, and if it is secure.

For advice about equipment contact staff at your local [Ministry of Education office](#).

Does our education programme follow the Ministry’s curriculum?

The curriculum for playgroups and ngā puna kōhungahunga is based on 4 principles and 5 strands from Te Whāriki and can be found in the booklet 'Certification Criteria for Playgroups 2008'.

The four principles from Te Whāriki are:

Whakamana – empower tamariki to learn and grow by encouraging and allowing them to make choices and take responsibility for their own learning.

Kotahitanga – reflect the holistic way that tamariki learn and grow by recognising that all learning is interwoven and happens through relevant and meaningful experiences.

Whānau Tangata – include and involve the whānau and local community by respecting differing viewpoints and encouraging whānau and community participation.

Ngā Hononga – recognise that tamariki learn through interacting with the people, places and things in their

environments by providing a wide and interesting range of people, places and things for tamariki to be with.

The five strands from Te Whāriki are:

Mana Atua – tamariki are **physically and emotionally safe**.

Mana Whenua – tamariki and their whānau feel a **sense of belonging**.

Mana Tangata – everyone is **treated fairly and contributions are valued**.

Mana Reo – **language and a range of other communication tools** (such as books, art, drama, dance, mathematics, movement, music) from children’s own cultures, from Aotearoa’s Māori heritage, and from other cultures is promoted and valued.

Mana Aoturoa – tamariki can **actively explore and make sense of their world**.

Read [Te Whāriki](#).

So what does this mean in practice for ngā puna kōhungahunga?

The day to day activities, experiences, events, routines, rituals, resources, opportunities and interactions that happen in ngā puna kōhungahunga should reflect and promote the four principles and five strands of Te Whāriki.

The principles and strands of Te Whāriki should be seen in the way the various types of play are provided for tamariki, and the ways adults relate and respond to tamariki as they play.

Further things to ask yourself and your group when planning your curriculum:

Mana Atua (Wellbeing)

Are we giving our tamariki opportunities, activities and resources that will help them to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes to keep themselves safe and healthy?

Are we interacting with tamariki and each other in ways that promote a sense of self worth?

Mana Whenua (Belonging)

Are we giving our tamariki opportunities, activities and resources that are familiar to them and help them feel welcome and comfortable in this place?

Are we interacting in ways that show each other that in this place we are safe and cared for and we are all respected and accepted for who we are?

Mana Tangata (Contribution)

Are we giving our tamariki opportunities, activities and resources that encourage them to actively participate with and alongside others?

Are we acting and interacting in ways that support tamariki to learn about valuing themselves and others and working together?

Mana Reo (Communication)

Are we giving our tamariki opportunities, activities and resources that help them to develop increasing ability and confidence to communicate?

Are we giving our tamariki opportunities, activities and resources that help them learn te reo and tikanga?

Are we interacting in ways that encourage tamariki and adults to think, solve problems, express ideas, opinions and feelings?

Mana Aotūroa (Exploration)

Are we giving our tamariki opportunities, activities and resources that are appealing, interesting, challenging and meaningful for them?

Are we encouraging them to try things out, experiment, play around with materials and ideas and revisit and build on past experiences and ideas?

Are we interacting in ways that encourage tamariki to actively explore their environments and are we showing that we value their play and spontaneous exploration?

Ask the staff at your local [Ministry of Education office](#) for more information and ideas about developing the education programme for your puna kōhungahunga.

Parents and whānau involved in running the puna kōhungahunga can get information, support and training from the Ministry of Education. Contact your local [Ministry of Education office](#).

Managing the finances

It does not need to be expensive to start a puna kōhungahunga. It is best to work out a budget right from the start so the group knows just how much money it will need. Costs may include:

- rent and bond for premises
- play equipment
- matting or carpets
- food and drink for children and adults (or will they bring their own?)
- electricity
- first aid kit
- administration costs such as photocopying.

A puna kōhungahunga must have a certificate to get Ministry of Education funding and you will need to open a bank account in the name of your puna kōhungahunga. If you choose not to get a certificate you will need to work out how you will cover your costs. In some groups parents give money regularly, but in others funds are raised through donations, fundraising and community grants.

Being eligible for funding

To be eligible to receive funding a puna kōhungahunga must:

be certificated (hold a valid interim or full certificate) and

meet the conditions for payment of funding set out in the Ministry of Education’s Playgroup Funding Handbook.

There are two types of funding available from the Ministry – playgroup funding and special grants.

Playgroup funding helps with the day to day operating costs of running a puna kōhungahunga. It is based on the average number of tamariki attending and the hours of attendance per session over a six-month period. Funding can be claimed for a maximum of 25 tamariki between birth and six years old for each puna kōhungahunga session. Funding cannot be claimed for tamariki attending the puna kōhungahunga with a caregiver when they are enrolled with a home-based service. There are no restrictions on the number of times or hours the puna kōhungahunga meets as long as no tamaiti attends for more than 4 hours a day.

The **special grant** is to assist a puna kōhungahunga to cover large 'one off' costs that cannot be met from other funding. This grant is not given automatically and there is no guarantee applicants will get the money they apply for.

Financial reporting

Every year in July, all playgroups including ngā puna kōhungahunga, have to give a Playgroup Funding Report to the Ministry of Education which shows how the puna kōhungahunga has spent the money it has got from the Ministry in the past year

Annual statistics form

The Ministry of Education collects information from all playgroups including ngā puna kōhungahunga (not just those receiving funding). An annual statistics form is sent out to puna kōhungahunga in June each year and asks for you to fill in:

the number of hours the puna kōhungahunga is open for
the age, gender and ethnicity of children enrolled at the puna kōhungahunga.

For more information about the funding of puna kōhungahunga and how to apply refer to the Playgroup Funding Handbook on the Ministry’s website, or get a copy from your local [Ministry of Education office](#).

Closing a puna kōhungahunga

If the puna kōhungahunga closes then all remaining funds that you have got from the Ministry of Education must be returned. You may also need to return any equipment/resources bought with Ministry funding or grant money. It is important that you have kept clear financial records and lists of equipment. What to do with any money or equipment obtained outside of Ministry of Education funding should be decided by the people left in the group with help from staff at your local Ministry of Education office.

Types of ECE services

Ngā puna kōhungahunga and other playgroups are the only ECE services that are certificated rather than licensed. This means they may be less formal than other kinds of ECE services and have fewer Ministry requirements to meet. There are two main types of ECE service – teacher-led and parent-led. All teacher-led and parent-led services other than playgroups are licensed.

The table overleaf shows the range of ECE services available.

Teacher-led services

Education and care services

run all-day sessions or flexible hour programmes for children from birth to school age
some services are for certain ages like children under two
may be privately owned, or owned and operated by a community group
some have a particular language and cultural base.

Kindergartens

accept children between two and five years old and can have set morning and afternoon sessions for different age groups
some offer all-day or flexible sessions for a wider age range of children
non-profit, community-based services managed by a Kindergarten Association.

Home-based education and care services

involve an educator³ providing education and care for groups of up to 4 under school age children at a time in a home setting
each educator must belong to a licensed home-based care network and is supported by a coordinator⁴ who is a registered ECE teacher.

³ For definition of educator see the **Glossary** at the end of this publication.

⁴ For definition of a coordinator see the **Glossary** at the end of this publication.

Parent-led services

Playgroups

are run by parents and cater for groups of children from birth to school age and their parents
typically meet for 1 to 5 sessions each week to provide play, social and learning opportunities for children
can be certificated and may be less formal than other kinds of ECE services.

Pasifika playgroups

As well as the above playgroup requirements, Pasifika playgroups focus on developing and maintaining Pasifika languages and cultures.

Ngā Puna kōhungahunga

As well as the above playgroup requirements, Māori language and tikanga is reflected in the structure and content of the playgroup sessions.

Playcentres

are collectively supervised and managed by parents for children from birth to school age
have a strong focus on parent education as well as children’s learning
are supported by Playcentre Associations around the country.

Ngā Kōhanga Reo

cater for children from birth to school age in a Māori language and tikanga Māori environment
parents and whānau manage and operate the kōhanga reo with the support and guidance of the Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust
some kōhanga reo are also teacher-led services with trained kaiako.

Ministry of Education regional offices

The Ministry of Education has a number of regional offices that provide services to communities. The staff in these offices support all playgroups and puna kōhungahunga in their local area.

Contact your [regional Ministry of Education office](#) if you have an enquiry about ngā puna kōhungahunga.

Glossary

Whānau means the person (or people) responsible for having a role in the care and education of the child and may include grandparents, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews, and other relatives.

Parent means the person (or people) responsible for having the role of providing day to day care for the child and may include a biological or adoptive parent, step parent, partner of a parent, legal guardian or member of the child’s whānau.

Educator means the person with the designated role of providing education and care directly to children in his or her care, and attends to the health and safety of those children.

Coordinator means the person who has primary responsibility for overseeing the education and care, comfort, and health and safety of the children, and providing professional leadership and support to educators within the service.

Curriculum in early childhood means the “sum total of experiences, activities and events, whether direct or indirect, which occur within an environment designed to foster children’s learning and development.”

Māori language glossary

Kaiako

Teacher.

Kōhanga reo

Māori language early childhood centres which come under the umbrella of Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust.

Matua

Parent or father.

Mātua

Parents.

Papa kāinga

Residential area located around or in close proximity to the marae.

Tangata whenua

Indigenous people of the land.

Tamaiti/Tamariki

Child/children.

Te reo Māori

The Māori language.

Tikanga

Customary practices.

Whānau

Family.