



Cohort Entry Information

At Wānaka Primary School, we are deeply committed to ensuring your child has the best possible start to their school life. To support a positive transition from Early Childhood Education (ECE), we use a cohort entry approach.

What is Cohort Entry?

Cohort entry is when new entrant children start school together in groups at specific points during the year, rather than starting on their fifth birthday. These start dates are set by the Ministry of Education and occur twice per term:

- The first day of the term
- A mid-point during the term

2026 Cohort Entry Dates

Term	Start of Term Date	Mid-Term Start Date
Term 1	Between 26 Jan & 9 Feb	9 March
Term 2	20 April	2 June
Term 3	20 July	24 August
Term 4	12 October	16 November

Why We Use Cohort Entry

We believe this approach offers significant benefits for our tamariki, their whānau, and our teaching staff:

- **Better Settling:** Children often feel more secure and less anxious starting in a group, sometimes alongside friends from ECE.
- **Social Well-being:** Starting with peers helps children build immediate relationships and a sense of belonging.
- **Uninterrupted Learning:** Teachers can plan for groups of children arriving at once, allowing for more stable classroom routines and fewer disruptions for current students.
- **Stronger Connections:** It allows the school to hold group welcoming events, helping new parents meet one another and connect with our school community.

Key Information for Parents

When can my child start?

- In New Zealand, children can start school between the ages of five and six, but must be enrolled by their sixth birthday. Under our cohort entry policy, a child's start date will be the first cohort entry date after they have turned five.

Please note: If your child turns five the day after a cohort entry date, they must wait until the next scheduled date to begin.

What about ECE funding?

Your child can remain at their ECE until their cohort entry date. They will continue to receive the '20 free hours' funding until they officially start school.

Will my child be Year 0 or Year 1?

Term 1 starters: Children enrolling in Term 1 (either at the start of the term or mid-term) are generally considered Year 1 students for that year.

Term 2-4 starters: Children enrolling from the start of Term 2 onwards are considered Year 0 for the remainder of that year and move into Year 1 the following year.