**Frequently asked questions**

1. **My child has special needs. If I homeschool, what special education resources am I entitled to?**

Children who are taught at home are entitled to many of the same special education resources as other special needs students.

If children are demonstrating **significant** difficulties they can access assessment screening and programmes through the Ministry of Education Special Education.

This includes access to:

* speech and language, physiotherapy, and occupational therapy assessments;
* support for moderate physical disabilities; and
* advice and guidance from specialist advisers or psychologists.

To access these resources, students need to meet the same criteria as any other students.

For students with high and complex needs please refer to question 2 below.

Application forms and referral information can be obtained through contacting the local office of the Ministry of Education and asking to speak to the Special Education Service Manager.

1. **I have a child who has special needs and is ORS verified and I have a certificate of exemption. Can you please tell me what resources my child is entitled to receive?**

Children who have been verified through the Ongoing and Resourcing Scheme (ORS) are entitled to specialist support as stated above.

This specialist support is delivered by Special Education and includes access to Resource Teachers: Vision Impaired, and Itinerant Teachers of Deaf and Hearing Impaired.

The delivery of these services is directed via an individual education plan (IEP).

Children who are homeschooled are not entitled to school-based services such as additional specialist teachers or teacher aide time.

1. **My child is very unhappy at school and is being bullied. I am keeping my children at home and am thinking about homeschooling. What are my options?**

This question has several components.

### Unhappy children

Have you spoken to the classroom teacher and principal about your concerns? All children should feel safe and happy at school.

This right is outlined in *National Achievement Guideline 5 (NAG 5)* for schools which states that:

*Each Board of Trustees is also required to:*

* 1. *provide a safe physical and emotional environment for students;*
  2. *comply in full with any legislation currently in force or that may be developed to ensure the safety of students and employees.*

If you are not satisfied with the response from the teacher or principal you can raise your concerns with the Board of the school. If you still feel your concerns are not being listened to, please ring the local Ministry of Education office and ask to speak to a member of the Education, Curriculum and Performance Team.

### School attendance

Your child must continue to attend school until you receive the certificate of exemption that allows you to educate your child at home.

All children in New Zealand between the ages of 6 and 16 must be enrolled and attending a registered school.

To remove your children from school to educate them at home you need to first apply for and be granted an exemption from a registered school. You can apply to the Ministry of Education for an exemption. Once you have been granted an exemption you will be responsible for providing, supervising and monitoring the learning programme for your child.

1. **I am thinking about applying to homeschool so that I can address my child’s learning needs. What support will I get so that I can help my child?**

There are a number of homeschooling groups around the country that are made up of enthusiastic people who educate their children at home. These groups can give you information about group activities and outings, social events and learning activities. Joining a local home educators group is one way to receive support and encouragement when homeschooling.

If you would like to keep your children at school and have their learning problems addressed, please contact the local Ministry office to discuss what help is available.

1. **My family has just arrived in the country and we are applying for residency. We would like to homeschool in New Zealand, but we are unsure if we need to apply for an exemption for our children.**

In this situation you will first need to determine if your children have *‘domestic student status’.* If they do and they are between the ages of 6 and 16 years of age, then they must attend a registered school unless they have an exemption.

If your children do not have domestic student status then they will qualify as foreign students, and you do not have to apply to homeschool them as foreign students in New Zealand are not required to enrol or attend a school.

To determine if your child or children are foreign or domestic students, please read the following:

**What’s the difference between a foreign and domestic student?**

Under the Education Act 1989 a **foreign student** is anyone who does not fall into the category of domestic student.

A **domestic student** is defined as:

At any time, means a person who is then -

1. a New Zealand citizen; or
2. the holder of a residence class visa granted under the [Immigration Act 2009](http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1989/0080/latest/link.aspx?search=ts_act_education_resel&p=1&id=DLM1440300#DLM1440300) who satisfies the criteria (if any) prescribed by regulations made under subsection (4); or
3. a person of a class or description of persons required by the Minister, by notice in the Gazette, to be treated as if they are not foreign students.

These categories are explained in Ministry of Education Circular *Eligibilty to enrol in New Zealand schools*. The link to this circular is: [www.minedu.govt.nz/circular201201](http://www.minedu.govt.nz/circular201201)

1. **I have recently adopted a child from another country. I would like to homeschool my child so I can cater for his/her individual needs. As the adoption process takes a long time before it is legalised, can you tell me if I need to apply for an exemption to homeschool?**

Children in the following situations who are in the process of being adopted into a New Zealand family will be categorised as domestic students.

A foreign student who has entered New Zealand for the purposes of adoption:

1. and whose adoption application before the New Zealand Family Court (where the Final Order will entitle those children to education as domestic students) is supported by the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services and who has a letter from the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services confirming this support; or
2. who is the subject of an Interim Order of Adoption granted by the New Zealand Family Court under section 5 of the Adoption Act 1955 (where the Final Order will entitle those children to education as domestic students).

If your adoptive child is in either of these categories you will need to apply for an exemption certificate to homeschool them.

1. **I am unsure about the difference between homeschooling and The Correspondence School / Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu (Te Kura)?**

Homeschooled students are exempted from the legal requirement to be enrolled in and attend a registered school. The parent/guardian is granted the responsibility for providing what would otherwise be provided by a registered school. The parent/guardian therefore defines the curriculum that will be taught, provides the teaching materials, does the teaching, assesses the student’s work, and completes the ongoing monitoring of the student’s progress.

Te Kura is a registered school. The curriculum that Te Kura follows is The New Zealand Curriculum. Students who are enrolled at Te Kura have a Te Kura teacher assigned to them. This teacher maintains regular contact with the student and provides the learning material for the student. The student’s work is returned to the Te Kura teacher for assessment and ongoing monitoring of progress.

There are two ways a child can enrol at Te Kura. The first way is as ***a full time eligible student***, where they do not have to pay fees and go on the Te Kura roll. To work out if your child may be eligible for Te Kura please ring Te Kura on 0800 65 99 88. The weblink to Te Kura is: <http://www.correspondence.school.nz/>

The second way is as a ***part time fee-paying student***as part of a homeschooling programme (for up to a maximum of 2 subjects at a time)*.* If you would like to look at this as an option you still need to apply for an exemption to homeschool and explain in your application that you will be using Te Kura to support part of your homeschooling programme.You remain responsible for your child’s overall programme.

The cost of each subject through Te Kura depends on whether your child is at primary or secondary school. Please ring Te Kura on 0800 65 99 88 for more information.

1. **How do I know the Ministry of Education staff are qualified to assess the application?**

Ministry of Education staff go through a comprehensive appointment process and are only appointed when they have been deemed to be competent to undertake work of this nature.

1. **If I enrol my child in a school and my certificate of exemption expires,** **will I need to re-apply for another certificate if I want to homeschool again?**

Yes. If you wish to return your child to homeschooling you will need to reapply to the Ministry for a new exemption certificate. However, if your child has been enrolled at a school for less than a term and your previous plan and circumstances have not changed, the Ministry may not necessarily require you to resubmit this information. You must have this recorded for the statutory declaration.

A request for the certificate to be re-issued needs to be organised through your local Ministry office. If your child has been enrolled in a school for more than one term, contact your local Ministry office for advice as each situation is different.

***If you would like any other information please ring your local Ministry of Education office.***