



MANAAKITIA A TĀTOU TAMARIKI

**Children's
Commissioner**

“Striving through school to be the best you can be for yourself, your children and your family.”

(Student in teen parent unit, Māori)

Education matters to me:

Progress and achievement

Detailed report 5 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: Progress and achievement**, and a link to the online version at www.occ.org.nz or www.nzsta.org.nz

ISBN: 978-0-473-43300-0

Education matters to me:

Progress and achievement

Detailed Report 5 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**¹, 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 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

¹ 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>

been used in more than one report to help tell the story. The reports can stand alone, or be read alongside the others.

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.

Progress and achievement is the area of enquiry explored in this report.

What we heard from children and young people about progress and achievement

We wanted to hear from tamariki and rangatahi about what 'achievement' meant to them. To do this, we asked questions along the themes of:

What does achievement mean to you?

What do you want to achieve?

Does your [learning environment – school / TPU/LSU] help you with your goals?

What do you need to help you achieve and reach your goals?

How well is your school doing things that would help you achieve?

Children and young people have a broad view of achievement

"Achievement means a lot to me, it shows me how far I have come from a certain point or aspect in my life till now." *(Secondary school student, Pacific Peoples)*

"Achievement is a difficult term for me because I feel like we are expected to achieve a lot. For me it is about finding happiness and having a sense that I have done something useful today." *(Secondary school student, Samoan)*

Children and young people had a broad and holistic view of achievement in their own lives. In our face-to-face engagements, we heard more about students' own goals and aspirations. Children and young people who responded to our survey told us more about the goals and aspirations that school defines for them.

“If you're trying to make a significant difference to the school, changing the socks is literally the last thing on the list of problems this school has.” *(Secondary school student, NZ European)*

In our survey, we asked how well schools are doing some of the things that research tells us contribute to student achievement. Children and young people who responded to our survey were generally quite positive about the things their school is doing to help them achieve academically. However, there were still things in each of these areas they told us could be better.

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

- Finding 1** I want to make my whānau proud
- Finding 2** To help me, understand what my goals are
- Finding 3** Recognise my strengths
- Finding 4** My physical space impacts on my learning
- Finding 5** I can't achieve without strong relationships
- Finding 6** I feel stuck in the classroom and it doesn't work for me
- Finding 7** Bullying happens so do something about it

In the following sections we will provide more detail on the seven findings on progress and achievement.

Glossary

āhuru mōwai	safe space
ingo	desire
kaiako	teacher
kaikiri	racist
māuiui	sick
orotau	understand
rangatahi	youth
tamariki	children
whakamā	embarrassed
whakawhānaungatanga	building relationships

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.

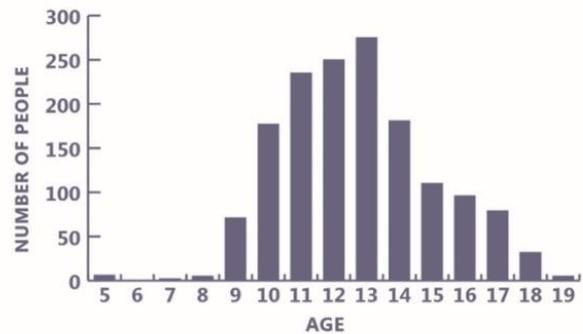
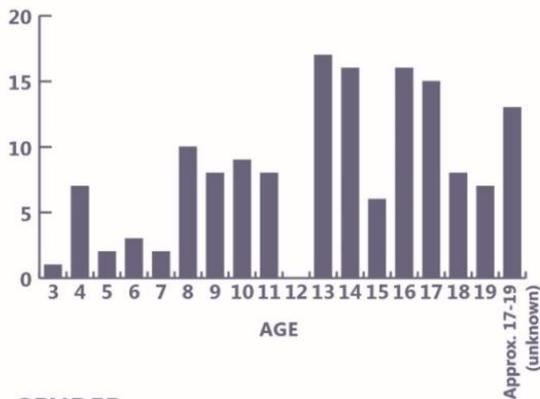
Who did we talk with?

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

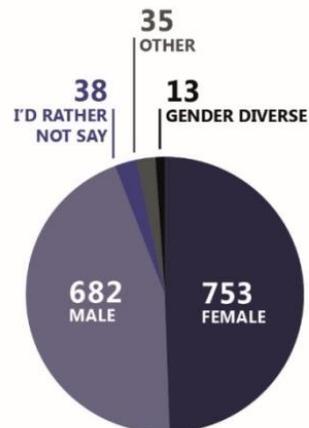
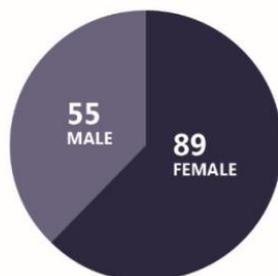
144 Face to face engagements
Kanohi ki te kanohi

1534 Online responses
Urupare ā-ipurangi

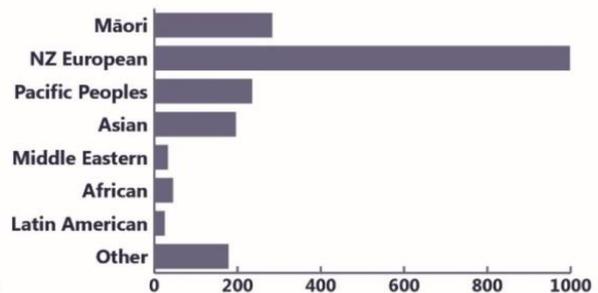
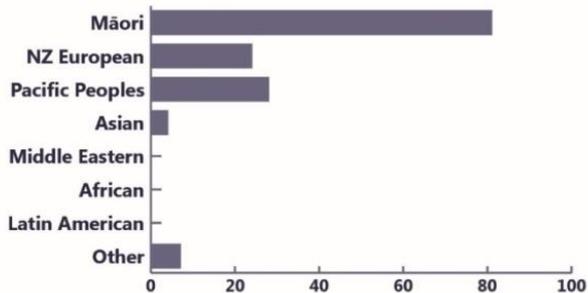
AGE



GENDER



ETHNICITY



I want to make my whānau proud²

Young people want to make their family proud. For many, their family is their main motivation for school life:

“I just think that my motivation is my parents and the fact that they've put a lot of their time and money to invest in my future and I really want to give back what they've given me. I want to make them proud and let them know that I don't only come to school for friends or to do certain activities for six hours of my day five times a week, but I want to exceed and succeed on behalf of them and show others that they raised a good kid.” *(Secondary school student, Pacific Peoples)*

“What really keeps me going to school is honestly my family. Being a Samoan, life is challenging but I knew that education is where my parents would look at me for refuge, for I was and still am their investment.” *(Secondary school student, Samoan)*

Some of the young people we spoke to told us that their parents expressed high hopes for them, and they wanted to live up to the expectations. They also did not want to bring their parents shame by failing. We spoke to one young person just before he sat his final exams. Both of his older brothers had not completed high school and he felt the pressure was on him to succeed by finishing school. He didn't feel as though school was “his thing”, but he knew it was important to his parents that he passed his final exams. His parents wanted him to go to university, and he felt conflicted because he did not want to go, but also did not want to disappoint his parents.

Supporting my whānau is important

For many tamariki and rangatahi Māori, their whānau is also their motivation. Māori children and young people told us that they are motivated to do well in school by their whānau, and believe that achieving in school will enable them to better support their whānau, now and in the future.

[What helps you achieve at school?] **“Succeeding in life jobs while supporting whānau.”** *(Student in kura kaupapa, Māori)*

“Achievement should be more than grades. Be able to support whānau and doing jobs well in life.” *(Student in kura kaupapa, Māori)*

² This finding is also discussed further in the *He manu kai matauranga: He tirohanga Māori* report.

[What helps you achieve at school?] **“Supporting my whānau, iwi and hapū any way I can and have a successful career.”** *(Student in kura kaupapa, Māori)*

One rangatahi Māori told us about how when she transitioned from primary to secondary school she knew no one at her new school, and she wanted to drop out. She talked about how her Nan gave her the consistent message that school was important, and supported her to go. She is now going into Year 13 and really enjoying school. She has high hopes for the future, and credits her school success to her supportive whānau, friends and teachers.

“I have achieved most of this thanks to the few people at school and my family at home that kept me going. The people that I've become close with this year have been a big impact in my life and have encouraged me to go to school every day and finish the year.” *(Secondary school student, Māori)*

My kids are my motivation

We heard from mothers in teen parent units who were motivated to achieve for their children. They told us that their school environment enables them to achieve when it works with them to support their children while studying.

“I feel loved here, comfortable, supported, my surroundings, my child at creche right next door, love love love my kura.” *(Student in teen parent unit, Māori)*

“It is comfortable with our babies here.” *(Student in teen parent unit, Māori)*

“Success in school would look like teachers and students building a relationship together so students can feel comfortable.” *(Student in teen parent unit, Māori)*

“I want my boy growing up happy, a roof over his head, food on the table and clothes on his back. Setting goals and achieving them.” *(Student in teen parent unit, Māori)*

In some of the teen parent units there were achievement walls of previous students, and seeing the achievements of others who have been younger parents too was encouraging for the young people. They talked about how it showed them what they could achieve, and gave them hope for their future.

“Striving through school to be the best you can be for yourself, your children and your family.” *(Student in teen parent unit, Māori)*

To help me, understand what my goals are³

Many of the children and young people we spoke to were very conscious of the difference between 'achievement' as measured by school credits and 'achievement' in reaching goals they set for themselves. They themselves have a range of different measures of achievement that reflect their lived experience, and their relationship with the people and events that help shape it.

Achievement is more than just good grades

We heard that some really meaningful achievements may not be recognised by school. For some young people we spoke to, being the first generation to complete secondary school is a huge achievement for both them and their family. For others, being the first to go to university is one of their measures of achievement. For some children and young people, being at school and completing NCEA is just something that they expect to do. When we asked questions about achievement, some talked about sporting achievements, and some talked about achievements in kapa haka and other cultural groups as things they were proud of.

"I think it [achievement] means passing a test or doing good when it matters, sometimes achieving has more to do about feeling good about yourself than it is about making others feel good. I want to achieve for myself but also for my family." (Secondary school student, Māori)

"Like if you want to be a mechanic instead of doing social studies, a class that helps you." (Student in alternative education, Māori)

"To finish school, to get an education and qualify for a job in the future. To raise my children better than I was raised. Have no violence around my children. To raise my kids in an environment that is healthy for them and keep my children in my care." (Student in teen parent unit)

"Appreciate the cultural groups more, our Kapa Haka group and Poly group have been hiding behind sport achievements. I think that everyone should be appreciated for what they achieve." (Secondary school student, Asian)

³ This finding is also discussed further in the following reports: *Education matters to me: Engagement* and *Education matters to me: Emotional wellbeing*

Focus on things that are important to us

Some children and young people who responded to our survey told us that schools do not always focus on what really is important. Some told us that they are not able to study the things that interest them, or that are important to them.

“I would add a subject that would be useful, like life skills such as learning how to make budget, understanding how to be independent in life etc.”

(Secondary school student, Pacific Peoples)

“Create other courses that can lead to apprenticeships.” *(Secondary school student, NZ European)*

“...schools must look at what they want their students to look like at the end of year 13 - it should not be "make them an average tax-paying person.” *(Secondary school student, British)*

“We also need to rework the English subject as we are taught many skills that not all of us will need for instance creative writing. I personally do not want to become a writer. I know some of these skills are just building blocks that we are taught in primary but they are just building blocks and our whole education shouldn't be based off them we need more open-minded creative people not more robots in the system.” *(Secondary school student, Pacific People)*

“I would be more inclusive for people that want to do sport as a career.” *(Secondary school student, NZ European)*



“If we aren't getting the credits then it means we aren't achieving even if we are doing good in other areas of our life. This makes me feel pretty stink because I see other people doing really good and getting those credits.” *(Student in alternative education, Pākehā)*

Recognise my strengths⁴

Children and young people want their strengths highlighted and to be given positive reinforcement and encouragement. They want to be noticed for when they're behaving well or succeeding, not just be told off for misbehaviour. For many, school is like that most of the time. For others, it is not:

"That teachers notice every one and that they notice the good kids rather than always focusing on the bad behaved ones." (Primary school student, NZ European)

"Get a new principal who genuinely cares about us and focuses more on what we do well than everything we're doing wrong." (Secondary school student, Pākehā)

One young person talked about how teachers don't talk to her or seem to understand her. They were unlikely to ask her for her views. She reflected:

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

Some of the children and young people who responded to our survey told us that they can feel as if they are not given an opportunity to demonstrate their strengths, or that they are blamed for things that are not their fault.

"No more yelling at students because they just yell back or cry and it stresses everyone out ...And people should be able to get to class five minutes late without being told off. Some teachers don't let us go until the exact time the next class starts, and it often takes a little while to get from one side of the school to another." (Secondary school student, Pacific People)

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

Some young people also told us that as Māori or Pacific young people it can feel as if their strengths are not recognised because teachers do not know how to recognise them:

"The way Maori and Pasifika students are treated and viewed. I would employ a more ethnically diverse teaching staff and ensure that there is a

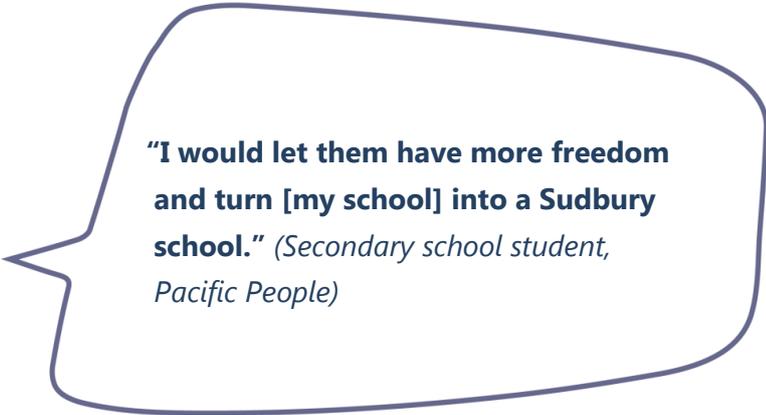
⁴ This finding is also discussed further in the following reports: *Education matters to me: Engagement* and *Education matters to me: Emotional wellbeing*

wider understanding of Maori and Pasifika culture among them.” (Secondary school student, Māori, Pacific Peoples)

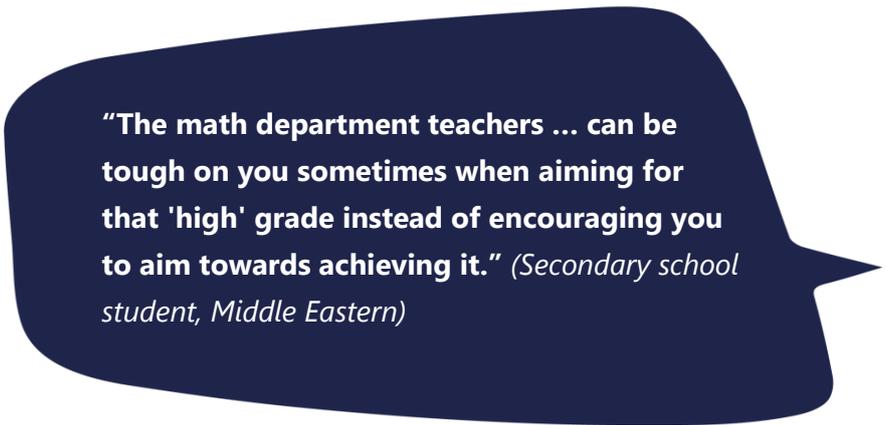
Young people who responded to our survey had some clear views about the effectiveness of teaching practices and school organisation.

“I would change the curriculum slightly, so that instead of being told everything we could do more of our own research with more hands on work, because it would get more people interested in learning.” (Secondary school student, African European)

One young person commented that teachers can sometimes lose sight of student’s strengths in pursuit of high grades at assessment time.



“I would let them have more freedom and turn [my school] into a Sudbury school.” (Secondary school student, Pacific People)



“The math department teachers ... can be tough on you sometimes when aiming for that 'high' grade instead of encouraging you to aim towards achieving it.” (Secondary school student, Middle Eastern)

My physical space impacts on my learning⁵

Many of the children and young people we engaged with told us about how their physical environment affects their learning. Some feel invisible in large, open-plan learning spaces, and have difficulty connecting with their teachers. For some children, the school playground is a space where bad things can happen away from teachers' oversight:

"Bully free zone. So you can go to another playground and you cannot get bullied." (Primary school student, Māori)

"More teachers on duty to make sure students don't feel unwanted in the playground." (Primary school student, NZ European)

I want to feel proud of my school surroundings

Some were frustrated that the buildings and equipment they are expected to use are not fit for purpose. We also heard that some spaces don't feel inviting or cared for because they are full of rubbish:

"I would change the rubbish around our school because everyday I come to school, i see rubbish everywhere." (Primary school student, Pacific People, Asian)

"I would change the entire school by putting in more rubbish bins so our school won't look dirty that much!!!" (Primary school student, Pacific People)

"Class rooms need to be able to fit to the weather - therefore heaters need to be on when it's freezing and raining, and air conditioning needs to be on when it's boiling hot and everyone is sweating - it's when you feel gross because of weather it's very difficult to focus in class. I understand this is a lot and money can be an issue but if anything can be done to improve our learning and health at school it would be something many students would be grateful for." (Secondary school student, NZ European)

"I would make the facilities cleaner, and some of the classrooms less like 1950s prison." (Secondary school student, NZ European)

⁵ This finding is also discussed further in the following reports: *Education matters to me : Transitions*, *Education matters to me: Emotional wellbeing* and *Education matters to me: If I were the boss - Improving our education*

“Upgrade the 1800s era computers in the music block bc they don't work 97% of the time.” *(Secondary school student, Māori, NZ European)*

“The places that the staircases are in, get a better map, FIX THE GYMS, the fact that the music block LEAKS, the wifi, etfc etc etc etc.” *(Secondary school student, NZ European)*

Our bathrooms should be comfortable to use

A number of children and young people commented on the unpleasant and unhygienic conditions in the school toilets:

“Clean working student bathrooms - hand dryers should work, toilets should flush, we should have toilet paper, there should be soap, the doors should lock, sanitary bins should not be over flowing.” *(Secondary school student, NZ European)*

“The bathrooms are also gross as they hardly ever have toilet paper or soap, the hand dryers don't work, only a few have sanitary bins, and half of them don't even flush, which is disgusting. This makes it take ages to go as there is literally three or four toilets in a block that work for a school of 1500, making students late for class or spend their whole interval waiting.” *(Secondary school student, NZ European)*

“The [bathrooms] are actually revolting but it's cause lots of the students vandalise them so I would want new bathrooms and consequences if u muck them up.” *(Intermediate school student, NZ European)*

Survey respondents talked about a need for gender neutral bathrooms, and unisex uniforms:

“I would also make the uniform unisex, so people can have a choice of shorts, skirts and pants no matter what gender they are. We only have one unisex toilet in the gym, but we need more than one in the school. We should also have a Q&A to help the students and teachers understand more about sexuality and gender.” *(Secondary school student, NZ European)*

I can't achieve without strong relationships⁶

Children and young people talked about the range of significant relationships that exist in their worlds and how these relationships either enable them to achieve or prevent them from achieving. They talked about their peer relationships, their relationships with their teachers, with their learning community, and the importance of the relationship between their learning community and their whānau or family. We discuss these topics in more detail in our Education Matters to me: Emotional environment and support networks report.

Many children and young people told us that they can't begin learning unless they have a trusting relationship with their teacher.

"Another thing I would like is for a way to connect with teachers more, most teachers are there to teach and want nothing to do with the students, but being a teacher who you get along with and like their students is a lot better for the kids, and could make teaching easier for the teacher."

(Secondary school student, NZ European)

Trusting relationships work both ways. Children and young people talked about the need for teachers to listen to them, and to give them more opportunities to study in the ways that work for them. They do not always feel that school offers them this flexibility.

"Teachers being more understanding and actually listening to students reasonings for their decisions." *(Secondary school student, NZ European)*

⁶ This finding is also discussed further in the following reports: *Education matters to me: Transitions*

I feel stuck in the classroom and it doesn't work for me⁷

Overall, we heard mixed views from children and young people on what works for them in the classroom. Children and young people told us that their own preferences and learning styles need to be recognised and responded to so they can learn.

It's hard to learn in big classrooms

Some children and young people feel invisible in large, open-plan learning spaces, and have difficulty connecting with their teachers. Both those who are struggling to keep up and those who are not being challenged by the content shared the same insight of not having their needs met in large learning environments.

"The studios are too big and we only have 4 teachers and 1 assistant teacher so people can get away with bad things they do sometimes." *(Primary school student, NZ European)*

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

"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)*

Smaller class sizes make it easier for me to learn

Young people in alternative education compared their class sizes to what they had when they were at mainstream secondary schools, saying that smaller classes made it much easier to deal with the challenges of school. In big classes, primary-aged children talked about feeling there were too many children in the classroom and lots of distractions. Children with different learning needs and disabilities told us that they need calm spaces; some said they become anxious without this. All of these things can impede learning.

⁷ This finding is also discussed further in the following reports: *Education matters to me: Emotional wellbeing*, *Education matters to me: Engagement* and *Education matters to me: If I were the boss - improving our education*

“...the way we deal [with] misbehaved kids.” (Secondary school student, Māori, New Zealand European, Asian)

“I would dish out stricter rules and more discipline, however I wouldn't tolerate teachers yelling and screaming.” (Secondary school student, NZ European)

“... detention would not be thrown around, rule breaking would not be punished straight away and instead warnings would be issued, because most of the time, people don't know they're breaking the rules, or they have a reason.” (Secondary school student, NZ European, Middle Eastern)

Some children and young people commented on the effectiveness (or not) of teaching practices they have experienced. Assessment was an important issue for young people responding to the secondary survey.

“I would change the way teachers teach, so they talk and show you what to do. Make classes smaller, because I did better in a smaller class in intermediate.” (Primary school student, ethnicity not specified)

“Bring back the mock exams, no one is prepared and the teachers are indifferent. Some year 11's haven't been in an exam situation since year 8 entrance exams and have no idea what it is like and will be overall anxious on the day as a result of this. Also the derived grades are hardly done under exam conditions so these are not preparing us either. It isn't fair to the [school's] year 11's as all the others have this opportunity.” (Secondary school student, NZ European)

Many children and young people commented on aspects of the curriculum, such as the inflexibility of subject choice, and 'teaching to the test':

“... I would take away the credit cap imposed by the school, teach the subject not the assessments (although they should be covered). Not try to dumb down internals so that they can show 'better' overall results (as opposed to other schools) as it doesn't help our learning... Organise subjects like woodwork better (it's not a 'drop out' subject, but is considered such - need to hire more teachers).” (Secondary school student, NZ European)

“...our lack of education outside the classroom, consistent assessment conditions...” (Secondary school student, NZ European)

Our time matters too

Some children and young people commented on other aspects of classroom or school organisation such as school hours or homework:

“Start school later because if everyone is falling asleep and complaining about being tired then what are we going to learn anyway?” *(Secondary school student, Pacific People)*

“Change the schedule, 8 hours in school can be difficult and It's hard to concentrate in the mornings when tired.” *(Secondary school student, Māori / NZ European)*

“Make school start later and finish later, because I think that students need more sleep, so that they can focus on school, and when teachers say just go to bed earlier Teenagers are going into a stage where they are transitioning into adulthood and are trying to get into more of a sleep pattern like there parents by staying up late, which is the reason why teenagers sleep in a lot, so I'd like school to start at like at least around 10am.”*(Secondary school student, NZ European)*

“... we have homework every day, for almost all of our classes. would should not be sacrificing our sleep for homework that nobody even cares about in the end. I was told by my maths teacher that 'if your homework takes more than two hours, it's okay, you don't have to do it'. even without homework, I don't have two hours of free time.” *(Secondary school student, NZ European/Middle Eastern)*

“Teachers being easier on student when students are stressed and give students time to relax during holidays and not giving homework.”
(Secondary school student, Scottish)

Bullying happens, so do something about it⁸

Children and young people we spoke to confirmed that bullying is a very real concern for many of them. They want to be carefully listened to and responded to when they talk to a teacher about bullying.

A child talked about the risks of reporting bullying:

“It would be really good to have someone to go and talk to but I’d be really scared if they couldn’t do something about it.” *(Primary school student, undisclosed ethnicity)*

Responding to an open ended question on what they would change about their school, many children and young people responded they want changes related to bullying, racism and emotional safety.

While other issues such as class organisation and topic choice took priority for many rangatahi at secondary school, bullying and racism remain in the top ten things most frequently identified as something they would change if they could.

“Giving bullies punishments so that they know it is not ok.” *(Secondary school student, undisclosed ethnicity)*

“I get bullied everyday always got put down, beat up, called names and much more...” *(Secondary school student, undisclosed ethnicity)*

“I would put more teachers on duty on very specific areas and just not one open area so that bullying could stop.” *(Primary school student, undisclosed ethnicity)*

“Control on bullies and the help of people who have problems at home.” *(Primary school student, undisclosed ethnicity)*

Some young people talked about other behaviours, such as ageism, sexism, and homophobia.

As well as peer to peer bullying, some of the young people identified teachers hassling them and negative expectations from teachers as something that significantly impacts on their emotional wellbeing and ability to achieve at school.

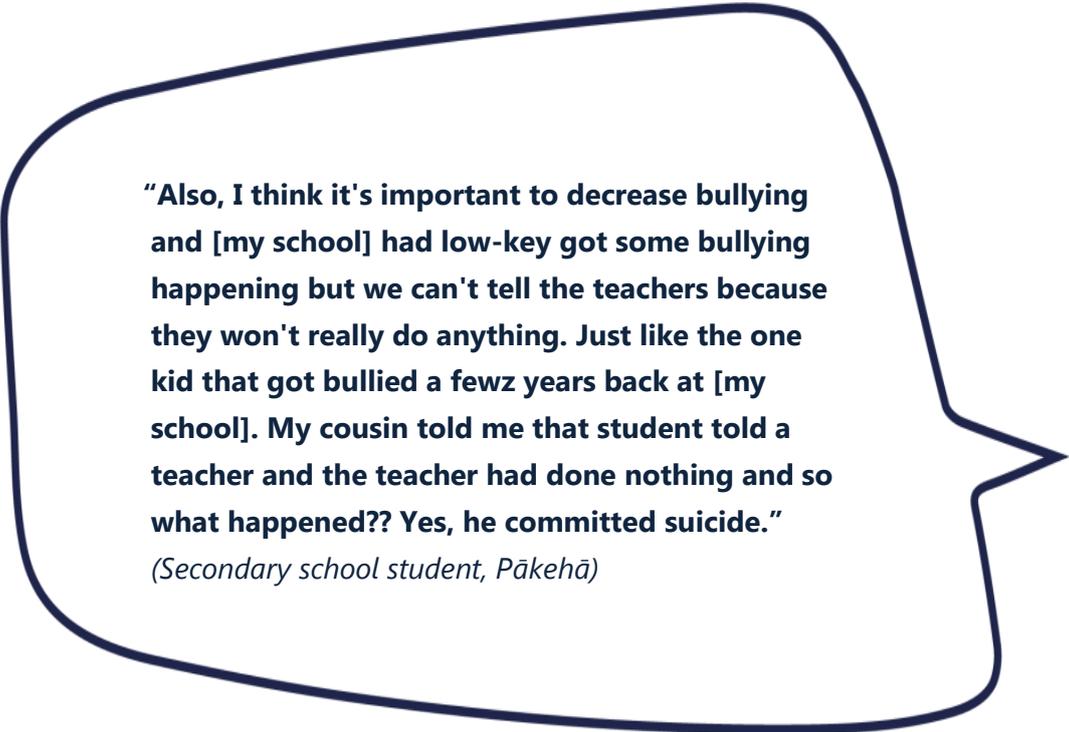
⁸ This finding is also discussed further in the following reports: *Education matters to me: Emotional wellbeing*, *He manu kai matauranga: He tirohanga Māori*, *Education matters to me: If I were the boss - Improving our education*.

“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)*

“I would change all the mean teachers and get rid of bullies.” *(Primary school student, undisclosed ethnicity)*

“I would also make sure no teacher picks favourite and puts down the ones who they do not like as it happens way too often. In this day and age we should not have that in our classrooms because this can be disheartening for students.” *(Secondary school student, Asian)*

“I would change my schools view in students. I would institute mandatory lectures for teachers on child psychology; I would also make sure that teachers are closely monitored by external parties to limit bullying.” *(Secondary school student, undisclosed ethnicity)*



“Also, I think it's important to decrease bullying and [my school] had low-key got some bullying happening but we can't tell the teachers because they won't really do anything. Just like the one kid that got bullied a fewz years back at [my school]. My cousin told me that student told a teacher and the teacher had done nothing and so what happened?? Yes, he committed suicide.”

(Secondary school student, Pākehā)

Conclusion

“I have achieved most of this thanks to the few people at school and my family at home that kept me going. The people that I’ve become close with this year have been a big impact in my life and have encouraged me to go to school every day and finish the year.” *(Secondary school student, Māori)*

Children and young people had a broad and holistic view of achievement in their own lives. In our face-to-face engagements, we heard more about students’ own achievements and aspirations. Children and young people who responded to our survey told us more about the aspirations and achievements that school defines for them.

Children and young people told us about how they want to make their family proud, and relationships are a key motivator for them, to attend school, and keep trying to improve. They want their teachers to know their goals, and to help them amplify their unique strengths. They talked about the impact of their physical space on their ability to learn, and the importance of relationships, especially when bullying happens.

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 those 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



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 futures.



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.

“Focussing more on the problems in the world and what we can do to help. I think it would be good if we learned to be more aware about equality and what’s good for our planet.”

(Primary school student, Ethnicity not specified)

“I would want to be able to work outside and learn more languages.”

(Primary school student, Māori, NZ European)

“Bring back financial literacy.”

(Secondary school student, NZ European)

“Have more courier [career] and adulthood experiences and activities like courier [career] days.” *(Secondary school student, NZ European)*

“Another thing is that in the winter some classes have no heating as the school doesn't want overload the circuit or something like that. This is basic health, I could see my breath in class and was wearing a puffer jacket.” *(Secondary school student, NZ European)*

"I am currently trying to learn German, but I have to teach myself English grammar beforehand, because of the school system's failure to do so. Grammar should be taught as part of the English subject, so that New Zealanders have better understanding of how language works, meaning that teachers of other languages don't have to teach their students basic grammatical terms like what the infinitive form of a verb is, and can focus on actually teaching them another language (which is what the curriculum requires them to do)."

(Secondary school student, NZ European)

"I would change how much te reo Maori they teach us (which would be more). Also how much New Zealand history they teach us (also more). By history, I mean more about the Treaty of Waitangi, and the when, and how, the Maori came to New Zealand."

(Secondary school student, NZ European)

"Have the younger students still use books because they're changing it to computers for them which doesn't help with their hand writing or learning things easier."

(Secondary school student, NZ European)

"I feel more independent, and I want to learn in my own environment where I am not distracted by others around me, where the teacher spends time getting the students attention, doing the roll, everyone's talking etc. Don't get me wrong, I think it's great that you have teachers to help you learn and succeed and a lot of students who may not be as mature may be best at school for every class 5 days a week, but for some of us this is not the case as future university students need to adapt to learning on their own." (Secondary school student, NZ European)



MANAAKITIA A TĀTOU TAMARIKI

Children's
Commissioner

