



MANAAKITIA A TĀTOU TAMARIKI

**Children's  
Commissioner**

**“When I first started school  
I was scared but then after a couple  
of days I felt welcomed and calm.”**  
*(Intermediate school student, NZ European)*

# **Education matters to me:** Transitions

**Detailed report 6 of 6**

**‘Education matters to me’ series**

A starting point for the Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities

March 2018

Please respect the voices of the children and young people that have contributed to this report.  
To reference this report, please include the full title: **Education matters to me: Transitions**, and a link to the online version at [www.occ.org.nz](http://www.occ.org.nz) or [www.nzsta.org.nz](http://www.nzsta.org.nz)

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# Education matters to me: Transitions

## ***Detailed Report 6 of 6 At A Glance***

*This detailed report belongs to a series that supports **Education matters to me: Key Insights. A starting point for the Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities**<sup>1</sup>, released January 2018. A pictorial summary of the Key Insights report is included as an appendix.*

The Children's Commissioner and the School Trustees Association have a shared interest in ensuring the National Education and Learning Priorities are grounded in the needs and lived experiences of all tamariki and rangatahi in Aotearoa. We engaged with children and young people face to face and through online surveys to hear their views on education. This engagement was initiated to help ensure that voices of rangatahi and tamariki contribute to the development of National Education and Learning Priorities that are to be introduced for the first time in 2018.

We wanted to hear from children and young people about their experiences; especially what was working well and how things could be better for them. We started from a position informed by the views of tamariki and rangatahi from previous engagements and some of the well-documented challenges in the education system. With this foundation we were able to focus our engagements with children and young people on six key areas of enquiry, which correlate directly to the following six detailed reports:

- 1. Experiences of tamariki and rangatahi Māori**
- 2. Emotional wellbeing**
- 3. Engagement**
- 4. 'If I were the boss' - improving our education**
- 5. Progress and achievement**
- 6. *Transitions***

This is one of six supporting reports that give more detail on each of these main areas of enquiry. As real life does not fit into neat compartments, the feedback we received from children and young people quite often overlaps areas of enquiry. This means some reports share common themes, and some statements we heard have been used in more than one report to help tell the story. The reports can stand alone, or be read alongside the others.

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<sup>1</sup> Hereafter referred to as the Key Insights report. Available at <http://www.occ.org.nz/publications/reports/education-matters-to-me-key-insights/> or <http://www.nzsta.org.nz/news-and-publications/education-matters-to-me>

The six key insights from the whole engagement are explored further in the *Key Insights* report. You can access the insights report and all the other supporting reports on the NZSTA and Office of the Children's Commissioner websites.

Children and young people across a diverse range of engagement groups spoke about three key factors, which they require to have a successful experience in education. These were: a great teacher; a supportive and involved family, and friends.

*Transitions* is the area of enquiry explored in this report.

## Glossary

<b>āhuru mōwai</b>	safe space
<b>ingo</b>	desire
<b>kaiaako</b>	teacher
<b>kaikiri</b>	racist
<b>māuiui</b>	sick
<b>orotau</b>	understand
<b>rangatahi</b>	youth
<b>tamariki</b>	children
<b>whakamā</b>	embarrassed
<b>whakawhānaungatanga</b>	building relationships

## What did we find out about transitions in the New Zealand schooling system?

We found out that when children know and understand what is going on, they transition more successfully throughout their schooling.

We wanted to hear from tamariki and rangatahi about how they feel when things change for them. To do this, we asked questions along the themes of:

**What transitions (or times of change at school) have been easy for you?**

**What transitions (or times of change at school) have been hard?**

**What helped make times when things changed easier for you?**

**When you started school, what made you feel happy?**

## The responses we gathered from children and young people have been grouped into seven findings:

- Finding 1** Help me get to know my new surroundings
- Finding 2** When things change for me, relationships are really important
- Finding 3** Support me when things change, or when they go wrong
- Finding 4** Really listen to me
- Finding 5** It's my life – let me have a say

In the following sections we will provide more detail on the five findings on transitions.

Throughout this report we share many quotes from children and young people. When we do, we will indicate the type of learning centre that the child or young person is attending, and their ethnicity.

For many reasons, categorising ethnicity can be subjective. In this report, some children and young people chose not to share their ethnicity. Ethnicities cited from face to face engagement are self-identified and based on the terminology used by the children and young people. Online survey response use categories used by StatsNZ Tatauranga Aotearoa.

Throughout this report we have used the terms 'tamariki / children' and 'rangatahi / young people' interchangeably to refer to all children that we spoke with.

**"Make them feel more welcomed to the school/classroom and have someone hang out with them so they don't feel alone."** *(Secondary school student,*

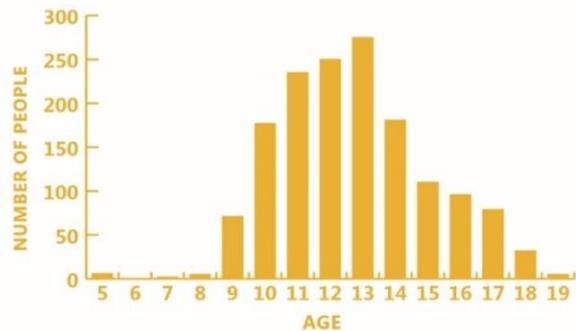
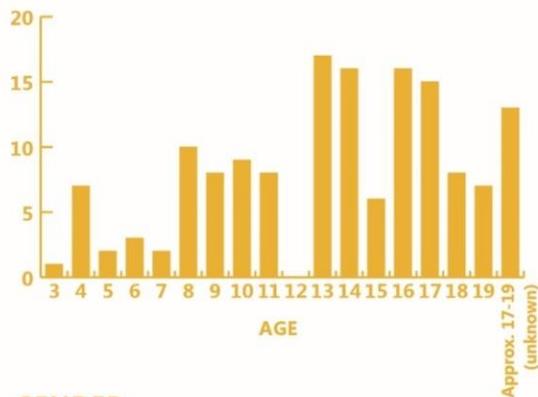
## Who did we talk with?

During October and November 2017, we engaged with 1,678 children and young people face to face and through online surveys to hear their views on education. We heard from rangatahi and tamariki in primary, intermediate and secondary schools, alternative education centres, kōhanga reo, kura kaupapa Māori, learning support units and teen parent units, as well as home schooled students.

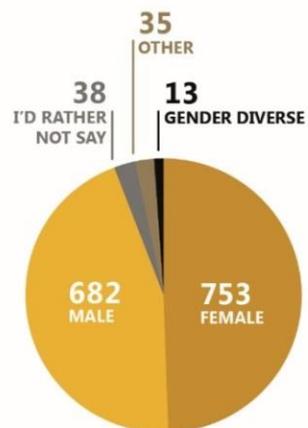
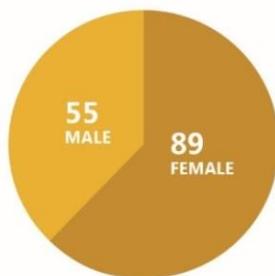
**144** Face to face engagements  
*Kanohi ki te kanohi*

**1534** Online responses  
*Urupare ā-ipurangi*

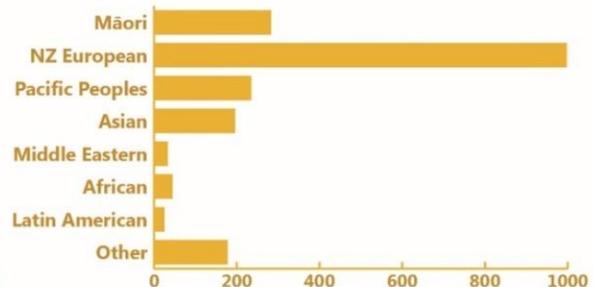
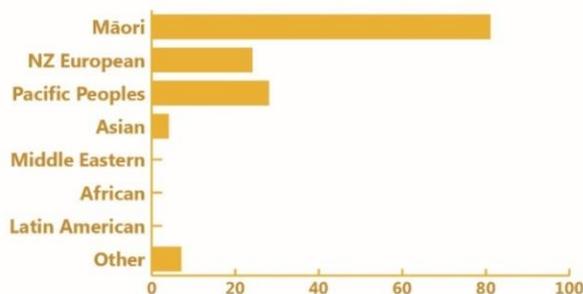
### AGE



### GENDER



### ETHNICITY



## Help me get to know my new surroundings<sup>2</sup>

Many young people said they had good support to orientate themselves to their new surroundings when they changed schools or teachers. However, some children and young people we spoke to said it would have helped them when they started at secondary school, if they had the chance to get to know their teachers, instead of beginning school work immediately. We heard that having a chance to get to know their teacher can help to make a new school or class feel a safer place to be.

Children and young people shared suggestions about how transitions could be made better for them and their fellow students. Their comments are mostly based around relationships – with teachers, and other students:

**“...let the students get to know their new teachers a bit.”** (Secondary school student, Māori)

**“Knowing the teacher beforehand.”** (Secondary school student, European/Asian)

**“Start things slow, get to know teachers and students - maybe do half days and get to know people outside of school.”** (Student in alternative education, Māori)

**“Meet everyone that’s going to be in your class - maybe create a Facebook page of just your class.”** (Student in alternative education, Māori)

Some students suggested practical things schools can do to help transitions. These included induction days, buddy-systems and campus directories.

**“It would help to have a map of the college because I couldn’t find my classes a lot at the start of the year.”** (Secondary school student, Pākehā)

**“A proper tour of the school that showed me where things were and what they were called, and which classes are in which area in the school.”** (Primary school student, NZ European)

**“Stop putting staircases in weird places. Or put a map up. Please. It’s almost been a year and I still get somewhat lost.”** (Secondary school student, NZ European)

**“Have information, from a student’s perspective about what to expect that new students can access before they start so they have an idea of what to expect.”** (Secondary school student, NZ European)

<sup>2</sup> This finding is also discussed further in the following reports: *Education matters to me: Progress and achievement*, *Education matters to me: Emotional wellbeing* and *Education matters to me: If I were the boss - Improving our education*

**“Guiding and supporting students more with the expectations of college and the reality of it that could be unknown to some.”** *(Secondary school student, NZ European)*

Young people who have experienced exclusion from secondary school and are in alternative education settings identified how not knowing what to expect in their previous school settings made it difficult for them to succeed:

**“It was terrifying to transition because I knew nobody, so I would not go to school because it was too scary.”** *(Student in alternative education, Pākehā)*

**“It was stressful because I was not used to the school or the learning.”** *(Student in alternative education, Māori)*

**“I was nervous because I didn’t know who would be in my class or what to expect.”** *(Student in alternative education, Māori)*

**“If we knew people before we went into the school, then we would feel safer and more comfortable.”** *(Student in alternative education, Samoan)*

Young people excluded from State and State Integrated schooling identified some teachers’ hardening attitudes toward them, and how teachers expected young people would cause trouble and fail. They talked about this undermining their attempts to reintegrate into school.

These students talked about their experiences of feeling hassled by teachers when they returned to the school after an initial problem, and how they would react by leaving school grounds again to get away from the feeling of being hassled.

One young person talked about how the school would suspend him, and then when he returned, teachers would tell him to go away and catch up by himself, which felt impossible.

Some rangatahi expressed frustration when teachers told them not to bother coming to school if they did not want to learn, and then the same teacher would phone home and report them for truancy.

**“It’s really annoying, teachers say if you’re not gonna come to school then don’t come and if I don’t come they phone home saying I didn’t come!”** *(Student in alternative education, Māori)*

In contrast, the experiences of the young people we spoke with who had transitioned into secondary school learning support units was generally positive:

**“Seeing friends here from my other school meant I felt safer.”** *(Student in learning support unit, Pākehā)*

**“I was scared ‘cause there was so many new people and new places but the teachers helped me feel included. Other students from the main school also helped and made me feel good to meet new people and make new friends.”** *(Student in learning support unit, Māori/Pākehā)*

**“The subjects are better here and I understand what I have to do, I don’t feel left out.”** *(Student in learning support unit, Samoan)*

Some children experience a high degree of stability at primary school, where rolls are typically smaller and children are likely to know all staff members, and be known by them. For these students, the move to a larger school where everything is more impersonal can be disorienting. Some primary school children told us they find the size of open-plan classrooms intimidating and distracting. They would find it easier to settle into smaller classrooms.

**“At my very first primary my teacher helped me get through things and then I never changed teachers until i moved class for one year and then moved back to the first teacher that i had and then i moved schools and I hated it.”** *(Primary school student, Māori)*

[When you started school, is there something that would have helped you feel happy at school?] **“not open space learning.”** *(Primary school student, Māori / NZ European/Irish)*

**“The big studios because it gets too confusing at times and is really loud pretty much all the time.”** *(Primary school student, NZ European)*

**“I do remember feeling left out sometimes, especially when I didn’t understand what was happening or what I was meant to do.”** *(Student in alternative education, Pākehā)*

**“I hate changing schools because it always feels like I am going to something new where I won’t fit in but when I came here I was surprised because I felt very comfortable.”** *(Student in learning support unit, Pākehā)*

## When things change for me, relationships are really important<sup>3</sup>

We heard that children and young people sometimes leave their peer support networks behind when they move schools. Being unable to re-establish effective peer support networks quickly can make children and young people feel alone and scared, and make it difficult to focus on learning. Having friends peer support to rely on was a theme we heard consistently.

**“Not that anyone could change it, but because I moved countries I didn't really have many friends at first.”** *(Secondary school student, NZ European/British)*

**“Making sure all students have at least one friend in their class, especially from intermediate to high school.”** *(Secondary school student, NZ European/Asian)*

**“Something that would definitely have helped me was having a friend or an older kid to introduce me to the school.”** *(Primary school student, NZ European)*

**“Make sure they are paired with people and teachers that make them feel they are in a safe environment (you learn better that way).”** *(Secondary school student, NZ European)*

Young people who have changed schools frequently (especially those in alternative education) talked about how much they miss their friends when they are moved.

We heard loneliness can be a big part of a child or young person's experience of a new school or class, and that the inability to develop an effective peer support network at school can lead to disengagement<sup>4</sup>:

**“Make them feel more welcomed to the school/classroom and have someone hang out with them so they don't feel alone.”** *(Secondary school student, Pacific People)*

**“If people were kinder when I started. It's hard to be the new person in a school.”** *(Primary school student, NZ European)*

**“If I had made more friends and be included.”** *(Primary school student, Pacific People)*

**“Less Racism”** *(Primary school student, Asian/Middle Eastern)*

**“School's not really the right place for me. Hard for me to make friends.”** *(Secondary school student, Asian)*

<sup>3</sup> This finding is also discussed further in the report: *Education matters to me: Progress and achievement*

<sup>4</sup> See our report *Education matters to me: Engagement*

We heard some children and young people find new relationships difficult at the best of times. Making new friends, and making themselves known to new teachers can present significant challenges for them when they change classes or schools.

**“Some students are quite shy and teachers do need to understand that.”**  
(*Secondary school student, Asian*)

We also heard family relationships can be an important source of support for young people, but is sometimes less effective than they would like:

**“Better communication between your parents, so they know how you feel.”**  
(*Secondary school student, Samoan*)

[When you started school, is there something that would have helped you feel happy] **“My brothers.”** (*Primary school student, NZ European*)

**“Having my relatives with me at school.”** (*Primary school student, Cook Islands*)

**“Getting my parents involved with my learning and helping me at school.”**  
(*Primary school student, NZ European*)

The secondary students who responded to our survey found the transition to secondary school the hardest – harder than getting a new teacher, or starting primary or intermediate school. In response to the question ‘*What do you think could make these changes better for students?*’ the most commonly identified suggestions related to teachers, introductions and induction processes, and peer support (in that order).

**“...personal experiences say that being close to a teacher or comfortable with a teacher makes school easier. When moving up to the next school or into a new classroom, it's easier if you have a friend in your classes. Schools should make sure each student has someone they can get along with instead of being alone with nobody they know, making friends for some students isn't as easy for some people.”** (*Secondary school student, NZ European*)

**“More fun days in the first day to [bond] with your classmates.”** (*Secondary school student, Māori*)

**“You could choose a friend to be with you in your class.”** (*Primary school student, NZ European/Māori*)

**“Be able to choose at least one friend to be in the majority of your classes.”**  
(*Secondary school student, NZ European/Māori*)

Rangatahi who have stable relationships with teachers are better able to stay connected to school even if other aspects of their education are not going well. Poor relationships are connected in young people’s minds with disengagement from education.

**“Better relationships with the teachers so we feel more comfortable about changing.”** (*Secondary school student, Asian*)

**“Knowing more teachers better.”** (*Secondary school student, Māori/ Pacific People*)

**"No there's nothing I would change cause my teacher is really nice, supportive and helps me and the class when we need it. I also feel safe and sound knowing my teacher is loving and can help us when we need it."**

*(Primary school student, Māori)*

**"A teacher student meet and greet where all the teachers are in the hall and you can have a chat with them about what they teach and what their names are."** *(Secondary school student, NZ European)*

**"Good teachers, teachers who are helpful, they make the difference between me achieving and failing."** *(Not in employment, education or training, ethnicity undisclosed.)*

**"Honestly from my perspective being new at [this school] has been the worse experience of all my schooling years. None of the ... students have ever been accepting to the new people and if they are its only because those new people "fit in" within groups. So I think maybe getting a new student paired up with a student who isn't new so that it would be easier to make friends. [It] is the worse especially the boys... they're all very arrogant and rude."** *(Secondary school student, Pacific People)*

**"Teachers need to get along with students and show more love so the students can feel safe and wanted... teachers should be security, listen, care and help you, be willing to help."**

*(Student in alternative education, Tongan/  
New Zealander/Samoan/British)*

## Support me when things change, or when they go wrong<sup>5</sup>

Many of the comments we heard about transitions between year levels or between schools identified things their teacher or peers did to support children and young people and help them cope with the changes. However, some children and young people still talked about transitions between schools or schooling levels (e.g. primary to intermediate or secondary to alternative education) as difficult. Their comments indicated uncertainty, fear, and feeling that the people around them didn't care what they were going through:

**"Sometimes I feel what we learn is unnecessary, we should be prepared for the stress and anxiety we face at secondary school, I feel if primary school prepared us for the reality of the workload we probably wouldn't be so stressed."** (Secondary school student, Samoan)

**"If there were better teachers, teachers that cared, then maybe it would have made a difference. When I went to high school there were loads of people and for ages it felt like we were all just there but didn't know what to do or how to get help."** (Student in alternative education, Māori)

We heard a lot of ideas about how schools could support students better through these transitions. We heard that schools at different year levels could make more effort to give their students more experience of the environment they will be moving into.

**"Adding a few days at the end of the intermediate year to visit the college and to get more used to the routine."** (Secondary school student, Māori/NZ European)

**"That before I went to secondary school (college) I had more homework / assessment experience. I spent most of my intermediate time just playing games and never doing anything too difficult, then I was thrown into a deep end in year 9 and then thrown into another deep end in year 11 that I wish I was more prepared for. students who are academically advanced can somewhat cope with this but the majority can't."** (Secondary school student, Asian)

**"Teachers could help students more uniquely and push those who are ahead."** (Secondary school student, NZ European)

**"Better integration between local primary schools and colleges, so the transition process is easier and the campus feels less foreign."** (Secondary school student, Māori/NZ European)

<sup>5</sup> This finding is also discussed further in the following reports: *Education matters to me: Emotional wellbeing* and *He manu kai matauranga: he tirohanga Māori* report

**“Not have too many students in a classroom (Like joining two classes together) because then students can't get as much 1:1 from the teacher and harder to get to know everyone in it.”** *(Secondary school student, NZ European)*

**“Making sure that going into a new classroom that a teacher knows the students weaknesses so that they can have an understanding and help.”** *(Secondary school student, NZ European)*

**“Have people who know that person help them out.”** *(Secondary school student, Asian)*

We asked children and young people who responded to our survey if there was something that would have helped them feel happy when they started at their school. Some responses, and some of our face-to-face interactions identified moving schools as a time when they can be particularly vulnerable to bullying, and when they need peer support networks to be readily accessible:

**“The boys being nicer and not teasing about where I come from.”** *(Primary school student, Asian)*

**“Improve the education of LGBT+ to other students and teachers, helps to prevent bulling of these students as they are often very vulnerable.”** *(Secondary school student, NZ European)*

**“Better communication and responsibility needed to look after students that get bullied on a daily basis.”** *(Secondary school student, Indian)*

**“Trying to put friends into the same class so that there is someone familiar with them.”** *(Secondary school student, Asian)*

Some talked about the difficulty of transitioning into a new school with a language they did not speak well.

**“People trying to help me learn the language because when I came from Greece I didn't know any English.”** *(Primary school student, Greek)*

We heard the unique experience of rangatahi Māori who transition from kura kaupapa into mainstream schools. We heard from tamariki and rangatahi who attend or had attended kura kaupapa Māori about how they feel judged and misunderstood by young people from other schools. For example, in interschool competitions, they feel they are treated as outsiders by other students for speaking te reo Māori. Tamariki and rangatahi from kura kaupapa Māori expressed a sense of wanting to be understood and supported.

One rangatahi spoke of how moving from an English-medium secondary school to kura kaupapa helped her to do better because she felt the school and teachers understood her:

**“Going to [from] a kura kaupapa to a English school and I couldn't speak English because I only knew Māori.”** *(Secondary school student, Māori)*

**“My other schools not understanding my background n coming to a school where everyone knos wot its like to be in my shoes.”** *(Student in secondary school, Māori)*

We also heard that changes within the class such as a change of teacher during the year can also require careful management:

**“When a teacher changes in the middle of the year a better hand over on what has been taught and what needs to be taught is required ”** *(Secondary school student, NZ European)*

**“Having the same teacher for longer. I have had 7 different teachers for one class this year.”** *(Secondary school student, NZ European)*

**“More support for incoming students from older students already at the school (seems to be in effect to some degree, but more leadership could be great for both the older and younger), and a system to help ensure each teacher of a class cares about teaching the subject and supporting the learning of all students in the class. If a teacher can't provide all the help a student needs, there should be someone else in place to support the student, in case their families are too busy or can't fully support their learning at home.”** *(Secondary school student, Latin American/American)*

**“I felt anxious and scared of doing something wrong, mainly not knowing what everybody was speaking of when I was in writing, reading etc. This was when I started during the middle of school. I would like to have better understanding of what each subject was focusing on currently.”** *(Primary school student, Asian/Pakistani)*

## Really listen to me<sup>6</sup>

One of the greatest changes children and young people told us would help them to transition successfully, achieve, and stay engaged at school is for adults to get to know them and treat them as an individual, with respect and compassion.<sup>7</sup>

**“That teachers should not shout so much and listen better.”** (Primary school student, NZ European)

**“Listen.”** (Secondary school student, Pacific People)

**“Make it that people see me rather than doing nothing and treating me like a nobody.”** (Secondary school student, NZ European)

**“Just talk to us, don’t see us as too hard.”** (Student in learning support unit, Samoan)

**“Listen to the students more on what’s going on between the students which could be harmful. Put aside the school reputation and listen to the students for a better environment.”** (Secondary school student, Fijian Indian)

We heard that children and young people need to be actively listened to. They want teachers not just to go through the motions of letting them talk, but to genuinely engage with what they are saying, to hear what their worries are, and to get to know them.

Children and young people in both the survey and the face to face engagement talked about not getting a chance to explain themselves when they were being told off, or being suspended without understanding why.

Some children and young people expressed frustration that when they try to make their needs known, or ask for help, they are not listened to.

**“Teachers think that we don’t understand so they shout at us for no reason and squeeze my arm really hard.”** (Primary school student, Asian)

**“Teacher[s] need to be more understanding that not all students learn the same way so when we ask for help we are asking for a 1 on 1 time with you to explain not for you to tell us we already learnt this last year. Sometimes you should just let us dream a little instead of telling us our dreams are unreachable ...”** (Secondary school student, NZ European)

<sup>6</sup> This finding is also discussed further in the following report: *Education matters to me: If I were the boss - Improving our education*

<sup>7</sup> This finding is also discussed further in the following report: *Education matters to me: Emotional wellbeing*

## It's my life – let me have a say

Children and young people want to be involved in decisions about themselves and their learning. They want to know what's happening and why it happens, and be supported to plan for their future.

**"If kids had more of a say in the dumb changes they make around our school that are unnecessary and nobody likes them. Also that teachers would be nicer."** *(Primary school student, NZ European)*

**"They don't really give students a voice anymore about the little things at our school."** *(Primary school student, NZ European)*

Some of the children and young people we spoke to, including some in alternative education settings, experience a lack of choice or participation in decision making about their own lives and schooling. They highlight the importance of being recognised as people with the right to be included in decisions that affect them. They really want to have a say in their education, and they want teachers to involve them in their learning.

One young person said that he was uncertain what behaviour of his had caused him to get into trouble and that he never knew exactly what he was meant to do differently.

**"I don't get a chance to go to school. I always get suspended first week of term. I'm not sure why. There could be 100 of reasons why but I never got told. So been to 3 AEs. I want to go to school. Like hanging with my mates."** *(Student in alternative education, Māori)*

Being told off, or worse, removed from school without knowing why is confusing for children and young people. It makes them feel unsafe and alienates them from the school environment. It doesn't help them to learn or to modify their behaviour to meet teachers' expectations.

Some young people told us they do not get enough information, or enough help to make sense of information they are given about things like subject choice at secondary school. One young person talked about being presented with two subject options, but not given any guidance by an adult on which one might help them reach their goals for university.

**"I felt unprepared."** *(Student in alternative education, Pākehā)*

**"Asking for our opinions about the way teachers teach and to actually do something about it when the teacher is failing the students with their incompetence in the subject. Also, ask before splitting up form classes into new groups, instead of just isolating us from our friends."** *(Secondary school student, NZ European)*

**"Talk to the students and find out what they personally want to be made better to make changes better."** *(Student in secondary school, NZ European)*

**“Consult students about who they would like/not like to be with in their class next year.”** *(Secondary school student, New Zealander)*

This also applies to other agencies working with children and young people.

End-of-year changes are not the only reason children and young people may have to change schools or classes. Some can experience multiple transitions within each school year due to insecure tenancies, family relationship breakdown, and complex care arrangements, such as being moved to foster care. These students need extra support as they need to develop and maintain relationships with each new teacher. They also need to be able to discuss their educational goals and experience of school with their social worker or other support worker.

Some young people we talked with who have had contact with Oranga Tamariki have not had the opportunity to talk about their education goals with their social worker or case manager. The supporting agencies in their lives operate in silos, leaving gaps where important things such as access to education can come unstuck.

Some young people spoke about not having adequate supports to attend school, and having no one to ask for support:

**“Many people I have lived with [in CYF care] aren’t able to go [to school/courses] because they can’t pay the fees....I live with Mum but the uniform is too expensive and we got no money from CYF. We had to borrow off WINZ and have to pay it back. Some children and young people don’t have enough money to buy uniforms or just won’t go to school because of this. Education should be free so everyone has the equal opportunity to go to school. Money shouldn’t be a barrier.”** *(Student in secondary school, Māori)*

## Conclusion

Children who know what to expect and how to manage changes feel less anxious, and more able to relax and learn. Changing classes, schools, or types of education provider is a very important part of children and young people's experience of schooling. They need the adults in charge of their schooling experience to make them feel safe and supported, listened to and involved in decisions that affect them. They need this before, during and after these transitions in their school environment.

We heard that many schools do make a real effort to enable students to adjust to their new school or class, however many students still feel unsure even of the most basic things in their new environment, like where classrooms are situated.

We also heard that being given time to establish a sense of belonging and familiarity, through a more comprehensive and structured induction including targeted orientation activities and resources in the first weeks, and opportunities to get to know staff could help being ready to learn quicker and more effectively.

Children and young people who experience multiple transitions within each school year because of life circumstances outside of school, or because of high staff turnover in their classrooms need extra support to develop and maintain relationships with each new teacher. They need their teachers (not just the dean or senior leadership team) to notice when something is wrong, find out what is causing it, and respond appropriately and supportively.

Changing schools is naturally stressful. Old familiar relationships and surroundings are left behind, new relationships must be forged and new bearings taken. Our schools need to provide a good education for all of the children and young people of Aotearoa New Zealand. We heard from children and young people that the system is currently falling short. The question is how can we make it better.

If we really want to improve education outcomes, we need to get input from the people it affects most directly – children and young people. The children and young people we engaged with in the preparation of these reports care deeply about their education and how it prepares them for their future lives. They have a great sense of hope for what education can offer them.

Children and young people are experts on their own experiences in education. Only they can talk about whether the kind of experience we are trying to give our children and young people is what they are actually getting. They have the right to have a say, and have their views heard in decisions that affect them. It is time for everyone, especially in education, to be more deliberate and purposeful in how we incorporate children's views and opinions when making decisions that affect them.

We have gathered a diverse range of perspectives from children and young people throughout New Zealand, but we recognise the limitations of our reach. In particular voices from children and young people living rurally are not captured in this report. The children and young people's voices that have shaped this report, and all of the *Education matters to me* reports, are honest and genuine. It is our job now to listen to them and act on what we hear.

## Education matters to me: Key insights.

A starting point for the Statement of National Education Learning Priorities.

*Six key insights drawn from our engagement with children and young people on education, and supported by the findings in this report. These key insights can be found in our report Education matters to me: Key insights.*



### Understand me in my whole world

*He kākano ahau i te wao nui tāngata*

Children and young people talked about how they want to be seen for who they are, and to be understood within the context of their home life, and experiences.



### Relationships mean everything to me

*He āhuru mowai, he ingo matauranga*

Children and young people talked about the range of significant relationships that either enable them to achieve or prevent them from achieving. Many told us that they can't begin learning unless they have a trusted relationship with their teacher.



### I need to be comfortable before I can learn

*Whangaia tēnei manu kai matauranga*

Children and young people from all different learning environments stressed the importance of feeling happy and comfortable before they can learn and the impact that their learning environment has on their wellbeing.



### **People at school are racist towards me**

*He mea nui te hononga tangata*

Many children and young people told us they experience racism at school and are treated unequally because of their culture.



### **Teach me the way I learn best**

*Whangaia tēnei manu kai matauranga*

Children and young people want their teacher to teach them according to their strengths, and unique abilities. Learning content was also important, some want to be learning things that they see as relevant to their lives, and their



### **It's my life - let me have a say**

*Whakatua toku rangatiratanga*

Children and young people experience a lack of choice or participation in decision making about their own lives and schooling. They really want to have a say in their education. They want teachers to involve them in their learning.

the  $\mathbb{R}^n$ -valued function  $\mathbf{f}$  is a solution of the system (1) if and only if  $\mathbf{f}$  is a solution of the system (2). The system (2) is called the *variational system* of (1) at the point  $(t, \mathbf{x})$ . The matrix  $\mathbf{A}(t, \mathbf{x})$  is called the *variational matrix* of (1) at the point  $(t, \mathbf{x})$ .

Let  $\mathbf{f}$  be a solution of (1) and let  $\mathbf{v}$  be a vector in  $\mathbb{R}^n$ . Then  $\mathbf{v}$  is a solution of the variational system (2) if and only if  $\mathbf{v}$  is a solution of the system

$$\dot{\mathbf{v}} = \mathbf{A}(t, \mathbf{x}(t))\mathbf{v}, \quad \mathbf{v}(t_0) = \mathbf{v}_0, \quad (3)$$

where  $\mathbf{x}(t)$  is the solution of (1) with initial condition  $\mathbf{x}(t_0) = \mathbf{x}_0$ . The system (3) is called the *linearized system* of (1) at the point  $(t_0, \mathbf{x}_0)$ . The matrix  $\mathbf{A}(t, \mathbf{x}(t))$  is called the *linearized matrix* of (1) at the point  $(t_0, \mathbf{x}_0)$ .

Let  $\mathbf{f}$  be a solution of (1) and let  $\mathbf{v}$  be a vector in  $\mathbb{R}^n$ . Then  $\mathbf{v}$  is a solution of the linearized system (3) if and only if  $\mathbf{v}$  is a solution of the system

$$\dot{\mathbf{v}} = \mathbf{A}(t, \mathbf{x}_0)\mathbf{v}, \quad \mathbf{v}(t_0) = \mathbf{v}_0, \quad (4)$$

where  $\mathbf{A}(t, \mathbf{x}_0)$  is the matrix  $\mathbf{A}(t, \mathbf{x})$  evaluated at  $\mathbf{x} = \mathbf{x}_0$ . The system (4) is called the *constant coefficient linearized system* of (1) at the point  $(t_0, \mathbf{x}_0)$ . The matrix  $\mathbf{A}(t, \mathbf{x}_0)$  is called the *constant coefficient linearized matrix* of (1) at the point  $(t_0, \mathbf{x}_0)$ .

Let  $\mathbf{f}$  be a solution of (1) and let  $\mathbf{v}$  be a vector in  $\mathbb{R}^n$ . Then  $\mathbf{v}$  is a solution of the constant coefficient linearized system (4) if and only if  $\mathbf{v}$  is a solution of the system

$$\dot{\mathbf{v}} = \mathbf{A}(\mathbf{x}_0)\mathbf{v}, \quad \mathbf{v}(t_0) = \mathbf{v}_0, \quad (5)$$

where  $\mathbf{A}(\mathbf{x}_0)$  is the matrix  $\mathbf{A}(t, \mathbf{x}_0)$  evaluated at  $t = t_0$ . The system (5) is called the *autonomous constant coefficient linearized system* of (1) at the point  $(t_0, \mathbf{x}_0)$ . The matrix  $\mathbf{A}(\mathbf{x}_0)$  is called the *autonomous constant coefficient linearized matrix* of (1) at the point  $(t_0, \mathbf{x}_0)$ .

Let  $\mathbf{f}$  be a solution of (1) and let  $\mathbf{v}$  be a vector in  $\mathbb{R}^n$ . Then  $\mathbf{v}$  is a solution of the autonomous constant coefficient linearized system (5) if and only if  $\mathbf{v}$  is a solution of the system

**“...personal experiences say that being close to a teacher or comfortable with a teacher makes school easier. When moving up to the next school or into a new classroom, it's easier if you have a friend in your classes. Schools should make sure each student has someone they can get along with instead of being alone with nobody they know, making friends for some students isn't as easy for some people.”**

*(Secondary school student, NZ European)*



MANAAKITIA A TĀTOU TAMARIKI  
**Children's  
Commissioner**

