

Media release – Children and young people share their experiences of school

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*“I am a library, quiet but filled with knowledge - it’s dumb [that I’m not asked].”
(Student in alternative education unit)*

“If we really want to improve education outcomes, we need to get input from the people it affects most directly – children and young people”, say the New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) and the Children’s Commissioner.

The report *Education matters to me: Key insights* summarises responses from over 1600 children and young people to questions about what is important to them about their education, and what being at school is like for them. Six follow-up reports will be released in mid-February.

The reports are designed to inform public consultation this year when the Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities established under last year’s Education Act Update is being developed.

“We have heard about their positive and negative experiences of the current system and how it can work better for them”, says Lorraine Kerr, President of the New Zealand School Trustees Association.

Children and young people’s voices need to inform the priorities set in the education for the next five years.

“We can talk about the kind of experience we are trying to give our children and young people. But only they can talk about whether that is what they are actually getting” says Lorraine Kerr.

“Children and young people are experts on their own experiences in education”, says Andrew Becroft, Children’s Commissioner. “They have the right to have a say, and have their views heard in decisions that affect them. Children’s views always add value and improve services.

“This partnership draws on NZSTA’s knowledge of what we are trying to provide for children and young people in our schools, and my office’s experience in helping children and young people to make their views heard.”

“Our schools need to provide a good education for all of the children and young people of Aotearoa New Zealand,” says Lorraine Kerr. “We heard from children and young people that the system is currently falling short. The question is how can we make it better.”

The report shared six key insights drawn from what children and young people said:

1. Understand me in my whole world
2. People at school are racist towards me
3. Relationships mean everything to me
4. Teach me the way I learn best
5. I need to be comfortable before I can learn
6. It’s my life - let me have a say

“Children and young people 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”, says Andrew Becroft. “It is our job now to listen to them and act on what we hear. 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.”

“When people recognise me and my skills I feel I can do better and achieve more.”
(Student in secondary school)

ENDS

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About the New Zealand School Trustees Association

The New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) is an independent, non-partisan membership association representing school boards of trustees throughout New Zealand. NZSTA works closely with the government of the day to ensure that all boards of trustees are aware of their legal and ethical responsibilities as governors of their school.

NZSTA’s mission is to Lead and Strengthen School Governance in New Zealand. We will know we have succeeded in this mission when all schools are effectively governed by a board of trustees whose primary focus is every student achieving their highest possible educational potential.

NZSTA has two complementary areas of activity. Our membership activities provide leadership, representation and advocacy for NZSTA member boards. Our service delivery activities, delivered under contract to the Ministry of Education, provide practical support and advice to all boards of trustees to inform and improve governance and employment practice.

About the Office of the Children’s Commissioner

The Children’s Commissioner is an Independent Crown Entity, appointed by the Governor-General, carrying out responsibilities and functions set out in the Children’s Commissioner Act 2003. The Children’s Commissioner has a range of statutory powers to promote the rights, health, welfare, and wellbeing of children and young people from 0 to 18 years. These functions are undertaken through advocacy, public awareness, consultation, research, and investigations and monitoring.

The role includes specific functions in respect of monitoring activities completed under the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989. The Children’s Commissioner also undertakes systemic advocacy functions and investigates particular issues with potential to threaten the health, safety, or wellbeing of children and young people. The Children’s Commissioner has a particular responsibility to raise awareness and understanding of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Children’s Commissioner’s activities must comply with the relevant provisions of the Public Finance Act 1989, Crown Entities Act 2004 and any other relevant legislation.