

Compulsory attendance at school for under sixes

Changes have been made to the Education Act 1989 so that children under the age of six are required to regularly attend school once they are enrolled. Previously there was no compulsion for children to attend regularly until their sixth birthday.

The changes have been made because "regular attendance in the first year of school supports the development of positive attitudes to learning and provides a sound foundation for future learning and achievement"

Source: Ministry of Education factsheet

If parents are worried that regular full-time attendance at school will be too onerous for their child, under the amended legislation children can still wait until their sixth birthday before they must enrol. Parents need to carefully consider the maturity of their child and readiness for school before deciding whether their child is ready for regular attendance at school. A later transition to school coupled with regular attendance is likely to support better educational outcomes than a younger child attending irregularly.

For children who would benefit from a staggered transition plan to school, for example students with additional learning needs, the child's parents, the school principal and the Ministry of Education can agree on a transition plan and the child will attend in accordance with the plan. Transition plans may detail the child's attendance at school once they are enrolled.

Transition plans can also be put in place after a child starts school. If it is decided that a child would benefit from a staggered transition to school, a transition plan can then be put in place.

Where do I find this in the Education Act?

Sections 25(1) and 25(3A)

When do the changes take effect?

These provisions took effect from 3 July 2017.

Where do I get advice?

NZSTA will continue to update and advise you through factsheets, newsletters, and our website.

You can call **0800 782 435** or email actupdates@nzsta.org.nz.