




Starting School Together: What Do We Know?





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Introduction

Starting school is a major childhood event. It can be an exciting time for children and their families. But it is a big change, and so it can also be an uncertain time. A good start at school sets children up to succeed at school. We looked to see how changing to cohort entry impacts on children, their peers, and whānau, as well as their schools and early childhood education services.

Transitioning between early childhood education, or being at home with whānau, and starting school impacts on children's ongoing learning outcomes.¹

The evidence tells us that ensuring children have a sense of belonging is an important part of a good transition. Having a sense of safety and security, and feeling accepted into a new group or community, are important for social and emotional wellbeing. Feeling like they belong means that new entrants are less likely to feel anxious and more likely to engage with learning.

Creating a sense of belonging through relationships with peers, teachers, and the school is also important. Starting school with friends, or being able to make them when transitioning and joining a new class, contributes to feelings of belonging and a positive experience. This connection extends to learners' relationships with adults at school. When a child feels they have at least one adult who cares about them, they do better at school. Feeling lonely and alone, on the other hand, can affect their ability to engage in, and with, learning.

Starting school in New Zealand is different

New Zealand has a long-standing tradition of children starting primary school on their fifth birthday or the nearest school day to it. Unlike every other OECD country, New Zealand schools allow children to start school on any school day across a year once they have turned five. This is called continuous entry. Most other countries have periodic entry points or fixed entry dates for children starting school, occurring once or twice a year or every term². This is known as cohort entry.

Cohort entry in New Zealand

Government changed the law in 2017, allowing schools to run cohort entry. When first introduced, new entrants could start school four times a year—once per term. Children could also start at the beginning of the term closest to their fifth birthday, meaning they could be four when they started school.

The Act was further amended in 2020. The current policy³ requires:

- new entrants to have turned five before they can start school
- eight entry dates per year (two per term).

For a school to adopt cohort entry, the Education and Training Act 2020 requires formal consultation. This process includes talking to staff, parents, and early learning services. If stakeholders consider cohort entry is appropriate for their school community, a school's board can then formally adopt it. Schools must inform the Ministry of Education that consultation has taken place, that the school community approves the adoption of cohort entry, and when the change will take effect.ⁱ

At the start of 2022, 130 schools, or 7 percent of schools, providing primary education had implemented cohort entry. Ten percent of primary students attend these schools.

Why cohort entry?

Even before cohort entry was included in the Act, whānau and schools were varying when children start their formal school education.

Children were already starting school later

Ministry of Education data show that whānau are now less likely to start their child on their birthday, instead choosing to delay their start by a few months. In 2008, 82 percent of children started school in the month of their fifth birthday.⁴ By 2019, this had decreased to 70 percent.ⁱⁱ

According to participants in our evaluation, this change in start dates is driven by a range of factors. Some of these factors result from financial and practical aspects of family life, such as childcare costs, working arrangements, and family dynamics. A child's school readiness, neurodiversity, and social, emotional, and intellectual development are also likely to play a part. Parents also wait to start their child so they can start with friends in their community or ECE.

“...there's certainly a shift, a noticeable one of parents going, actually, yes, we can start on these days, but we're choosing to start on that particular date a little bit later so that kids are a wee bit more ready for school.”

PRINCIPAL

ⁱ For more information on cohort entry, refer to the Ministry of Education's webpage: [Cohort entry information for schools – Education in New Zealand](#)

ⁱⁱ Cohort entry was operating in some schools in 2019, which will have an impact on this number – see Webber, A. (2020). *How many students repeat a year?* Unpublished presentation. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

Schools had also been making informal adjustments to how children start school

Prior to changes to the Education Act, a small number of schools around the country implemented an informal version of cohort entry, choosing select dates across the year on which new entrants were encouraged to start. They did this to help these children get used to school, lessen the disruption to new entrant classes, and improve school planning.⁵

Starting school in groups can help children transition into school

Evidence tells us that a successful transition from early childhood education and care to school can set up a foundation for positive transitions and learning progress later on. Successful transitions depend on positive relationships between children, their peers, teachers, and families.⁶ Establishing peer/friendship groups and a sense of belonging are important supports for children as they adjust to a new environment and engage with learning.⁷

Adopters of cohort entry note the approach makes it easier for children to start school alongside other children, and possibly with children who were friends with them prior to school, helping to ensure positive relationships are fostered from the outset.⁸ These relationships can span the whole school community. As the Ministry of Education remarked:

“...group entry offers an opportunity for communities to come together to celebrate, demonstrate the value of education, and build partnerships connecting children, families, teachers and community. A cohort system also lets teachers plan a programme focused on the new group, which having children starting school on any day in the year does not.”⁹





About this report

To help inform schools in deciding whether to adopt cohort entry, and to share the lessons learned on how to do this, ERO evaluated the adoption of cohort entry in schools. ERO looked at what factors influence schools' decision to move to and keep cohort entry, and its impact on children, their peers, whānau, school staff, and the early childhood sector. We also looked at what transitions between early learning settings and schools are like when schools have cohort entry in place.

What we looked at

This evaluation looked at the experiences of cohort entry for various groups. ERO answered six key questions about them.

1. What are the impacts on children who have entered under a cohort entry?
2. What has been the impact for whānau of these children?
3. What has been the impact on the peers of children who started under cohort entry?
4. What has been the impact of cohort entry on schools (leaders, teachers, and community)?
5. What has been the impact of cohort entry on ECE services?
6. What has been the impact of cohort entry on transitions between ECE and school?

For context, we also looked at which schools have implemented cohort entry and why they did so.

The purpose of this report is to shed light on the experiences of schools that have moved to cohort entry so that schools considering making the change can learn from these experiences. We did not look at the relative merit of cohort entry compared to continuous entry.

How we evaluated cohort entry

To get a whole of community view of cohort entry, ERO spoke with 12 schools and six Early Childhood Education (ECE) service providers around the country. Schools varied in size from very small (under 50 students) to large (more than 500 students), were in main urban and rural areas, and ranged in decile from 2 to 10. Four schools were state integrated schools. The ECE service providers ERO interviewed were located up and down the country, provided services in urban and rural locations, and were across various SES groups.ⁱⁱⁱ Data collected for this evaluation include:

- survey responses from 94 principals, 21 teachers, and 66 whānau
- interviews with 22 school leaders and teachers, two whānau, and 12 ECE providers/staff.

ERO surveyed and interviewed in schools with high Māori and Pacific rolls, but we had few respondents who identified as Māori or Pacific. Interviews were conducted in November and December 2021. ERO also drew on administrative data collected by the Ministry of Education.

ⁱⁱⁱ ERO is using SES as the Ministry of Education uses this metric when referring to the ECE sector.

A fuller description of the schools and ECE providers we selected, and the data collection and analysis processes, is in [Appendix 1](#).

Report structure

This report is divided into three parts.

- Part 1 looks at which schools adopted a cohort entry and why.
- Part 2 describes the reported impacts of cohort entry on children, their peers, whānau, schools, and ECEs.
- Part 3 outlines what we have learned.

We have also produced four guides based on what we discovered during this evaluation:

- A guide for school leaders considering cohort entry
- A guide for school boards considering cohort entry
- A guide for ECE services on children starting school in groups
- A guide for parents sending a child to a cohort entry school

Reading this report

This evaluation did not look at whether cohort entry provides better outcomes for schools and learners when compared with continuous entry. Instead, we focused on the range of experiences of schools, whānau, and ECE services, in their contexts, to provide insights for schools considering a move from continuous to cohort entry.

Technical note

Percentages reported may add up to less or more than 100 percent due to rounding.

Where we have looked for themes in survey comments and interviews, a theme had to be mentioned at least ten times in the surveys or be a dominant topic of discussion during an interview for us to comment on it.

The new entrant teacher sample for this report is not of sufficient size to be a reliable indicator of the opinions of all new entrant teachers. These statistics should be read accordingly.

ERO is grateful for the time of all those who took part in surveys and interviews. We would like to thank the principals, new entrant teachers, parents, and ECE service providers who shared their experiences and opinions to help us gain some understanding of the impacts of cohort entry for their communities. We would also like to thank the Ministry of Education for conducting additional analyses on the changes to school starting ages.





Part 1: Which schools adopt cohort entry and why?

Seven percent of primary schools around the country have implemented cohort entry. These schools are more likely to be higher decile, in larger cities, and have larger rolls. Schools with cohort entry report a variety of reasons for adopting it. In this section, we look at the characteristics of schools more likely to be running cohort entry and why they adopted it.

ERO analysed datasets about New Zealand primary schools to identify patterns in characteristics of schools that have implemented cohort entry. Although any school can implement cohort entry, and data show a wide variety of school types with cohort entry, there is a clear relationship between cohort entry and a school's decile, size, and location.

Cohort entry schools are more likely to be higher decile, medium to large, and in larger urban centres

Today, one in 10 children attend a cohort entry school. Nearly three quarters (70 percent) of these schools are in urban areas, with a third (34 percent) in the Auckland area alone. Over half of these children (58 percent) will start at a school with a roll of 300 or more students. Cohort entry schools are also two and a half times more likely to be higher rather than lower decile schools.

The distribution of cohort entry in schools is:

- seven percent of primary schools have implemented cohort entry and 10 percent of primary aged children attend these schools
- 70 percent of cohort entry schools are in urban areas, with 34 percent in the Auckland region. Only 19 percent of cohort schools are in rural areas. In comparison, 49 percent of continuous entry schools are in urban areas and 34 percent are in rural areas
- as more Māori and Pacific learners attend primary schools in urban areas like Auckland, they are more likely to be at schools running a cohort entry policy
- two percent of small schools (rolls under 100 students), 6 percent of medium schools (101 to 300 students), 12 percent of large schools (301 to 500 students), and 14 percent of very large schools (500 or more students) have cohort entry
- 70 percent of cohort entry schools are in deciles 6 to 10, and 22 percent are decile 10 schools.

Schools adopt cohort entry to benefit new entrants

In our survey, we asked schools for the top three reasons why they adopted cohort entry.

Principals and teachers reported that their main reasons for adopting it were about benefits for new entrants and their families (see figure 1).

Over three quarters of schools (77 percent) reported new entrant social and emotional benefits as a reason to adopt cohort entry

Evidence tells us that social and emotional benefits (or social and emotional wellbeing) are an important aspect of a child's school journey and are significant contributors to their mental health, as well as academic and social success.¹⁰

Just over three-quarters of schools (76 percent) chose cohort entry to increase the potential of a good transition from ECE to primary school

Cohort entry reduces the number of potential entry points into school to eight across the school year. This increases the likelihood a child will start with others, including children they know or are friends with. Research into transitions shows that starting school with others, particularly friends, is more likely to be a positive experience for children and their whānau.¹¹ Starting school requires children to navigate new social environments, and friendships can be an important supporting factor.¹²

Almost half of schools (47 percent) that chose cohort entry reported that opportunities to welcome whānau in groups was an important benefit of cohort entry

Research into the role of parents, carers, and family in learning shows they contribute to a child's academic and social success, and are important partners with schools in a child's learning journey.¹³

They can validate learning, encourage and support progress, and contribute to positive attitudes to school and schoolwork.¹⁴ For schools, establishing and maintaining relationships with whānau is a way to support them in their roles as educators of their children.

Supporting networks among whānau also contribute to a child's learning success.¹⁵ Forty-seven percent of schools that responded to ERO's survey reported the opportunity to welcome groups of parents to a school as a reason they moved to cohort entry.

Schools were less likely to report they chose cohort entry for administrative benefits, but many talked about that in the interviews

Just over a quarter of schools (28 percent) put administrative benefits as one of their top three drivers for adopting cohort entry.

Figure 1: *Reasons schools reported for adopting cohort entry*

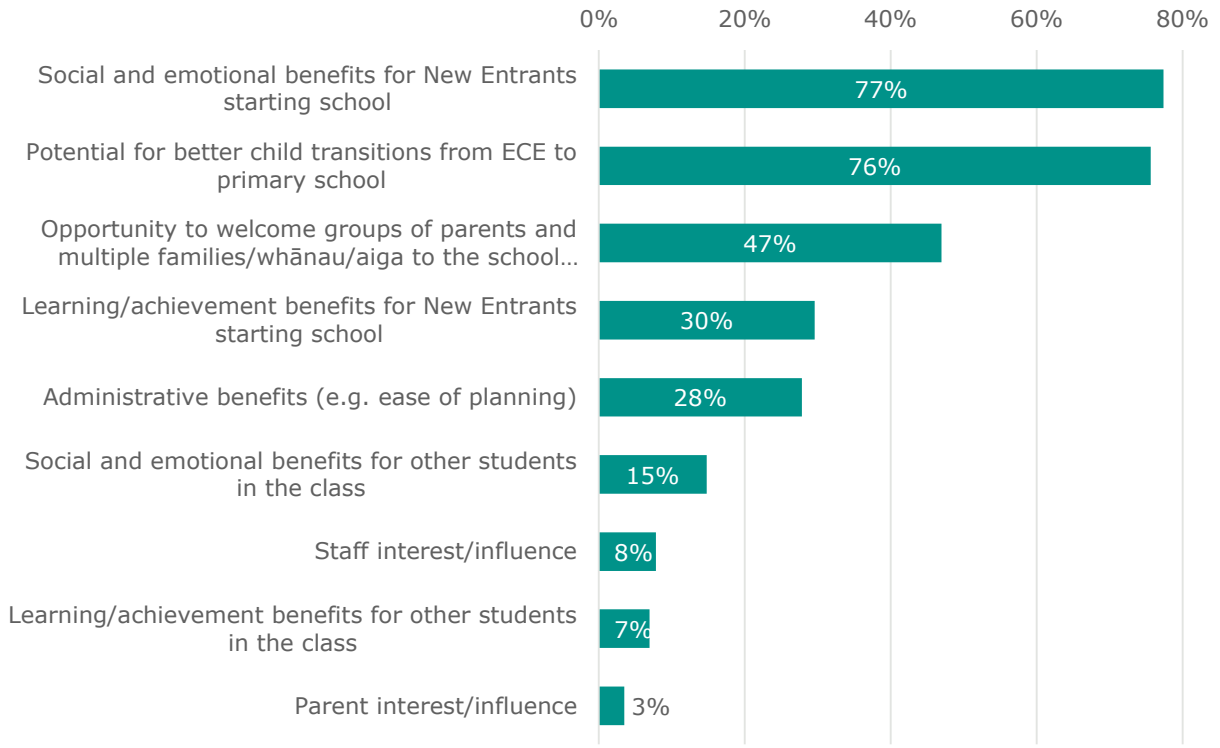
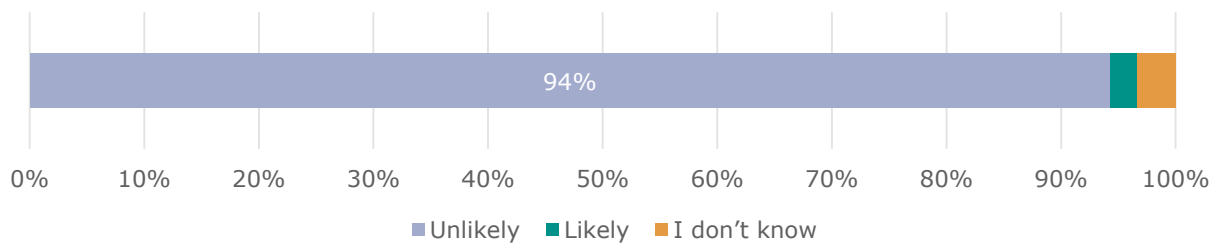


Figure 2: *Likelihood reported by schools of returning to continuous entry*



Cohort schools were unlikely to return to continuous entry

ERO asked schools if they intended to return to continuous entry in the next five years. The vast majority of principals (94 percent) were unlikely to return to continuous entry (see figure 2).

For the 2 percent of schools intending to return to continuous entry, the change in the Act from one entry date per term to two was a factor. They now felt cohort entry had very few benefits for schools of their size and new entrant numbers.

“Because we have small numbers of new entrants joining us and carers and [our] current new entrant teacher prefer[s] them to start on their birthday.”

PRINCIPAL

Conclusion

Seven percent of schools in New Zealand have cohort entry in place. These schools tend to be in urban centres, have larger rolls, and fall in higher deciles. Reasons schools gave for moving to cohort entry were principally to support children in their learning journey. Supporting social and emotional wellbeing was the most important reason given, followed closely by improving transitions between ECEs and school. Only 2 percent of schools thought they might return to continuous entry.



Part 2: Reported impacts of cohort entry

ERO found that cohort entry had a wide range of benefits for children, whānau, and schools. Schools found it contributed to learning, learner wellbeing, quality teaching, and supported their administration processes. Cohort entry also helped with positive ECE-to-school transitions for new entrants. This section looks at the impacts on children, their peers, whānau, schools, and ECE services.

ERO surveyed and interviewed schools, whānau, and ECEs, asking them to reflect on their observations and experiences of cohort entry for new entrants, and its impacts on outcomes for children, whānau, schools,^{iv} and early learning centres. This section sets out:

1. impacts on new entrant children and their peers
2. impacts on whānau
3. impacts on schools
4. impacts on early childhood education providers.

Impacts on new entrants

Cohort entry increases the likelihood a new entrant will start with a group of children, including ones they know. We found that they can establish or maintain friendships, which supports their social and emotional wellbeing. We also saw that cohort entry can reduce disruption, provide opportunities for cohesive blocks of learning for new learners, and reduce disruptions for their peers.

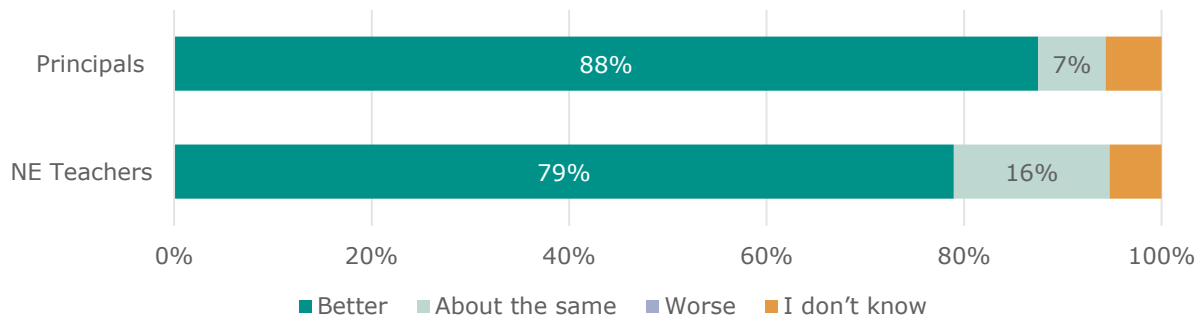
Cohort entry positively impacts new entrant social and emotional wellbeing

Principals and new entrant teachers rated learners' social and emotional wellbeing as better under cohort entry than their experiences with continuous entry (88 percent and 79 percent respectively) (see figure 3). None reported learners' social and emotional wellbeing as worse.

Sense of belonging is a common marker of social and emotional wellbeing in the research. Among principals and teachers who commented, this was mentioned as an important outcome of group starts for new entrants. They said cohort entry helped create a sense of belonging for new entrants as they started with a group of children who were also new to school.

^{iv} As most principals and teachers surveyed had experienced both a continuous and cohort entry approach, they were asked to compare the two approaches. Survey questions for carers asked them to compare their child's cohort entry experience with what they thought might happen if their child had started school on any school day during the school year.

Figure 3: Cohort entry's impact on child social and emotional wellbeing when compared to continuous entry



“Social connection for carers and children is stronger... works really well for sense of belonging within an innovative learning environment - A NE [new entrant] has a group they belong to within that environment as opposed to coming in on their own on their birthday.”

PRINCIPAL

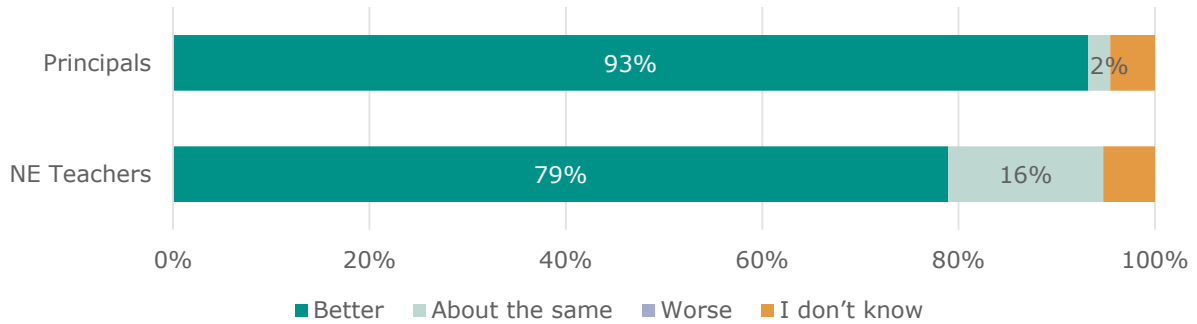
“One of the pre-schools had sent along one of their teachers... to the visit to support the child and they... said, Oh, this is great because the child didn't need support because they were in a wee group. It wasn't threatening and they weren't feeling anxious about it...”

TEACHER

New entrants could establish friendships during transition visits or the first days of school, or start school with friends from their ECE service or community. It also helped lessen anxiety.

Nine out of ten principals (93 percent) and eight of ten new entrant teachers (79 percent) also reported that cohort entry was better for settling new entrants into class (see figure 4).

Figure 4: Cohort entry’s impact on how well children settle into class when compared to continuous entry



School staff noted cohort entry gave new entrants time to settle into the rhythms of the classroom as a group. Elements of classroom culture such as routines and behaviours for young learners can be taught and reinforced as each new cohort starts.

“Systems and routines that new entrants thrive on in class can be built on and established clearly with each new cohort before the next arrives”

TEACHER

Teachers told us that this benefited a variety of new entrants, including those who might need additional support transitioning into the classroom learning environment.

“Allowed time for learners to settle into routines as many NE learners are being enrolled with special learning needs.”

TEACHER

New entrants can maintain or establish friendships

Whānau liked how cohort entry enabled their child to either maintain or establish new friendships. Two-thirds of whānau (68 percent) thought their child’s friendships with other children were much or somewhat better with cohort entry (see figure 5).

We heard that friendships helped children feel settled and develop a sense of belonging. Whānau comments echoed those of principals and new entrant teachers. A child was not “the odd one out and new” and gained “a sense of confidence” as they got used to their new environment alongside other new students and friends.

Figure 5: Cohort entry's impact on the quality of child friendships when compared to starting school on any school day of the year

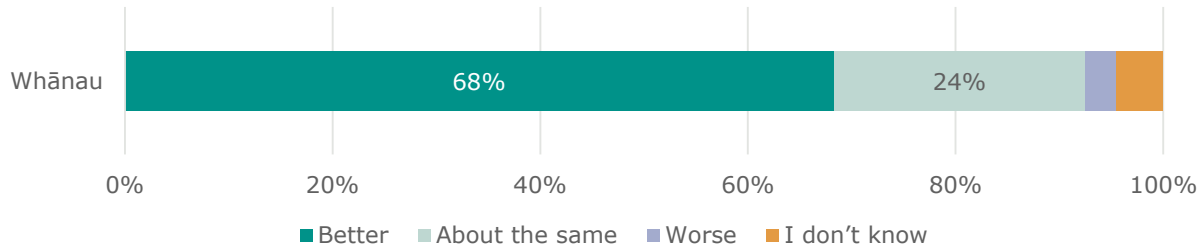
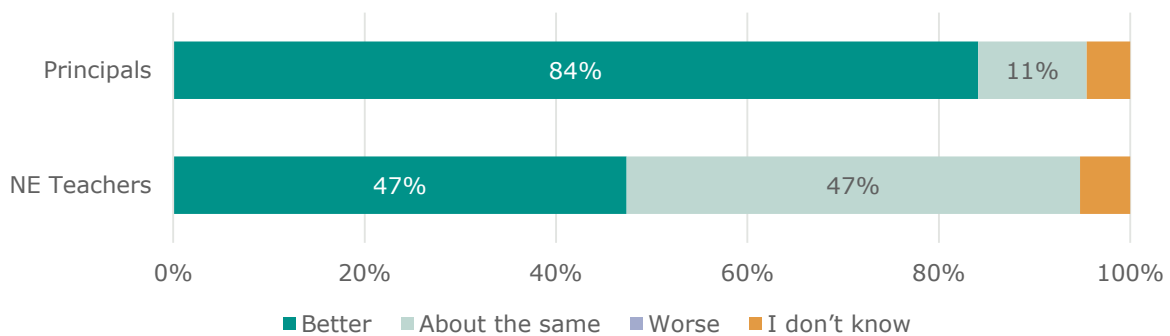


Figure 6: Cohort entry's impact on new entrants' engagement with learning when compared with continuous entry



“I think in cohort entry there are a bunch of new pupils starting together where they can understand each other well and stay together and start to have a sense of belonging together.”

WHĀNAU

New entrants experience few disruptions to learning

Schools should continually look to improve the learning outcomes of their learners,¹⁶ whether through innovation in teaching practices, changing classroom dynamics, or building student engagement.¹⁷

When asked to estimate how cohort entry impacted new entrant engagement with learning, eight out of ten of principals (84 percent) and just under half of new entrant teachers (47 percent) considered this to be better (see figure 6).

Principals, teachers, and whānau thought cohort entry reduced the number of disruptions to learning across the year when compared to the "drip" of children under continuous entry. They said it helped teachers structure blocks of learning and progress children through those uninterrupted and as a group. Transitioning new entrants could then be a settled sequence across the year, as this teacher explained:

“For us it meant that the NE teacher could structure a programme of induction and learning that wasn’t constantly interrupted by new children starting each week. Cohort one is settled and starting to become secure with routines etc by the time cohort two starts. This helps ensure that the new cohort arrives into a settled class and have ‘buddies’ who help them transition. The routines and structures of the classroom can be taught to the whole group, rather than individually. This process then continues for the remaining six cohorts coming in during the year.”

TEACHER

New entrant transitions are more consistent

For some principals and teachers, cohort entry provided opportunities for them to deliver consistent messaging to whānau and children, making their school start experiences less ad hoc.

They told us that being able to work collaboratively with ECEs and prepare for student intakes meant schools felt they were in a better position to support learning continuity for their new entrants.

“Cohort entry allows the transition process for new entrants to be deliberate and intentional. We are better able to plan the visits and form networks for other new carers and students to the school. It also supports our teaching team to plan adequately for various intakes and better meet the needs of students.”

PRINCIPAL

New entrant teachers in both the interviews and surveys commented that these uninterrupted blocks of time could be used to grow school readiness^v and curriculum learning.

^v Teachers and ECE staff talked about school readiness as: having the oral and listening skills to follow instructions, being familiar with learning activities such as sitting on the mat and being able to hold a pencil, and having sufficient self-regulation to be able to carry their own bag, eat lunch or go to the toilet unassisted.

Peers experience benefits of cohort entry

Schools reported that cohort entry positively impacted the engagement and learning for new entrants' peers (other children already in class).

- Three-quarters (74 percent) of principals and nearly two-thirds (63 percent) of new entrant teachers responded that cohort entry was better for peer engagement than starting school on any day during the year.
- Three-quarters (77 percent) of principals and more than half (58 percent) of new entrant teachers also felt that peer learning was better under a cohort entry start.
- Three-quarters of principals (78 percent) and new entrant teachers (74 percent) indicated that the wellbeing of other children in class was better (see figure 7).

Teachers reported peers benefited from fewer interruptions during the year.

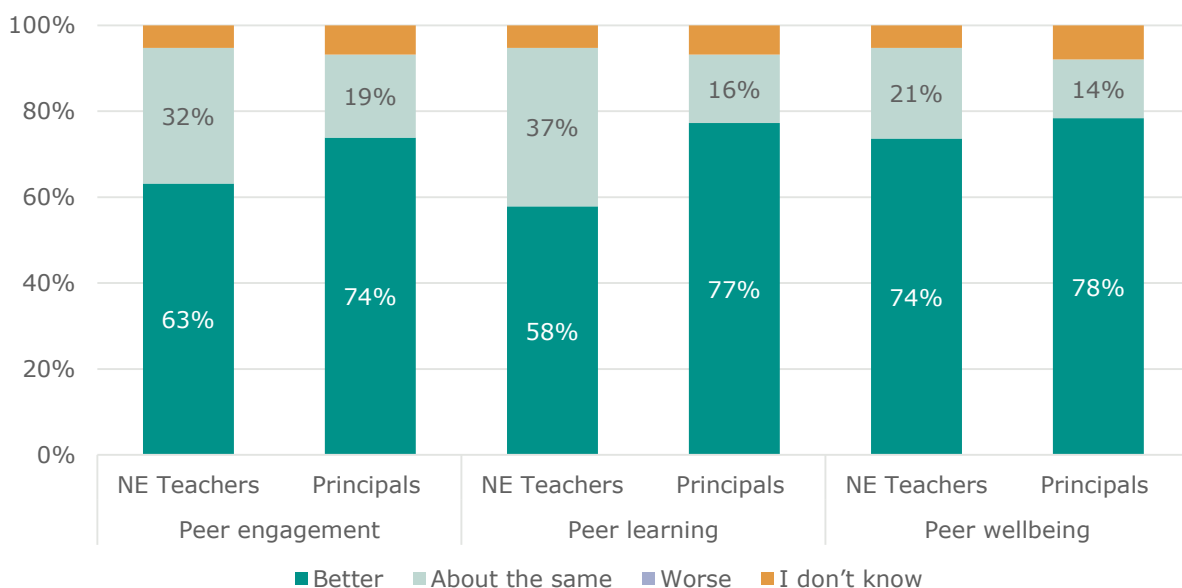
The excitement or curiosity of a new arrival was confined to set periods during the year, and students who could become unsettled with the arrival of a single child were more likely to remain settled when a group arrived.

It also created an opportunity for peers to review past learning and “reset” on the first day of each term.

“Each new cohort entry has meant that we have gone over classroom routines/ expectations at each entry point – every[one] gets reminded and the new children know what to do (this can be overlooked with continuous entry, but we have made a point of doing this with cohort entry).”

TEACHER

Figure 7: Cohort entry's impact on peer engagement, peer learning, and peer social and emotional wellbeing when compared with continuous entry



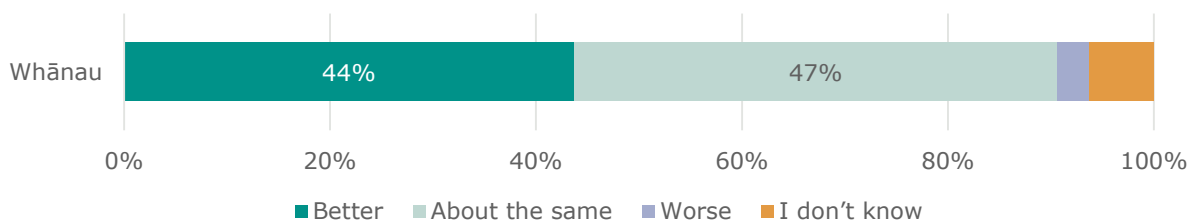
Impacts on whānau

Along with impacts on child wellbeing and learning, ERO wanted to understand cohort entry’s impacts on whānau. Data from our survey, and feedback from schools and ECEs, highlighted positive outcomes for whānau wellbeing and how well they could connect with other whānau and the school. Cohort entry also played some part in whānau school choice.

Cohort entry can have positive impacts on whānau wellbeing

Just under half (44 percent) of whānau reported their wellbeing was likely to be better because of cohort entry when compared to starting school on any day of the school term (see figure 8).

Figure 8: Cohort entry’s impact on whānau wellbeing when compared to starting school on any school day of the year



Although whānau did not directly reflect on their own wellbeing, they were less concerned about their child’s school start with cohort entry when compared with continuous entry. A cohort start meant their transition experience was shared with other whānau and children, extending the positives of groups starts for social and emotional wellbeing to whānau.

Schools confirmed the emotional impact of a positive start was sometimes as much about a carer’s wellbeing as their child’s, commenting their whānau were less anxious because their children were less anxious.

“An easier transition alongside others in the same position. School visits with the children our boy was going to be starting with, knowing he wasn’t the only one starting that day helped us and [our child] greatly.”

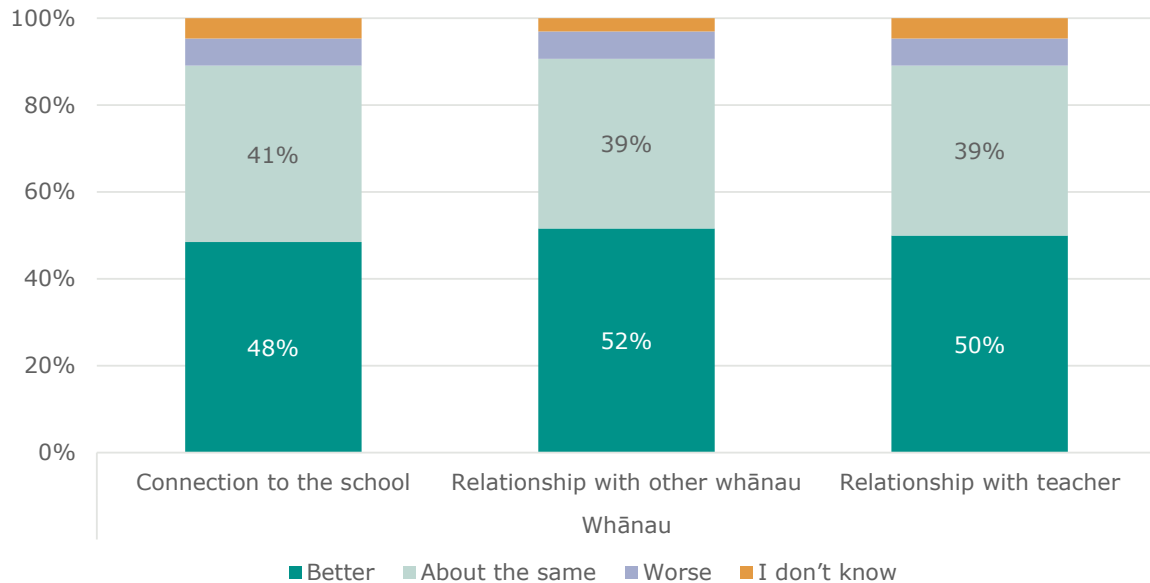
WHĀNAU

“[Parents are] “...choosing to start on that particular date a little bit later so that kids are a wee bit more ready for school. Whether that’s the anxiety of the parents, you know, and there’s probably a whole lot of contributing factors to that, but it’s definitely a... theme...”

PRINCIPAL



Figure 9: Cohort entry's impact on whānau relationships with the school, new entrant teachers, and other whānau when compared to starting school on any school day of the year



Cohort entry can build connections between whānau, the school, and the community

Schools told us that cohort entry can make it easier for schools to connect whānau with one another and develop supportive relationships.

Many of the schools ERO interviewed took advantage of the start dates for cohort entry to schedule activities and visits that bring whānau together.

Around half of whānau said that cohort entry helped build strong connections to schools (48 percent), relationships with teachers (50 percent), and relationships with other parents (52 percent) (see figure 9).

“We have to be very deliberate about planning school events to bring the whānau together. So, you know, there’s the standard things, learning conferences and whatnot... So by having these visits for the students, transition visits for the students and the parents, it helps create that sense of community and connection very early on.”

PRINCIPAL

“I really enjoyed the cohort entry and having a small group of other carers that were experiencing the exact same thing as me at the exact same time as me. It allowed for quality peer support.”

PARENT

Schools also told us that cohort entry is beneficial in building connections between whānau in larger school communities where schools draw new entrants from a larger number of early learning services.

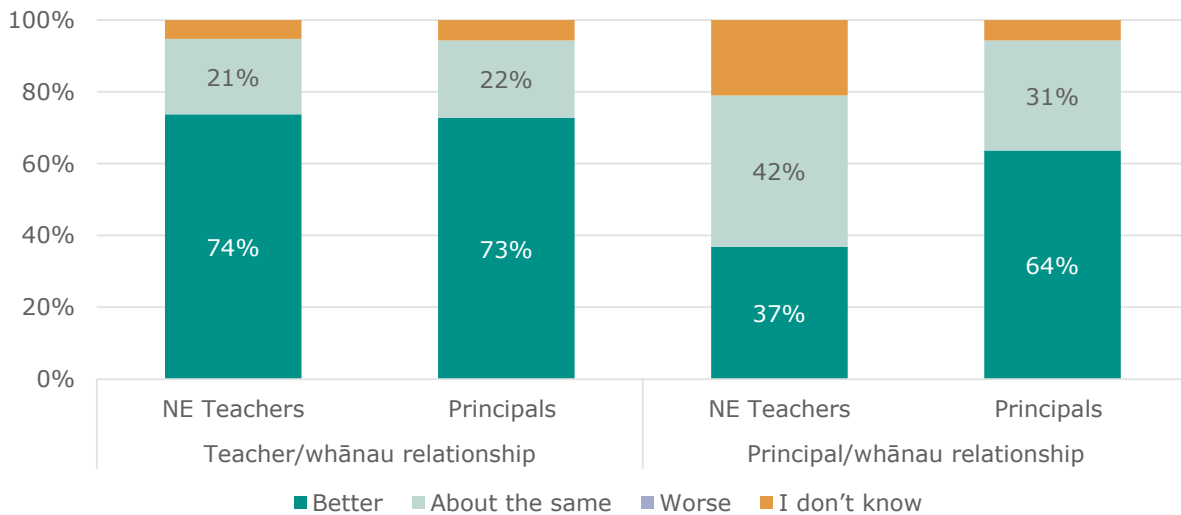
Schools also thought that cohort entry helped to foster school community (see figure 10). Three-quarters of principals (73 percent) and teachers (74 percent) thought their relationships were better than they would be if a child started on any day of term.

Two-thirds of principals (64 percent) thought principal-carer/family relationships were much or somewhat better. Over a third of new entrant teachers (37 percent) saw an improvement or felt relationships were about the same (42 percent).

Principals said cohort entry enabled them to set dates for school visits and other information sessions. These provided opportunities for leaders to “introduce [whānau] to school and the ways of school”, communicate the same information consistently to more families, and build connections, not only between whānau but between whānau and the school itself.

With predetermined dates to schedule around, schools could “group parents together for information sessions” and “put more time and effort into group whānau induction”. They welcomed new entrants and their families more formally with mihi whakatau, pōwhiri, or other ceremonies, making starting school a “special time”.

Figure 10: Cohort entry’s impact on relationships between whānau and teachers, and whānau and principals, when compared to continuous entry



“A transition process for all tamariki and their whānau to make a positive start to their formal educational journey. It also [enables] us to Pōwhiri all new tamariki in on their first day which is special and allows for parents to feel part of our community.”

PRINCIPAL

Cohort entry had some impact on whānau decisions to enrol their children

ERO asked whānau whose children were enrolled in a cohort entry school how influential the entry policy was on their choice to enrol at that school.

- Just under half of whānau (48 percent) considered it at least somewhat important.
- Just under of half (47 percent) felt it was of little or no importance in their decision-making process.
- The remaining 5 percent said there was no other school to send their child to.

ERO also asked whānau if they would have preferred more choice when it came to their child’s school start date — that is, if they could have started their child on their birthday or any other day of term.

- Almost two-thirds (62 percent) of whānau indicated they did not need more choice.
- Another 18 percent did not have a view one way or the other.
- Twenty percent would have preferred more choice.

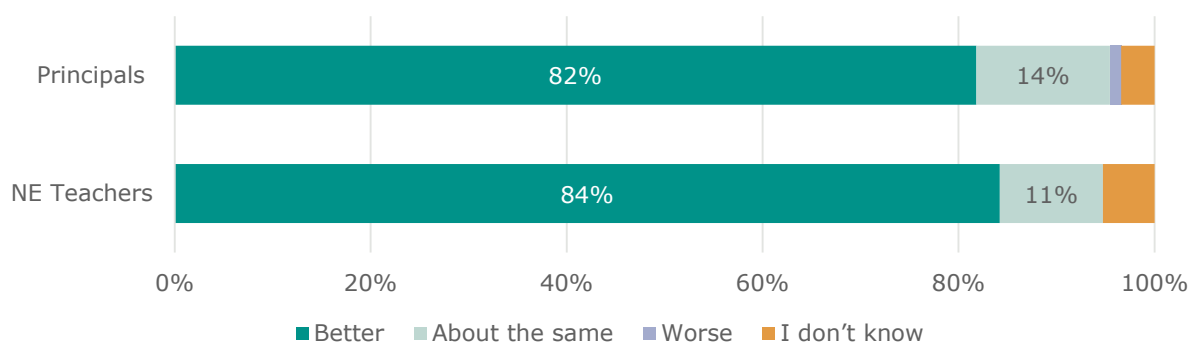
Impacts on schools

Cohort entry has the potential for a wide range of impacts on how schools and teachers go about the daily work of educating new entrants. ERO asked principals and new entrant teachers about how cohort entry impacted them and how they connect with learner families.

Cohort entry can simplify administrative work for schools

For the administrative work of schools, eight out of 10 principals (82 percent) and teachers (84 percent) indicated that they thought cohort entry had made this better (see figure 11).

Figure 11: Cohort entry’s impact on administration time when compared to continuous entry



For principals, administrative benefits were about being able to plan for student numbers more easily. Knowing how many students were starting each term enabled them to plan their staffing requirements, hire new entrant teachers to ensure they had sufficient staff for the number of new entrants, and allocate workload and activities, “especially in the second half of each school year”. Being able to plan for new entrant numbers also supported “easier management of class sizes” and roll management. One principal commented that they were better able to resource and “cater for the needs of the increased number of neurologically diverse children starting school” under cohort entry.

Being able to plan resulted in reduced disruption across the school.

“...For the admin side of things, it means that we don’t have a continuous stream of new entrant visits and students starting each week/day so it is less disruptive for teachers and students and administration.”

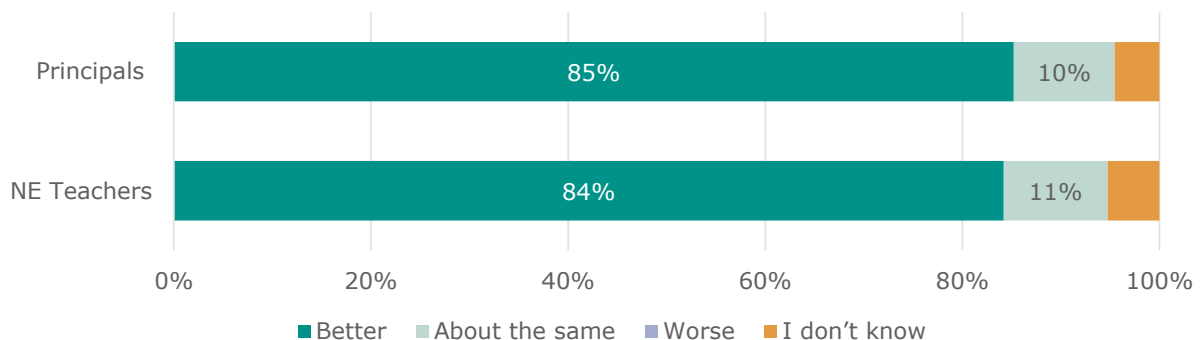
PRINCIPAL

“It has enabled us to strategically plan to have set teachers released to support our new learners to school at one time. This has meant that for their first week at school, someone is tagged to the group to ensure they are all settling ok.”

PRINCIPAL

For State-Integrated schools, cohort entry can help them manage their enrolment process and waiting lists. Principals can monitor rolls and predict how many places are available whilst communicating with whānau about places to enable them to make informed choices about how, when, and where to enrol their children.

Figure 12: Cohort entry’s impact on the work of teachers when compared to continuous entry



Teachers have more time to teach

When asked how cohort entry impacted the work of new entrant teachers, eight out of 10 principals (85 percent) and teachers (84 percent) indicated it had a positive impact on their work (see figure 12).

Principals and new entrant teachers said in their comments that cohort entry helped teachers to better prepare for new entrants as they knew when these children were visiting and starting, and how many to expect. Being able to plan for specific times and numbers enabled a range of activities, from preparing stationery packs to transition visits and lesson planning.

“I always have a desk with their name on, their own place to put the bag, all their stationery ready to go, so that they feel as though they are expected and looked forward to them coming, and that they were already part of our classroom.”

TEACHER

Teachers could also be strategic about programming, as they could “adjust at each entry point” more easily than continuous entry might allow. They told us that cohort groups also helped teachers communicate consistently with new entrants, which was important for both academic and social learning.

“Having children start as a group at the beginning, or mid-point of the term allows a consistent and progressive induction, rather than the induction process being repeated every week throughout the term as a new individual starts. This way our children are all receiving the same message at the same time about being school children and working together.”

PRINCIPAL

Although the bulk of comments about teachers’ work were positive, a small number noted that large groups of new entrants could be challenging to assess at one time.

Cohort entry helps schools get ready for new entrants

For some schools ERO spoke with, the structure of cohort entry supported their transition activities and how they connect with local ECEs and whānau to ensure “a smooth transition to school without tears, setting children up for success.”

“We have established a good transition to school programme in our school and a consistent relationship with the preschools. A planned and regular transition to school programme helps us to have regular interactions with carers and students.”

PRINCIPAL

Set dates were an opportunity to bring families together for school visits. Whānau and children could connect and build networks and maintain those relationships more easily because of scheduled transition activities.

“Well, the parents actually meet each other more than they do when you've just got a child starting.”

PRINCIPAL

Principals and teachers could also be more strategic with release time. They could schedule visits to early learning centres once or twice a term and include more than one centre at a time, helping to get to know their potential new entrants.

“...with the cohort entry... we're not having the send a teacher to the early childhood every couple of days.... There's a number of early childhoods in town, so they'd take a day and they go tiki-touring around where our kids are coming from this time to meet them, to get to know them a lot and that sort of thing, you know. So that has also made things a lot easier.”

PRINCIPAL

Cohort entry helps with building relationships with whānau

Along with the transition activities described above, principals told us that cohort entry supported relationship-building with whānau as set start dates provided opportunities to host welcoming events that not only connected families with one another but also with the school. These events were especially valuable for schools that drew new entrants from many ECEs.

“Having the set times means we can run a series of visits that where, once again, whānau feel they are part of the process and to engage with other families from the 25 ECEs we receive children from... No one likes showing up at a party by yourself where you don't know anyone. That is what starting on your 5th birthday is.”

PRINCIPAL

Set dates for visits and information sessions were opportunities for leaders to “introduce [whānau] to school and the ways of school”, communicate the same information consistently to more families, and build connections not only between whānau and the school but also between families.

“From a Principal perspective, meeting with the NE families as a group enables them to make contact with the other families their children will be going through school with. It’s a time to introduce them to school and the ways of school during NE visits.”

PRINCIPAL

Schools reported few disadvantages of cohort entry

Overall, schools that adopted cohort entry were positive about it. However, we asked everyone we surveyed about any disadvantages or challenges their community and school experienced.

Most frequently mentioned was that change meant new entrants had to wait anywhere from a few days to a few weeks to start school.

New entrants could miss out on valuable learning opportunities, particularly those children that were “school-ready”.

“Some students who miss out on the start dates have to wait several weeks, sometimes more for a mid-term cohort, to start school, so they are effectively missing out on up to 5 weeks of settling in and learning time. It could delay their progress in that way, particularly those students who have been ready for school for a while!”

PRINCIPAL

For teachers, transitioning larger groups of children twice a term could be a challenge.

They mentioned the challenge of assessing and integrating larger groups or welcoming new entrants near the end of the year when teachers were busy with reporting and end-of-year activities as something that could be “a bit overwhelming”.

Funding was also mentioned by both whānau and schools

For whānau, there were costs associated with holding their child in ECE services for additional time.

For a few schools, funding issues centred on the mismatch between intake dates and funding periods. This, in turn, affected their budgeting and planning for teacher recruitment.

“Funding disadvantage around July 1st roll return and not having real clear guidelines around the children that would have been enrolled on July 1st however not starting until the beginning of the following term.”

TEACHER

“...in this community, if we can get a child to school, it's a bonus. You know, and we need to try and take them in when we can to try and get them in and started, which, you know, is a reflection again of the community that we live in.”

TEACHER

In recognition of the impact of cohort entry's multiple entry dates across the year, the Ministry of Education makes funding adjustments for cohort schools.^{vi} However, it is possible not all cohort schools are aware of these adjustments.

Cohort entry may not work for all schools

Although cohort entry appears to offer advantages for many schools, it may not be a good fit for every school. Data from interviews with principals and teachers in schools that still have continuous entry, and interview data from ECE services, highlight circumstances where shifting to cohort entry may not be ideal.

Schools that want to encourage enrolment

In **communities where families may be disengaged with learning**, continuous entry can help schools engage with families and start a child's learning as soon as possible, avoiding languishing.

Concerns were raised that delaying school start by even a few weeks may **impact on other wellbeing issues**. Continuous entry schools talked about the risk that parents may choose to send their child to the nearest continuous entry school because of financial reasons like the ongoing cost of ECE care, and availability of other supports that come with being in school.

“[Some whānau want their kids at school because it is a] “Safe space, they're gonna get fed, they're there”

TEACHER

^{vi} For more information on cohort entry, visit the Ministry of Education's webpage: [Cohort entry information for schools – Education in New Zealand](#)

State Integrated schools that are “looking to grow” or **maintain their rolls** in a competitive enrolment environment may prefer continuous entry as it allows them to enrol students straight away, lessening the risk of losing new entrants to a nearby school.

“if we were to say no...
they might go and try out
another school.”

PRINCIPAL

Schools with particular community needs

We heard from principals in continuous entry schools that for schools that enrol higher numbers of new entrants with **learning or behavioural support needs**, continuous entry may be more suitable. Teachers may need additional time to assess learning support needs and to integrate these learners into the classroom – a process that may be easier to do well with students individually rather than as a group.

“Transitioning students with learning and support challenges into school may better lend itself to a continuous entry policy in communities with a higher proportion of these learners. Continuous entry can provide teachers with more time to devote to individual learners as enrolments are staggered rather than clustered.”

PRINCIPAL

Relationships with other schools may determine if or when schools transition to cohort entry. One Kāhui Ako ERO spoke to had decided that all its schools would remain as continuous entry so their whānau community wouldn't be confused by the different enrolment policies. They also remarked that some of their schools would struggle to transition larger groups of students at a time.

“...we discussed it as a group of principals, and one of the things was, there's obviously a variety of size schools in our Kāhui. So for some schools, that could mean quite big groups of children... 10 or so starting at one time. And schools just felt that that was too much... we decided and made a decision together because... we want to be giving a united voice, I guess, too and not confusing parents with some schools starting different ways.”

PRINCIPAL

We also heard that for **schools with small rolls**, the low number of new entrants they receive each year may not warrant a shift to cohort entry dates each term. When these schools are in communities that are tight knit, teachers may know when new entrants are due to start, making fixed start dates unnecessary.

“A cohort entry would probably, well, we’re so small we’d never get a big bunch. It wouldn’t really make any difference.”

PRINCIPAL

Schools told us that there are communities where whānau prefer their schools keep continuous entry as they **favour a birthday start** for their children. This may be because a birthday start is a strong tradition in a community, or whānau prefer to enrol their children as soon as they are ready for school. Whānau may also worry that a delayed start reflects poorly on their child or their parenting skills.

“the demographic around here is that when they’re five, the parents are happy for them to come to school. If we were going to delay that, we might lose them to somewhere else.... The kindie had suggested to [a new entrant’s] mum that he stay [at] kindie for another year, but she just wanted him at school. So to school he came.”

PRINCIPAL

Impacts on early childhood education services

How early childhood services manage the flow of children through their centres is generally based on schools operating a continuous entry enrolment process. Just as schools know to expect a drip-feed of students into their new entrant classes, ECEs are accustomed to children leaving individually or in small groups throughout the year. Cohort entry has the potential to impact this pattern of how children flow in and out of a service.

As cohort entry has eight start dates per year, twice per term, whānau could experience delays in sending their children to cohort entry schools when compared to a birthday start. Wait times can be anywhere from a few days to between six to 10 weeks, depending on the term.¹⁸

“Some students who miss out on the start dates have to wait several weeks, sometimes more for a mid-term cohort to start school.”

PRINCIPAL

These delays may impact services in different ways. This could depend on their size, type of service, age range of children, community, and how many of their local schools adopt cohort entry.

ECE services talked about managing rolls differently

ERO spoke to 12 ECE staff from services with multiple centres around the country to get their thoughts on how cohort entry schools could impact them. Many of these conversations focused on the impact of groups of children leaving for cohort schools in groups, or older children having their school start delayed, resulting in their remaining at the ECE for longer. These changes in flow have implications for their rolls and how ECEs manage the intake of new children.

ECE services with waiting lists

ECE services with waiting lists reported that delays created by school-aged children remaining until the next school cohort intake may delay new children either starting early childhood education or progressing to the next level of education within a service. A backlog can create challenges for both the service and whānau, particularly in communities experiencing a shortage of childcare providers and in kindergartens where the child must be three to attend.

“So if we’re holding back children at the age of five, we’re actually halting our waiting list.... So children might be a bit older, which isn’t a bad thing coming to kindergarten, but we also can’t afford to lose children while we wait because they’ll go to another service.... parents, they get quite anxious when it’s their turn on the waiting list”

ECE SERVICE PROVIDER

We also heard that having older, school-ready children remaining in an ECE service for additional weeks may also require providers to adapt their service to ensure these children remain engaged and learning, as the learning and support needs of these children can be different from younger cohorts.

“...there was a need to for them to look at their programs and how they were going to extend or challenge or keep engaged, you know, the children that were staying a wee bit longer, although they, they were very supportive of the fact that definitely some children needed to stay longer.”

PRINCIPAL

ECE services with no or small waiting lists

For ECE services with small or no waiting lists, a mismatch between the number of children exiting and the ECE’s capacity to intake new children can have financial implications. A group of children leaving together can create gaps in their rolls that may not be filled quickly, particularly near the end of the year.

“And it’s really hard to do because if children leave, with cohort entry and the midterm date of term four, but there’s no way I would fill those spaces five weeks before Christmas and everyone’s off on holiday. Those spaces are empty now until February....”

ECE SERVICE PROVIDER

ERO estimated that an ECE service with a cohort school nearby would lose, on average, fewer than two children per cohort.¹⁹ This may be less of an issue for smaller services but may have some impact on larger service that need to introduce groups of young children at once.

For other ECE services, children can stay longer, which can benefit both the child and the service. Several providers and schools told us they sometimes recommend to whānau they hold their child's enrolment until the following year. This might be because they feel the child would benefit from additional time in the ECE environment to ensure they are ready for school, or because the end-of-Term-4 start provides only a few weeks of learning and settling which are then disrupted by the school holidays. When whānau delay, ECEs keep those children over the school holidays, a financial benefit for these services as children are still eligible for funding.

“...actually, it was a positive impact in terms of funding because, you know, playcentre was pretty desperate for keeping those children as long as they can...”

ECE SERVICE PROVIDER

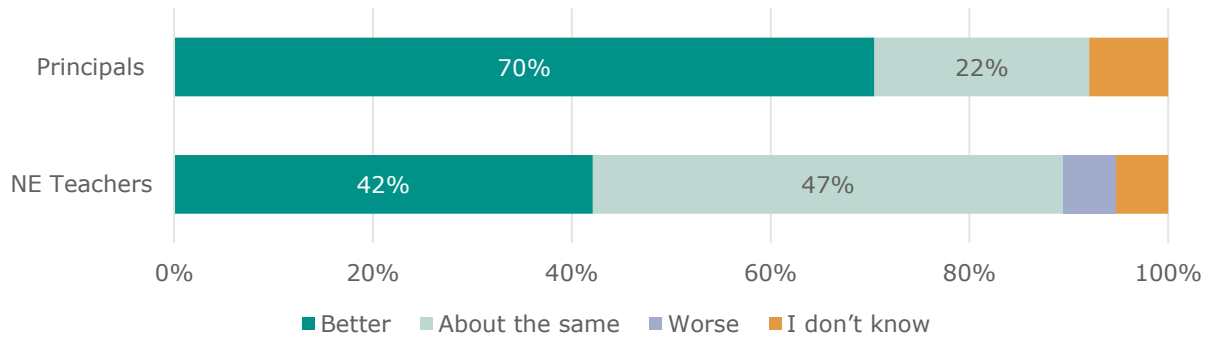
Cohort entry can impact ECE services' relationships with schools

Whether cohort entry is a factor that can enable and support relationship-building between ECEs and schools is unclear. ERO's survey and interview data from schools suggests positive and close relationships between some schools and their nearby early learning centres, but our interviews with ECEs were much less clear. Here is what we found.

In both cohort and continuous entry schools, positive relationships are more likely to be in place when ECE services are located close to, or are in some way affiliated with, schools they send children to. For example, State-Integrated schools may have connections with church-based childcare, schools, and ECEs. Schools may also be members of a Kāhui Ako, or an ECE provider may be on school grounds or “just across the road”.

For schools, survey data suggest cohort entry positively impacts their relationships with ECE services. Seven out of 10 principals (70 percent) thought their relationships with their local services were better, whilst four out of 10 new entrant teachers (42 percent) thought there was a positive impact (see figure 13).

Figure 13: Cohort entry's impact on principals' and new entrant teachers' relationships with ECE services when compared to continuous entry



Feedback from schools outlined how cohort entry was an opportunity for them to work with their local ECEs. Principals could schedule release time for their teachers to visit ECEs to meet incoming children more easily, or they could do these is its themselves.

“Relationships are built over time with the new entrant by the new entrant teacher having the close relationship with the local preschool. This is a successful model for our small rural school.”

PRINCIPAL

They could also plan and prepare together as cohort entry provided a “model for their numbers” so ECEs could anticipate child flows in and out of their services.

“It gave us and the ECE centres the ability to plan for children coming to school. We knew who was starting and when and the centres knew when children were leaving so they could accept new enrolments.”

PRINCIPAL

For some schools, consultation was an opportunity to work more closely with ECE services. A school mentioned having “gutsy” conversations with their local ECE, and an ECE provider recalled “rumbles” with a nearby school about the implications of cohort entry for the flow of children and the related funding implications.

“I think from memory through the consultation, they also were concerned about... the bulk group leaving. ...suddenly they had all these older kids and then the next week or the next two weeks after the holidays, they had all these, you know, that leadership of the children had gone. And so I think that was one of the concerns. Initially, it was around funding and there wasn't a huge understanding that actually the children would continue to get early childhood funding after five.”

BOARD MEMBER

We heard that for ECE services, strong relationships, clear communication, and inclusion in consultation can help them adapt and put in place processes to manage the flow of children through their services.

“...the whole time my administrators are talking to carers about, I've got a space here for you on this date, when the, when our administrator knows where that child's going and what date they're actually leaving, you know? So yeah... there's quite there's quite a process already in place.”

ECE SERVICE PROVIDER

When schools did not consult or communicate well with ECE services, these services were less able to plan for the impact of cohort entry and relationships were negatively impacted.

Preparing for transitions

As the connection between ECEs and schools is largely during transition, evidence from interviews with continuous and cohort entry schools and ECEs suggests that establishing and maintaining positive relationships is vital to ensure transitions to school are fit for purpose and benefit carers, children, schools, and ECE providers.

Conclusion

Schools and whānau reported a wide variety of positive impacts of cohort entry. For children, social and emotional wellbeing, learning, and relationships benefited. Teachers could plan for new entrants and teach them in uninterrupted blocks of time. Principals were better able to anticipate student numbers and could be more strategic in their transitions and welcoming events. Whānau felt they were better able to establish and maintain connections with other carers and the school. Impacts for ECE services were less clear because of the small number of cohort schools that ECE services may send children to. Evidence suggests the quality of their relationships with nearby schools plays a part in how ECEs adapt to cohort entry.



Part 3: What have we learned?

Cohort entry had a range of benefits for the school, staff, families, and children in schools where it has been implemented. Cohort entry appears to support good transitions between ECEs and schools, and provides uninterrupted blocks of time for teaching and learning. In this section, we summarise the findings.

ERO looked at how cohort entry impacts new entrants, peers, schools, whānau, and ECEs. We found that schools that have tried cohort entry recommended it and intend to stay with it. Only 2 percent of schools thought they would return to continuous entry.

Our research found that for schools that adopted it, cohort entry had many benefits.

Cohort entry helps with new entrants' successful transition to school

With cohort entry, new entrants start school with a group. This can include friends from their ECE service, or children they meet during transition or as they start school. Group starts improve children's sense of belonging as beginning school is a shared experience. Nearly all principals (93 percent) said children settled better in class with cohort entry. Schools reported students are less anxious and more confident with group starts. It also supported learning, with eight out of 10 principals reporting that cohort entry improved new entrants' engagement with learning.

Cohort entry has a positive impact on peers' learning

Cohort entry means peers experience fewer interruptions to their learning, and it helps them stay settled in class. They also get to reset and relearn classroom routines with each new cohort group. Peers also benefited from uninterrupted blocks of teaching time which can be used to progress school readiness and learning.

Cohort entry helps whānau connect with the school

Whānau were more likely to meet other whānau, either through the transition process, school events, or starting their children on the same day. This meant building supportive networks was easier.

Schools plan for transition and teachers have more time to teach with cohort entry

Principals can schedule whānau visits and share information to groups, ensuring a consistent experience for whānau. Teachers can plan and prepare for groups of new students starting on specified dates. Planning and preparation ranges from preparing stationery packs to transition visits and lesson planning. Eight out of 10 teachers reported it positively impacted on their work.

Cohort entry may not work for all schools

There are some schools that decided to remain with continuous entry to encourage enrolments within their schools, or because their community has specific needs like higher numbers of children with learning or behavioural support needs.

ECEs may be affected by cohort entry in their area

Though on average the number of children leaving an ECE service in a cohort is small, we found that ECE services thought that cohort entry into school has the potential to change the pattern of how children flow in and out of an ECE service, and how services manage their rolls.

Implications

Whilst cohort entry may not work for all schools, there are clear benefits so far for the schools that have adopted it. Other schools may wish to consider adopting cohort entry, particularly as it has the potential to support transitions, boost whānau engagement, and provide teachers with more time to teach.

Covid-19 disruptions have led to increasing concerns about how well children are transitioning into school, have highlighted the importance of whānau engagement, and have led to teachers reporting increasingly unmanageable workloads. Cohort entry could be one option for schools to consider in addressing these issues.





Appendix 1: Methodology

ERO used a multi-method approach to analyse existing datasets and gather additional quantitative and qualitative data from state and state-integrated schools with new entrants in New Zealand, particularly those that had adopted cohort entry. Administrative datasets were accessed to gain an understanding of cohort school characteristics and identify the sample of cohort entry schools for further data gathering. Data were collected from surveys of principals, new entrant teachers, and whānau. Interviews were conducted with principals and new entrant teachers, early childhood education providers, and a small number of whānau. Surveys and interviews were conducted at the end of Term 4, 2021.

Quantitative data were analysed using Excel and STATA, and qualitative data were thematically analysed in Excel.

Administrative datasets

ERO used data from the Ministry of Education on the schools that had formally adopted cohort entry. This dataset was reviewed and updated to ensure it was accurate at the time of our study. Additional data was added from Education Counts' School Directory Builder.^{vii}

These data were analysed to identify patterns of interest about the adoption of cohort entry by primary schools. ERO looked at characteristics such as decile, size, location, and ethnicity of school rolls. They were also used to identify schools for further data collection using surveys and interviews.

Surveys

ERO conducted two surveys using the SurveyMonkey survey platform.

The School Survey targeted principals and new entrant teachers at cohort entry schools nationwide and asked for their feedback on the impact of cohort entry on a range of wellbeing and learning outcomes for students, along with the impacts on the work of teachers and principals. As there are only 130 schools with cohort entry, surveys were distributed to all principals via their email addresses. Responses were collected during Term 4 of 2021, and 94 principals (81 percent) completed the survey.

Links to the survey were also sent to the generic email addresses of all 130 schools, requesting they be shared with new entrant teachers. Responses were collected during Term 4 of 2021, and only 21 new entrant teachers from 14 schools completed the survey. As the new entrant teacher sample is not representative (the number of new entrant teachers in cohort entry schools was not known at the time of this study), findings from this cohort should be read with caution.

The Carers Survey canvassed the whānau of children who attended a cohort entry school. Four schools who were approached during their individual or group interview volunteered to distribute a link to the Carer Survey to whānau of children in Years 0 to 2. They represent a range of decile levels and locations. Whānau responses were collected during Term 4 of 2021 and 66 whānau responded.

vii Ministry of Education. (2022). New Zealand Schools. Education Counts. [New Zealand Schools | Education Counts](#)

Survey results were aggregated for analysis and not analysed according to school. Both quantitative and qualitative data were analysed at the aggregate level. Any identifying information about schools, whānau, or children were removed, and all open-ended responses were deidentified.

As the number of respondents identifying as Māori or Pacific was small, we were unable to analyse their experiences and results separately.

A full list of the survey questions can be found in Appendices 2 and 3 of this report.

Interviews

Using the administrative datasets to identify all cohort and continuous entry schools in New Zealand, ERO created a stratified sample of primary schools to ensure it could recruit interview participants from a mix of centres, decile levels, and school sizes. The resulting sample of 12 schools was made up of six cohort entry schools, five continuous entry schools, and one revoked cohort entry school. Interviews with schools were conducted with individual principals/school leaders, board members, or new entrant teachers, or small groups of these in combination. A total of 22 school staff and executive were interviewed, including:

- for cohort entry: eight principals and leaders, one board member, and two teachers
- for continuous entry: three principals and seven teachers
- for revoked cohort entry: one principal.

Once the locations of the 12 schools were determined, ERO then contacted early learning services in the vicinity of these schools. This increased the likelihood ERO talked with services that would be sending children to a nearby cohort entry school and could share relevant experiences about the impacts of cohort entry with us. National bodies also helped with the recruitment process.

Twelve service managers, leaders and kaiako from six early childhood education services, primarily in kindergartens, were interviewed. They represented services from around the country, in rural and urban locations, and ranged from single centre providers to large scale groups. Interviews with ECE services were either with individuals or in small groups.

ERO also interviewed two parents from a continuous entry school.

Interviews focused largely on school and ECE experiences with cohort entry, or impressions of how cohort entry would impact schools, ECEs, families, and communities. ERO also asked stakeholders about school transitions to get a deeper understanding of this process and how cohort entry might impact it.

Interviews were conducted during Term 4 of 2021 and took place over the phone and via Zoom. Interviews were recorded and transcribed, and a thematic analysis was conducted to identify patterns and provide insights into the quantitative data results.

Limitations

This report does not directly compare continuous and cohort entry schools so as to determine if one approach is better than the other. Consequently, the sample for this report is not representative of the primary school or ECE sectors in New Zealand.

The new entrant teacher sample size for this report is statistically small, and these statistics should be read accordingly. There were insufficient responses from Māori or Pacific whānau and so we were unable to look at their experiences. The ECE sector sample of interviewees is weighted towards the kindergarten sector. We acknowledge that the opinions of members of other early childhood services may differ from those shared in this report.



Appendix 2: Schools Survey (cohort entry only)

Demographic questions

What is the name of your school?

If you know, what is your school's profile number?

What town or city is your school closest to?

Are you:

- The Principal or Deputy Principal
- A New Entrant Teacher
- Other (please specify) [open text response]

Ranking questions

What prompted your school to consider and adopt Cohort Entry? Please indicate the top three reasons.

- Potential for better child transitions from ECE to primary school
- Social and emotional benefits for New Entrants starting school
- Learning/achievement benefits for New Entrants starting school
- Parent interest/influence
- Opportunity to welcome groups of parents and multiple families/whānau/aiga to the school community
- Social and emotional benefits for other students in the class
- Learning/achievement benefits for other students in the class
- Staff interest/influence
- Administrative benefits (e.g., ease of planning)
- Other (please specify) [open text response]

Single response questions

In comparison to the continuous entry model, what impact has cohort entry had on:

- Settling New Entrants into the class/school
- Helping New entrants engage with learning
- New Entrants attendance
- Principal's relationships with parents/caregivers/whānau/aiga
- New Entrant teacher's relationships with parents/caregivers/whānau/aiga
- Learning of other children in the classroom
- Social and emotional wellbeing of other children in the classroom
- Work of New Entrant teachers
- Administration time
- Your relationship with ECE services
- New Entrant wellbeing
- Engagement of other students in class
- Other (please specify) [open text response]

Respondents could select one answer on a six-point response scale: much better, somewhat better, about the same, somewhat worse, much worse, I don't know.

In the next 5 years, how likely is it that your school will return to a Continuous Entry model?

Respondents could select one answer on a five-point response scale: extremely unlikely, unlikely, I don't know, likely, extremely likely.

Open text question

Please tell us why you are considering returning to a Continuous Entry model?



Appendix 3: Carer survey (cohort entry only)

Demographic questions

Please type in the approximate term or month and year that your year 0/1/2 child started school

- Term or month
- Year (YYYY format)

Which ethnic group or groups do you belong to? (Please tick as many options as you need to)

- New Zealand European
- New Zealand Māori
- Samoan
- Cook island Māori
- Tongan
- Niuean
- Chinese
- Indian
- Other (e.g., Dutch, Tokelauan, Japanese)
[open text response]

Single response questions

To what degree was the school's entry policy important to your decision to enrol your child there?

Respondents could select one answer on a six-point response scale: very important, important, somewhat important, of low importance, not at all important, there was no other school to send my child to.

Would you have preferred more choice about the start date that your child started school (that is, they could have started on nearly any day of the school term of on their fifth birthday)?

Respondents could select one answer on a three-point response scale: yes, no, I don't have a view.

Compared to starting school on any day in the school term, what impact do you think going to a cohort entry school had on:

- Your Year 0/1/2 child's learning
- Your Year 0/1/2 child's friendships with other children
- Your Year 0/1/2 child regularly attending school
- Your Year 0/1/2 child's relationship with their teacher
- Your Year 0/1/2 child's overall stat at school

Respondents could select one answer on a six-point response scale: much better, somewhat better, about the same, somewhat worse, much worse, I don't know.

Compared to starting school on any day in the school term, what impact do you think going to a cohort entry school had on:

- Your relationship with your child's teacher
- Your relationship with other parents/caregivers in the school community
- Your sense of connection with the school
- Your caring or work responsibilities
- Your wellbeing

Respondents could select one answer on a six-point response scale: much better, somewhat better, about the same, somewhat worse, much worse, I don't know.



References and Endnotes

- 1 Peters, S. (2010). *Literature review: Transition from early childhood education to school. Report to the Ministry of Education*. Wellington: Ministry of Education. www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/ECE/98894
- 2 *ibid*
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Data sources for these calculations can be accessed here: Licenced Early Learning Services: 2021 ECE Census results [PowerPoint Presentation \(educationcounts.govt.nz\)](#); [10 Licenced-Places-Pivot-Table-2000-2021 FINAL.xlsx \(live.com\)](#)



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