

Charter schools fact sheet

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The Assoc. Minister of Education is Hon David Seymour. D.Seymour@ministers.govt.nz

Government introduced the Education and Training Amendment Bill on Wednesday 26 June 2024 proposing to reintroduce charter schools to New Zealand. The Bill passed its first reading and advanced to select committee for submissions.

Although the legislation was not timetabled to be returned to Parliament for final consideration until September 2024, the Government opened applications to operate charter schools in July.

Reintroducing Charter Schools

In Budget 2024, the Government allocated \$153M for 15 new and 35 converted charter schools over four years. The Associate Minister states funding per student in charter schools will be roughly equivalent to state schools.

The Government's Education and Training Amendment Bill proposes charter schools will be privately operated by a sponsor who will have operational discretion to manage the school.

The following parties are amongst those expressing interest to become 'sponsors':

- Being AI, owner of former charter school operator, Villa Education Trust. After previous charter schools operated by the Trust reverted back to state schools in 2019, the Auditor-General found conflicts of interest related to a \$450K payment from the boards of schools formerly operated by them.
International online school operator
Crimson Global Academy

In 2018 the Associate Minister, then an opposition MP, publicly told church leader Brian

Tamaki that his church, Destiny Church, should have been approved to run a charter school.

Charter Schools in New Zealand 2014–2018

This is the second introduction of charter schools in Aotearoa.

ACT MP John Banks, previous Associate Minister of Education, introduced charter school legislation following the 2011 election. Between 2014 and 2018, 11 new charter schools began operation (conversion of state schools was not part of that legislation). The total cost averaged three times the state school average. The costliest charter school received more than six times the average state school funding per student.

The Labour/NZ First Government abolished charter schools following the 2017 election.

A 2017 report by charter school Advisory Group found only 40% of charter schools operating demonstrated satisfactory student achievement.

A 2019 Ministry of Education report on charter schools found insufficient evaluation meant evidence of charter schools having a positive impact on educational achievement could not be proved. This report also found no evidence of teaching practice innovation beyond what could be found in state schools. Any innovative practice was in operational areas such as separation of management functions and in staffing levels enabled by the funding arrangements.

Charter School Establishment and Operation

The Government's Education and Training Amendment Bill proposes charter schools will be funded by the state but will not be part of the state schooling system.

A charter school's educational and operational expectations and obligations will be set out in a contract with a Minister-appointed body, the Charter School Authorisation Board.

State schools can also be converted to charter schools. The Minister, or an individual from the school community (along with a sponsor) can instigate the process for considering the conversion of state school to a charter school.

The charter school legislation sets out different obligations for charter schools to state schools:

- They will be able to employ unqualified and unregistered teachers.
- They can set their own curriculum and mode of delivery
- They will not have to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, or be required to have parent governance structures
- They will not have the same level of oversight from the Education Review Office or Teaching Council of Aotearoa / New Zealand.

Criticisms of Charter Schools

The Government argues charter schools will allow for autonomy and diversity in schooling.

The 2024 OECD Economic Survey of New Zealand addressed the reintroduction of charter schools stating, "The high autonomy of schools mean they can already tailor significantly their offer to local needs suggesting **[charter] schools would not add much in this domain**".

The non-politically aligned Aotearoa Education Collective of education academics, principals and teachers said **there is not enough evidence charter schools can make a difference to educational outcomes** for

Government to justify this proposal ahead of other much needed educational reform and resourcing.

Teacher and principal groups have criticised the Government's spending of \$153M on this initiative instead of long-standing priorities such as addressing understaffing of learning support.

The Government's lack of a formal requirement to ensure charter schools' plans, policies and curricula reflect **local tikanga Māori, mātauranga Māori and te ao Māori**, or to take reasonable steps to make **instruction in tikanga Māori and te reo Māori** led to the Regulatory Impact Statement: 'charter schools could also reinforce existing inequities experienced by ākonga Māori, particularly if a schools leadership lacks the skills needed to address Māori concerns and inequities'.

The Government's Bill proposes **unqualified and unregistered people can hold teaching positions in charter schools**. In response, thousands of teachers signed an open letter supporting the Teaching Council of Aotearoa/New Zealand's position, that 'a quality education system requires qualified teaching professionals in every kura, schools and Early Childhood Education (ECE) service'.

Overseas experience has also been cited by critics of the charter school proposal. Advice provided to Minister Stanford included a 2015 USA research survey that found that 'teachers in charter schools tend to be younger, have less experience, less training and lower rates of certification that their public school colleagues', and that there is 'higher teacher turnover in charter schools compared to public schools'

For more information:

<https://www.nzeiteriuroa.org.nz/help-advice/knowledge-base/nzei-te-riu-roa-stands-for-public-education>

Email: nzei@nzei.org.nz

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