

September 2014



The Communication Service

The Ministry of Education's Communication Service provides support at school/kura for children with high speech and/or language needs. Speech-language therapists work collaboratively with you, the child, their parents/whānau and, if requested, kaitakawaenga – Māori cultural advisors who support everyone to work in culturally appropriate and responsive ways.

Who can receive this support

The service's main focus is on children aged five to eight years with high communication needs. To receive support, your student needs to meet one or more of the following criteria, which prevents them from being able to participate and learn:

- ▶ speak in a way that's very difficult for people to understand eg, have difficulty making speech sounds correctly
- ▶ have a significant language delay or disorder eg, they find it difficult to follow instructions and understand what they've been asked to do, or they can only talk in short sentences
- ▶ have difficulty developing social skills eg, find it difficult to interact with other children and adults who are familiar to them
- ▶ have a stutter eg, frequently repeat words or sounds, or get

stuck on words which means that people have trouble understanding them

- ▶ have voice difficulties that make it very difficult for them to communicate with people in typical everyday situations eg, they might have an extremely husky voice or keep losing their voice.

Services and support in Māori-medium education

Children and young people with special education needs in Māori-medium early learning centres and schools are eligible for the same level of specialist services and support from the Ministry that they would receive in English-medium education.

How to apply

If you have a student who appears to meet the above criteria, discuss this with their parents/whānau. You will need to obtain parent or

legal guardian agreement as part of the referral process and complete a referral form. Copies are available from your local Ministry of Education office.

We encourage parents/whānau to discuss their concerns with the teacher or principal or a kaitakawaenga if they believe their child has a significant communication difficulty that needs to be addressed. You might have someone on the staff whose role it is to work with parents/whānau, such as a SENCO.

If you're unsure if a student meets the criteria, a speech-language therapist can work with you to help decide whether to go ahead with an application.

What happens next

We will read the referral information, clarify your student's communication needs and decide whether we need to contact you

for further information, such as information about your student's participation in social activities, learning and their wellbeing.

Assessments are time-consuming and not all applications progress to an assessment. Once your student's needs have been clarified, we will make a decision about whether they need further assessment.

When your student is accepted for an assessment, a speech-language therapist will contact you and your student's parents/whānau and outline the assessment process, where and when the assessment will take place and the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved.

At this stage we will provide parents/whānau with information about the Ministry's special education service, the management of private information and complaint procedures. We will ask them to sign a consent form for Ministry staff to work with their child.

Working out what support your student needs

The speech-language therapist will:

- ▶ talk with you, parents/whānau and any other specialists working with your student
- ▶ observe your student in their classroom and school environment
- ▶ assess or record your student speaking to get a sample of their language

We will work with an interpreter or cultural support person if needed.

We will usually send copies of the assessment report to both you and the parents/whānau. If your student has high communication needs, the speech-language therapist will work with you and the student's parents/whānau to develop a service agreement.

The support provided through the service

We might provide support in a range of ways, including: advice and guidance to everyone working with your student

- ▶ classroom strategies for you
- ▶ small group work
- ▶ through an individual therapy programme that's followed up at school and at home
- ▶ supporting a teacher's aide at school/kura to carry out a programme for your student
- ▶ help from a communication support worker (CSW) – these are trained aides who work with speech-language therapists to provide short-term support for students' speech-language therapy. CSWs work in schools and might support your student within individual or group work in the classroom or, occasionally, in a quiet room
- ▶ through kaitakawaenga – these are Māori cultural advisors who support everyone to work in culturally appropriate and responsive ways if your student identifies as Māori
- ▶ offering a Language and Learning Intervention (LLI) to meet your student's learning needs. This approach is based on evidence that language intervention for children is most effective when embedded in frequently occurring interactions with significant adults in the child's life. As teachers may be the main conversational partners talking with a child during the school day, and language is essential for all curriculum activities, the classroom provides great opportunities for language interventions.

We would outline the goals and activities, as well as each person's roles and responsibilities, in a service agreement and/or IEP.

Other support available if your student isn't accepted for the Communication Service

Your school receives a Special Education Grant to use to support children with special education needs. The school can spend this in a variety of ways – on resources, teacher training, teacher's aide time and for individual students or groups of students.

You can also make a referral to Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLB). They can provide guidance and support to teachers on learning and behaviour issues.

If your student is being supported by the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS) and has high communication needs, these will be addressed as part of their ORS service (see our information sheet *The Ongoing Resourcing Scheme*).

For more information

If you are unclear about any part of our service or have questions about the help your student receives, please talk with staff at your local Ministry of Education office, or call the Special Education information line on **0800 622 222**.

You can get more detailed special education information on Te Kete Ipurangi a website that provides educational material for teachers and schools: www.tki.org.nz

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