

APPLICATION PROCESS

Some of the feedback received said the application form and process was very useful as it helped parents to think about how they will home educate their children. Others said the process was intensive, complicated and difficult to understand. Additional comments were as follows:

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| <p>Application Form</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People write what they think the Ministry of Education want to hear to try to ensure the application is accepted, rather than what they will actually be doing • Parts of the application form are unclear e.g. is it for the first year or the child's entire home educating journey? • The application form is too long and takes a long time to fill out e.g. some parts are duplicated • The application comes from a school lens and doesn't fit with home educator's philosophies. The application should ask about the home educator's philosophy and approach to teaching or ask what sort of home educating is planned e.g. structured, unschooling, etc. • Should not ask for a timetable, or a topic plan as timetables do not reflect home education philosophies as it is 24/7 • The application form should ask for children's strengths and weaknesses and what work will be done to address the weaknesses • The Ministry of Education should not ask about Early Childhood Education participation in the application form • The Ministry of Education should not ask the principal to comment on a home educating application. |
| <p>Process</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would like to be able to apply online or via email and be able to track the application's progress • The Ministry of Education should not require the home educator to have an in depth knowledge of the child's learning abilities or techniques before home educating has started • One application per family rather than an application per child. Or a more full application for the first child and then a smaller and more simple application for subsequent children • Want to be able to apply for an exemption when a home |

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| | <p>educated child is five years old, rather than waiting until they are six.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would like the Ministry of Education to be clear about when people should be applying • A notification of intention to home educate should be sufficient. An “application” should not be necessary • Students should be able to be at home during the application process (as a ‘justified absence’) • The appeal process for having a declined application reviewed is not clear • “As regular and as well as” should not be defined any further; it should be kept as a broad guideline • Home educators should not have to reapply for an exemption, when returning from overseas travel • Ministry of Education should provide an anonymous summary as to why exemptions were withdrawn for the past few years. |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ministry should be clear what the reasons for declining applications are • The process is scary, partly because of assumptions made by the Ministry • The tone of information and application forms regarding home education make people feel that by homeschooling you are doing something wrong • There are outdated contacts and paperwork given with the application pack • Would like to be called “home educators” rather “than home schoolers” • Would like recognition of Home educating to be a valid educational option. |

WHILE HOME EDUCATING

Many submissions shared their personal experiences of how home education works for them on a day-to-day basis, including the types of resources they use and activities they undertake with their children. Key themes included:

Resources

- Access to resources are lacking compared to mainstream schooled children e.g. ‘early readers’ books, dental, eye

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| | <p>care, speech language therapy, swimming lessons, school nurses, careers advisors and support, laboratories and science equipment (needed for preparation for Cambridge exams) etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would like more Special Education needs support and resources e.g. teacher aide for a few days a week or help with teaching techniques for children with special education needs. Access to resources to help those with learning difficulties achieve NCEA e.g. readers & writers is needed. • Home educators would like written guidelines on how to access support services • Home educators would like access to standardised tests from schools to see where their child is at • Home educators would like to receive the same discounts that schools would • No Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) provider in New Zealand. |
| Funding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of funding is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ too low, ○ not inflation adjusted ○ is not enough to fund necessary resources ○ is not the same as students get in a registered school ○ should not be reduced for subsequent children being home educated ○ extra funding is required for students with special education needs. |
| Other | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would like the Ministry to hold group seminars or free workshops for those home educators interested in attending. These should be supportive and informative e.g. on assessment, special education techniques, meeting other home educators • Would like the contact details for home education networks, or an optional database for home educators to list their details for others to contact them e.g. an internet forum • An education liaison role who could work with support groups and families to find and provide resources and as |

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| | <p>an advocate for home education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home educated children should be able to get a student ID card • Would like schools and principals to be more welcoming to home educators and invite them into their community e.g. extracurricular activities, sports days etc • Home educators would like a hard copy of the New Zealand curriculum sent to them once the exemption has been granted • Parents would like to be provided with contacts of the home educating groups around the country • Would like the Frequently Asked Questions on the Ministry's website and application documentation to be updated • There is not any support for Maori home educators • Recording of progress & achievement should not be needed • Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ) work testing requirements for beneficiaries means they cannot receive income support if they choose to home educate their children; this should be changed • Getting into universities or polytechnics can be a challenge. |
| <p>Several submissions requested changes to the statutory declaration process:</p> | |
| <p>Statutory Declaration</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would like the statutory declaration to not have to be signed by a JP • Would like the statutory declaration to be an online form or be able to be emailed • Would like the statutory declaration to be done yearly rather than six monthly. |
| <p>A number of submissions expressed difficulties with their children accessing qualification pathways:</p> | |
| <p>Qualifications</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make other qualifications e.g. Cambridge well known as alternatives to NCEA • Home educated children should have free access to Te Kura for NCEA from when the student is 14 or 15 (rather than 16) |

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION IN GENERAL

A number of submissions referred to the way the Ministry managed its role in home education and how it managed relationships. Some of the submissions were complimentary with home educators feeling well supported. Others made the following points:

- Ministry of Education are like “big brother” with power
- Ministry of Education are unsupportive, unhelpful and don’t communicate changes and don’t understand the philosophies of home education
- Ministry of Education treat the Education Review Office’s word as gospel
- The Ministry are unapproachable as people watch what they say so their exemptions don’t get revoked
- There are inconsistencies and prejudices within Ministry of Education offices
- Some Ministry staff ask for more information for things that are not required on the application form
- Ministry documents and correspondence should be in a nice tone and more uniform
- Would like Ministry staff who understand and support home education to be involved in the application process and review processes
- Ministry staff do not understand homeschooling philosophies
- The application stage is the Ministry’s opportunity to establish relationships with home educators and a chance to reflect support for the choice that home educators make

EDUCATION REVIEW OFFICE IN GENERAL

Several submissions referred to the Education Review Office. While some comments were complimentary with home educators finding the review process useful, others considered:

- Education Review Office (ERO) are like “big brother” with power
- ERO are unsupportive of home education and go in to assess the complaint rather than to be supportive
- ERO don’t understand the philosophies of home education

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families need to be able to feel that ERO will work with a family, not against them • ERO need to clarify up front what they are looking for in a review so families can plan for these. |
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COMPLAINTS & REVOCATION PROCESS

A number of submissions made suggestions regarding the complaints and revocation process:

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the Ministry of Education to make sure complaints are valid and are about educational concerns before requesting an Education Review Office review • Child welfare issues should be forwarded to Child, Youth and Family • A school gets supported and encouraged to improve by the Education Review Office but homeschoolers get revoked. Would like assistance to get it right rather than to be revoked. • Would like a clearer and fair appeal process for revocations • Assessment criteria should be different to schools to reflect the differences in philosophies. |
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