



26 March 2018

## **New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) Submission on the**

### **COHORT ENTRY**

#### **To: The Ministry of Education**

##### **Personal Details:**

Agency: New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF)

Designation: National Executive

Address: National Office, PO Box 25380, Wellington 6146

The New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) is the largest professional organisation for lead educators representing the interests of 2,200 Principals of Primary, Intermediate, Area and Secondary Schools. Principals are from public, integrated and independent schools and are spread throughout New Zealand. NZPF aims to be the most influential advocate for school principals to enable high quality, well supported leadership for school learners in New Zealand.

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed Cohort Entry Options

##### **General Comments**

NZPF welcomes the opportunity to submit comments on Cohort Entry Options. NZPF expressed its views on cohort entry during the consultation and select committee stages of the Update to the Education Act under the previous Government.

##### **Points that NZPF made at that time include:**

- There seemed little point to including Cohort Entry in legislation, given that schools, in conjunction with their communities, can operate a cohort system *now*, if that best suits their community's needs
- Objection to children beginning school before their fifth birthday arguing that New Zealand already has a low school entry age and children are not ready for a school learning environment at age four
- Creation of funding pressures for ECE centres that would be losing a substantial number of children at one time, rather than individual children across the year
- Concerns that Kindergartens are not funded for children over five years of age and the difficulties of accommodating special needs children whose special education funding would also cease at age five
- Financial issues for parents who could have to pay for months of extra ECE care if their children could not start school on their fifth birthday

- Uncertainty about whether parents would continue to receive the 20 hours a week subsidy once a child had turned five years old (we understand that this issue has now been resolved and parents would continue to receive the 20 hours free)
- The difficulties of settling in an entire cohort of new school entrants at once, rather than integrating them individually as they turn five. It was argued that integrating one new entrant at a time into an environment where structures and practices are already set is more manageable than bringing a large number into an environment which is completely unfamiliar to every child. Further, when children enter school individually, they are more likely to be treated as individuals
- Cohort entry takes decision making power away from the community. Which is not desirable
- In New Zealand there is a long-held tradition of children starting school on their fifth birthday

### **The 2018 Paper- Cohort Entry**

NZPF agrees that children should not start school before their fifth birthday. Many would argue that five is still too young for formal learning and the law still holds that children in New Zealand do not have to begin school until age six. Recent research on play would suggest that there is much children learn from play and the more years at play, the more children are ready for formal learning.

In this respect NZPF supports the Government's intention to change the law so no child starts school before the age of five.

That said, NZPF does not consider cohort entry to be the most pressing issue on the education agenda with only 2.4% of schools choosing to implement it.

In our view, schools are self-managing and should be free to implement whatever entry system they and their community choose. We would expect that schools would also consult with their local ECE centres in deciding on their school entry system. Whether that is cohort entry twice a term or once a term, or whether that is starting each child on their fifth birthday, should be entirely up to each school and their community.

We do not therefore have a preference for Option One or Option Two, as outlined in the paper.

Our view remains as it did when submitting on the Update of the Education Act. NZPF believes that Cohort Entry should be removed from legislation and that individual schools and their communities should have the right to embrace or reject cohort entry depending on the context and the collective views of their community.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on Cohort Entry.

Yours sincerely

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