



# Waipu Primary School

## COMMUNITY CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

# Proposal to Introduce a Cohort Entry Policy

*Prepared in accordance with Sections 60-65 of the Education and Training Act 2020 and Ministry of Education Guidelines.*

<b>School Name</b>	Waipu Primary School	<b>Consultation Period</b>	Open - Thursday 28th May 2026 Close - Friday 19th June 2026
<b>Contact Person</b>	Belinda Bunny - Principal	<b>Submission Email</b>	principal@wps.school.nz

## 1. Purpose of this Document

The Board of Trustees is currently consulting with our school staff, parents/whānau, current and prospective families, and local Early Childhood Education (ECE) providers regarding a proposal to adopt a Cohort Entry Policy for new entrants starting school.

Under the Education and Training Act 2020, schools must formally consult with their community before shifting from a continuous entry model (where children start on or immediately after their fifth birthday) to a cohort entry model. This document outlines how cohort entry works, the legal frameworks governing it, the expected benefits and impacts, and instructions on how you can submit your feedback.

## 2. What is Cohort Entry?

Cohort entry is an enrollment policy where new entrant children start school together in structured groups (cohorts) at specific points during the school year, rather than individually on their fifth birthday.

The Ministry of Education determines eight fixed cohort entry dates per year—two per term (the first day of the term, and a mid-term date). If this policy is adopted, children turning five will start school at the next available cohort entry date following their fifth birthday, or at a later date chosen by their parents up until their legal mandatory starting age (six years old).

### Crucial Legal Constraints under the Education and Training Act 2020:

- **No Early Starts:** Children cannot under any circumstances start school before they turn five years old, even if the cohort entry date falls just days before their birthday.
- **Not Compulsory at Five:** Enrolment in school remains optional until a child turns six. Parents retain the legal right to delay their child's school start until any subsequent cohort date, or until their sixth birthday.

### 3. Proposed Entry Timetable

The matrix below outlines how birth dates align with Ministry-mandated entry points. If the policy is ratified, children would start on the following timeline:

Child's Fifth Birthday Falls...	Earliest Permissible Cohort Entry Point	Operational Framework
<b>Before the Mid-Term Date (in a given Term)</b>	<b>Mid-Term Cohort Date of the current Term</b>	Child starts with a group midway through the term, provided they have already turned 5 by this date.
<b>After the Mid-Term Date (but before Term ends)</b>	<b>Start of Term Cohort Date of the following Term</b>	Child remains at their ECE service or home until the conclusion of the term and starts fresh at the start of the next term.
During a School Vacation	<b>Start of Term Cohort Date of the upcoming Term</b>	Child starts on Day 1 of the new school term along with all other children in that holiday cohort.

### 4. Stakeholder Impact Analysis

The Board has conducted a preliminary assessment of how a shift to cohort entry could affect various segments of our educational ecosystem, based on national evidence and Ministry frameworks:

#### For the Children

- **Enhanced Social Transition:** Children start school alongside a peer group, instantly establishing a sense of belonging, mutual support, and shared familiarisation.
- **Minimised Disruption:** Rather than a continuous cycle of new pupils arriving weekly, classrooms settle faster, leading to structured, uninterrupted learning blocks.

#### For Parents and Whānau

- **Structured Induction:** The school can organise targeted welcome, orientation, and transition-to-school visits collectively, strengthening home-school partnerships.
- **Clear Planning:** Parents have unambiguous timelines for transition visits and purchasing uniforms, school stationery, and organising logistics.
- *Note:* Some parents may experience an extended period where their child remains at home or ECE if their birthday falls just after a mid-term cut-off.

#### For School Staff and Classroom Management

- **Strategic Resource Allocation:** Teachers can plan cohesive 4–5 week introductory curricula tailored to an incoming group, rather than constantly re-teaching routines to single additions.
- **Administrative Efficiency:** Systems for processing enrolments, organising learning resources, and coordinating with class teachers become batches rather than ongoing daily tasks.

## For Local Early Childhood Education (ECE) Services

- **Predictable Transitions:** ECE centers can plan their roll management, space availability, and transition programs with high accuracy, knowing exactly when cohorts will exit.
- **Continuous Communication:** Direct dialogue between the school and local ECE providers is streamlined when managing groups rather than individual, ad-hoc student departures.

## 5. Statutory Consultation Timeline & Process

To satisfy regulatory parameters, the school must execute a thorough consultation process. The sequence of milestones is structured as follows:

Phase	Activity & Requirements	Status / Expected Date
<b>Phase 1</b>	Community Consultation Period opens. Distribution of this document to parents, prospective parents, staff, and local ECE providers.	Thursday 28th May 2026 - Friday 19th June 2026
<b>Phase 2</b>	Collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative feedback via submissions and survey forms.	Monday 22nd June 2026
<b>Phase 3</b>	Board of Trustees review of data to determine if the proposal is "generally acceptable" to the community. Formal voting resolution.	Tuesday 23rd June 2026
<b>Phase 4</b>	If approved, formal notification provided to the Ministry of Education, local ECE providers, and the wider community.	Wednesday 24th June 2026
<b>Phase 5</b>	Mandatory Notification Notice Period: A minimum of one full school term's notice must be observed prior to implementation.	Notice given Thursday 25th June 2026  Intended cohort entry start date Term 4, 2026 - Monday 12th October 2026
<b>Phase 6</b>	Formal Implementation: Policy goes live. All new entrant enrollments must follow the cohort entry schedule.	Term 4, 2026 - Monday 12th October 2026

# Cohort Entry Proposal Feedback

Please complete this form and return it to the school office or email it to [principal@wps.school.nz](mailto:principal@wps.school.nz) by **Friday 19th June 2026, 5:00pm**

## 1. What is your relationship to Waipu Primary School? (Select all that apply)

- Parent / caregiver of a current student
- Parent / caregiver of a future student (pre-schooler)
- Staff member at the school
- Local Early Childhood Education (ECE) provider / representative
- Community member / Other

## 2. Having read the proposal details, do you support the introduction of a Cohort Entry Policy at our school?

- Yes, I fully support the shift to cohort entry.
- Neutral, I do not have a strong preference either way.
- No, I prefer to keep the current continuous entry model (starting on the 5th birthday).

## 3. Please share any specific reasons, perceived benefits, or concerns you have regarding this proposal:

## 4. (For Parents/Whānau) If your child's start date was deferred to the next available cohort date (up to a few weeks after their 5th birthday), how would this impact your family arrangement?

**Optional Contact Details (for administrative follow-up if required):**

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**Name**

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**Email / Phone**

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*Thank you for participating in this statutory consultation process.  
Your feedback is vital in helping the Board determine the best path forward for our community.*