

Being child-centred - what does it mean for your school?



MANAAKITIA A TĀTOU TAMARIKI
Children's
Commissioner

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Children (those aged under 18) are a core part of society. They depend on, and are users of, many services but often they have little say in the policies, and services that affect them. Despite being the core users of education, many decisions in schools are made without asking students.

Being child-centred is about elevating the status of children, their needs, rights and views. From a Māori world view, this means enhancing the *mana* of the child.

This is important because children are affected directly, and indirectly, by practically all decisions. You can make better, more robust decisions when you consider impacts on students, uphold children's rights and hear their voices in your decision-making process.

Follow these steps to help you make child-centred decisions:

ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- 1. How will the decision (about a policy, programme, service or product) affect children?**
- 2. What are the differential impacts (i.e. on children from different groups, or between children and other groups in society?)**
- 3. What do children say? Collect children's views and voices on a subject †**
You can find helpful advice and info on how to do this at www.occ.org.nz/listening2kids

MAKE THE RIGHT DECISIONS:

- 4. Use the answers along with your professional judgement, input from stakeholders, expert knowledge and evidence to make decisions that are in children's best interests and enhance their outcomes.***
- 5. Make sure children know how their views were considered, what the outcome was, why the decision was reached (including why the decision is different from their expectations if relevant) and what to expect next.**

More information:

Advice and tools for considering children's interests: www.occ.org.nz/listening2kids

Longer paper on Being Child-Centred: www.occ.org.nz (search 'Being Child-Centred')

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Children's Commissioner Judge Andrew Becroft represents the 1.1 million people in Aotearoa New Zealand under the age of 18, who make up 24 percent of the total population.

He advocates for their interests, ensures their rights are upheld, and helps them have a say on issues that affect them.

† UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12: children have the right to have a say in matters that affect them.

* Article 3: decisions that affect children must be made in their best interests.