

AUT

A FUTURE IN  
**EARLY CHILDHOOD  
EDUCATION**





## WHAT IS EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION?

Fostering a love of learning in young children (0–5 years old) and encouraging them to feel a sense of their wellbeing are the fundamental objectives of early childhood education (ECE) teaching.

ECE teaching requires a genuine commitment to working with young children, including sometimes having to put yourself on the front line for those children. You need a complex set of skills that overlap those of a social worker, developmental psychologist and play therapist, as well as teacher and caregiver. While this can be stressful at times, it is also very rewarding – as an early childhood education (ECE) teacher you can make an incredible contribution to the community and the future.

All licensed early childhood centres must follow New Zealand's ECE curriculum, Te Whāriki. The curriculum encourages teachers to see infants and young children as full of mana, and emphasises interactions and relationships based on joy and respect.

A well-run ECE service works with the whole family and aims to build strong communities, as well as ensuring positive attitudes to learning for very young children.

There are a diverse range of ECE services on offer in Aotearoa New Zealand from kōhanga reo and language nests to sessional or full day services, including Montessori and Steiner etc. This enables early childhood education teachers to find services that meet their world view.

Do you like interacting with children? Do you find yourself drawn into their ways of communicating? Do you wonder what is going on inside their minds? Are you excited about creating a physically and emotionally healthy environment for young children to learn? Then a career in early childhood education could be a great option for you.

## OUTLOOK AND TRENDS

**Improved teacher/child ratios needed** – The Ministry of Education's *He taonga te tamaiti: Early Learning Action Plan 2019–2029* identified five objectives to be met over the next 10 years. These included improving teacher/child ratios in centres for younger children. This objective is creating more opportunities for graduate teachers.

**Equity and learning needs** – Equal opportunities in education in Aotearoa New Zealand for all children under five is still a way off. The current emphasis is on a model of private investment in ECE centres that has created more childcare options but quality is variable and cost prohibitive for some communities. The Ministry of Education's *Early Learning Action Plan 2019–2029* identifies and acknowledges those inequities and proposes several policies, including targeted funding for participation in ECE centres, learning support for children with high learning needs, universal health checks for three-year-olds and access to other services such as public health nurses and speech language therapists.

**Culturally competent, diverse, qualified staff needed** – It is vital to Aotearoa New Zealand that early childhood professionals reflect diversity in terms of culture and language, gender and ability. The Education Workforce Strategy (EWS) includes a focus on diversity of cultures, particularly on learning the languages of Aotearoa and the Pacific Island nations. The ECE sector also recognises the importance of addressing persistent barriers for people with disabilities entering the ECE workforce.

**Disparity in support for beginning teachers** – Once qualified, all ECE teachers are required to complete a two-year induction and mentoring programme that leads to their teacher registration. Induction and mentoring programmes require significant investment from both the Government and the sector, in order to ensure time and support for both the beginning teacher and their mentor teacher. When interviewing for a position in a centre it is vital for beginning teachers to discuss the induction and mentoring support provided for them and their designated mentor.

**Pay and qualification disparities** – Disparities around teacher pay continue to be a challenge for the early childhood sector. Regulation of pay levels is complex because of the different providers in the sector, including corporate and private. Teacher-led centres are required to pay rates set by the Ministry of Education that recognise teacher qualifications. Centres have the right to employ unqualified teachers, alongside qualified teachers, but the shortage of ECE teachers places qualified teachers in a strong negotiating position.

## WORK SETTINGS

Graduates find jobs through the Education Gazette (in print or online), job boards such as SEEK, SJS, Trade Me, NZUniTalent – or word of mouth. Graduates often apply directly to early childhood education centres. Many centres are happy for potential teachers to visit and leave their CVs. A shortage of qualified teachers means work is plentiful for beginning ECE teachers – many students are offered positions during placements and before completing their qualification.

Typical early childhood education options include:

- **Public kindergartens** – Teacher-led services usually working with 3–5-year-olds (some take 2-year-olds). Traditionally kindergartens ran as morning and afternoon sessions for different age groups, but some now run full day sessions due to funding and parental needs.
- **Private and community-based childcare centres** – These centres are teacher-led, working with groups of different age groups under five. They follow Te Whāriki but may also incorporate other educational approaches, eg Montessori or Reggio Emilia.
- **Professional home-based services** – There are two professional types of home-based care. Nannies look after a child/children in the child/children's own home, often also doing housework, cooking meals etc. Home-based educators look after up to four children at a time in their own home, usually working with a service such as Barnardos. Home-based educators are supervised by qualified ECE teachers.
- **Nga Kōhanga Reo** – Developed as an essential part of the protection and nurturing of Te Reo Māori, kōhanga reo encourages total immersion in Māori language and values, taking a whole community and family focus. They follow Te Whāriki a te Kōhanga Reo.
- **Language nest centres** – Language nests can be mono or bilingual and are set up to provide children with immersive care and education experiences in their home language within an early childhood education setting.

## CAREER EXAMPLES

Early childhood educators plan programmes, provide learning experiences and discuss progress with parents and caregivers. 'Learning stories' are the preferred method of assessment – typically narrating meaningful experiences from the child's day, focused on their wellbeing, contribution, communication, belonging and exploration.

Care routines including nap times, nappy changing, and mealtimes are another essential aspect of the teacher's role in building relationships and trust to support the learning and development of children.



- ECE teachers with experience can move into supervisory, senior teacher and centre management roles.
- Some ECE teachers purchase, invest in or set up their own private childcare services.
- Qualified ECE teachers also take on roles such as hospital play specialists or child advocates for organisations.
- ECE teachers with experience can also move into roles as early intervention teachers, professional development facilitators or teacher educators.

## SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

- Skilled at developing educational opportunities from child-led play, curiosity and activities for children 0–5 years old
- Competent in assessing, recording and documenting individual children's learning through learning stories
- Highly knowledgeable in Te Whāriki, the Ministry of Education's early childhood curriculum
- Demonstrates a strong grounding in the social, cultural and political context of Aotearoa New Zealand and Te Tiriti o Waitangi with knowledge of tikanga and te reo
- Able to communicate confidently with children and whānau
- Competent in all aspects of the Teaching Council of Aotearoa NZ's Code and Standards

## PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Passionate about care and education
- Creative, innovative and flexible
- Able to advocate for young children in their care
- Caring, empathetic and compassionate
- Collaborative, with excellent time management

## SALARY GUIDE

There are no binding salary requirements for ECE teachers outside of the kindergarten setting but centres can sign up to an early childhood pay parity opt-in scheme that incentivises centres to build parity between kindergarten teachers and ECE teachers in other education and care centres (see link on back page). Due to a current shortage in qualified ECE teachers, graduates do have leverage to negotiate fair conditions and pay.

Pay for supervisory and senior teachers varies according to the size of the centre (children and staff numbers).

As a guideline, teachers working for services within the collective agreement for early childhood registered teachers *Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu Early Childhood Teachers Collective Agreement* can expect the following:

	Salary (per year)
Graduate teacher	\$57,358 (Starting salary)
Top of salary scale	\$93,338
Head teacher	\$92,000–\$120,000

Sources: Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu Early Childhood Teachers Collective Agreement, NZEI Te Riu Roa, Careers NZ

Salary range is indicative of the Aotearoa New Zealand market at time of publication (late 2023) and should only be used as a guideline.

## PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION

After graduation, early childhood teachers begin the process of registration with the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand. Graduates should ensure the ECE centre they are employed by offers a comprehensive induction and mentoring programme to support their teacher registration.

## THE AUT APPROACH

As a university degree, AUT's Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Teaching) focuses on theory and practice, weaving together curriculum and pedagogy knowledge with the study of political, sociological and philosophical issues for education.

AUT's teacher education degree places strong emphasis on diversity, including opportunities to specialise in teaching Pacific children in Pacific ECE centres.

Student teachers complete a practical teaching placement in each of the six semesters. Placements usually reflect a diversity of communities and age levels (from infants to approaching school age).

## FURTHER STUDY

Postgraduate study options include the Postgraduate Diploma in Education, the Master of Education or the Master of Arts.



A young woman with blonde hair tied in a bun, wearing glasses and a black jacket with a blue collar. She is smiling and standing in front of a grey brick wall. To her left, there are two large white handprints on the wall. To her right, there is a colorful mural of a sun or moon with a face.

## JORDAN ANDERSON

Early Childhood Teacher at Bambinos Early Childhood Centre Manukau

Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Teaching)

"I've been teaching under two-year-olds at Bambinos since I graduated in 2021. I really enjoy forming relationships with children and building up their trust. I love seeing them reach new milestones.

I believe strongly in free play, in letting children explore without too much direction. That is how they learn about themselves and the environment around them.

There is a lot more going on working with under two-year-olds than appears on the surface. We facilitate free play based on the interests of each child. Through this we're encouraging their language skills and ability to recognise and regulate emotions and interact with others. Helping children form relationships and learn to play harmoniously is a big part of our role.

We spend a lot of time observing the interactions and connections our children make with the world to extend their learning and understanding. Using those observations, we write monthly learning stories that demonstrate how each individual child is learning and developing. These are read by parents, our team leaders and are available for the Education Review Office.

We do a lot of caregiving but we are not babysitters. The caregiving part of our day gives us opportunities to form nurturing relationships. We endeavour to take our time while doing bottles or nappy changing to connect and communicate with the children so they know they have a secure base with us.

The biggest challenge is the energy required. It is emotionally tiring because you're giving a lot of yourself to the children to ensure their physical and emotional needs are met."

## EMPLOYER COMMENT

"I expect graduate teachers to use their initiative and common sense. I want teachers working alongside babies and creating learning opportunities for them.

I expect graduate teachers to share their knowledge. Graduates bring freshness and new ideas and need to be confident about communicating those ideas and sharing that knowledge.

Jordan is an awesome teacher and very passionate. She is confident, uses her initiative, questions changes and has opinions. She is always looking at things from the children's perspective which is great for us. She is a very strong advocate for the wellbeing of the children.

At interviews dress tidily and professionally and in a way that shows you know the job. For example, no high heels because you wouldn't wear them in the centre.

Do your homework on the centre through looking at the centre's Facebook page and reading the ERO reports. It is important to find a centre that suits you.

Pay reflects experience and registration, not only training, so new graduates cannot expect to be at the top end of the pay scale."

### **Ngairi Rowson**

Infant and Toddlers Head Teacher  
Bambinos Early Childhood Centre Manukau



## USEFUL WEBSITES

### Education Review Office (ERO)

[ero.govt.nz](http://ero.govt.nz)

### Education Counts

[educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics](http://educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics)

### Education Gazette

[gazette.education.govt.nz](http://gazette.education.govt.nz)

### Ministry of Education – Pay parity opt-in scheme

[education.govt.nz/early-childhood/people-and-employment/pay-parity-opt-in-scheme](http://education.govt.nz/early-childhood/people-and-employment/pay-parity-opt-in-scheme)

### New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI)

#### Te Riu Roa

[nzeiteriuroa.org.nz](http://nzeiteriuroa.org.nz)

### NZ Kindergartens

[nzkindergarten.org.nz](http://nzkindergarten.org.nz)

### Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand

[teachingcouncil.nz](http://teachingcouncil.nz)

### Teach NZ

[teachnz.govt.nz](http://teachnz.govt.nz)


## FURTHER INFORMATION

For the most up to date information on studying early childhood education and the Bachelor of Education visit [aut.ac.nz/education](http://aut.ac.nz/education)

For other Future Career Sheets visit [aut.ac.nz/careersheets](http://aut.ac.nz/careersheets)

### EMPLOYABILITY & CAREERS


For employability and career support, AUT students can book an appointment through <https://elab.aut.ac.nz/>

 @AUTEmployabilityandCareers

### FUTURE STUDENTS

Contact the Future Student Advisory team for more information: [aut.ac.nz/enquire](http://aut.ac.nz/enquire)

[futurestudents@aut.ac.nz](mailto:futurestudents@aut.ac.nz)

 @AUTFutureStudents

### CURRENT AUT STUDENTS

Contact the Student Hub Advisors team for more information: 0800 AUT UNI (0800 288 864)

[aut.ac.nz/enquire](http://aut.ac.nz/enquire) | [studenthub@aut.ac.nz](mailto:studenthub@aut.ac.nz)

### NORTH CAMPUS

90 Akoranga Drive, Northcote, Auckland

### SOUTH CAMPUS

640 Great South Road, Manukau, Auckland

### Connect with us now:



The information contained in this career sheet is correct at time of printing, late 2023.

