**Allocation of National Student Numbers in early childhood**

*The Early Learning Information (ELI) programme is developing and implementing a new information system, using the National Student Number (NSN) as a unique education identifier, to increase the quality and volume of individual learner information on early childhood education (ECE) participation.*

*Approximately 180,000 learners already attending early childhood education will need to be allocated an NSN prior to the roll out of ELI so ECE services are able to enter information on each learner.*

*It is proposed that there be an early allocation of NSNs to all early childhood education (ECE) learners currently enrolled in ECE from early 2013, ahead of the roll-out of ELI to ECE services in October 2013*.

**What is the National Student Number?**

The National Student Number is a unique education number allocated to all children when they enrol with an education provider (as stated in the Education Act 1989). This isn’t something new - it currently happens when each child starts school and is used throughout their education.

National student numbers are already in use in primary, secondary and tertiary education and the ELI project will allocate them to all ECE learners. The numbers allow the Ministry to work with the information in a way that protects each learner’s privacy. This information will provide the Ministry with the basic data needed to assess trends and develop initiatives.

**Why have a National Student Number for my child?**

Currently the Ministry allocates National Student Numbers and collects information on children from when they enrol in school. Allocating a National Student Number to children before they go to school will mean that there will be better information available about children’s attendance in ECE, in school and beyond.

The Ministry of Education is introducing the ELI system to ECE services so that information about children’s attendance can be collected from ECE services electronically, using the number.

**What is the ELI system?**

ELI will enable information collected by each ECE service about children’s attendance to be submitted to the Ministry of Education. This information will be about where, how often and how long children attend ECE.

**What information will be required for a National Student Number to be allocated to my child?**

You will need to provide your ECE service with a copy of an identity document for each of your children, for example a New Zealand birth certificate, passport, foreign birth certificate or New Zealand citizenship documentation.

Your ECE service will provide this information to the Ministry of Education and a National Student Number will then be allocated for your child.

**Can my child attend ECE if born overseas?**

Yes, children born in places other than in New Zealand are eligible to attend an ECE service.

**What is an official identification document?**

An acceptable official identification document can be a copy of one of the following:

* New Zealand birth certificate
* New Zealand passport
* Australian passport
* Australian birth certificate
* Foreign birth certificate
* Foreign passport
* New Zealand citizenship certificate
* Official New Zealand residency documentation

These documents confirm your child’s full official name, gender and date of birth which can be recorded by your service on the enrolment form.

If you are unable to provide a copy of one of these documents, please discuss this with your ECE service.

**Do I have to do anything to get my child a National Student Number?**

No. National Student Numbers will be allocated to your child by the Ministry of Education once information about a child’s enrolment has been received from the ECE service and confirmed by the Ministry of Education.

Can I choose not to have a National Student Number allocated to my child on enrolment?

No. From 2013 every child in New Zealand will be automatically allocated a National Student Number when they enrol in an ECE service.  The same number will be used when your child enrols at school.

This is similar to what happens in the health sector where numbers are automatically assigned to all children born in New Zealand or once a child has had any involvement with a health service.

**Who will have access to the information collected?**

The law limits access to the information attached to National Student Numbers. Only authorised users are able to access the index of national student numbers, or allocate individual numbers. Authorised users include education providers (e.g. early childhood education services and schools) and the Ministry of Education. You can request the information that relates to your child.

**Will this number become a single national number?**

No, the law is clear that the National Student Number can be used for the following reasons only:

* monitoring and ensuring student attendance;
* ensuring education providers and students receive appropriate resourcing;
* statistical purposes;
* research purposes;
* ensuring student’s educational records are accurately maintained.

(Education Act 1989 (section 344))

These provisions and the Privacy Act 2000 prevent the National Student Number, or other identifiers such as the National Health Index number, or tax number, becoming a single national number.

**How will my ECE service ensure my child’s information remains private?**

All ECE services must comply with the Privacy Act 2000 which aims to promote and protect individual privacy, and in particular to establish principles with respect to:

* the collection, use, and disclosure, by public and private sector agencies, of information relating to individuals; and
* access by each individual to information relating to that individual and held by public and private sector agencies.

**How will the Ministry ensure my child’s information remains private?**

The Ministry of Education has a number of measures in place to ensure the privacy of learners.

* There will be restrictions for each authorised user of the system and the information they can access. As noted previously authorised users will be primarily Ministry staff and education service providers;
* Appropriate audit records and procedures will be established to enable the Ministry to monitor use of the system and any other system that uses the National Student Number;
* The Education Act 1989 (section 346) includes an offence provision, with a penalty up to a maximum of $15,000, for a conviction of misuse of the National Student Number.
* Under the Privacy Act, if you are a parent or guardian of a child you can request the ECE service or Ministry provides details of all information held about your child.