



Requiring compulsory attendance at school for under sixes

Regular attendance in the first year of school supports the development of positive attitudes to learning and provides a sound foundation for future learning and achievement.

Changes have been made to the Act so that children under the age of six are now required to regularly attend school once they are enrolled. Previously children were only required to regularly attend school when they turned six, regardless of whether or not they had already enrolled.

Parents need to consider whether their child is ready for regular attendance at school before enrolling them. A later transition to school based on a judgment about the child's maturity and readiness for school is likely to support better educational outcomes than an earlier transition in which a child attends school irregularly.

Does this mean that children will have to enrol in school as soon as they turn five?

No. Children are not required to be enrolled in school until their sixth birthday. The requirement for regular attendance only applies once a child's parents have enrolled them in school.

Is there any flexibility around the compulsory attendance requirements?

Where a child would benefit from a graduated transition to school, a transition plan can be agreed between the child's parents, the school principal and the Ministry of Education. Early childhood education services me ngā kōhanga reo are a valuable resource for supporting a child's transition to school and can contribute to the development of a child's transition plan. The child will then be required to attend school in accordance with that plan.

Why is there an exception for some children?

Some children may benefit from attending school part-time in their first year as a part of a managed transition process. Research suggests that graduated transitions can be effective for these children, so this option needs to be available.

Does this change affect four year olds who are enrolled at a school with cohort entry?

Yes. All children who have started school have to attend regularly, unless they have a transition plan that includes graduated attendance.

Will parents face penalties if their children attend school irregularly after they enrol?

As has been the case, parents of children who do not attend school as required may be fined up to \$30 per school day, not exceeding \$300 for a first offence and \$3000 for subsequent offences.

Where are the compulsory attendance provisions located in the Act?

The compulsory attendance provisions are located in section 25.

When do the changes take effect?

These changes took effect from 3 July 2017.

Link to key provisions

See section 30 of the Education (Update) Amendment Act 2017 (which will amend section 25 of the Education Act 1989):

<http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2017/0020/latest/DLM6928674.html>