

SECURING NEW ZEALAND'S FUTURE



BUDGET
2026

Hon Erica Stanford Minister of Education

28 May 2026

Budget 2026 – Investing in Secondary Achievement

Budget 2026 invests around **\$2.1 billion** to continue building the foundations of a world-leading education system that sets Kiwi kids up for success, Education Minister Erica Stanford says.

“Budget 2024 and 2025 focused on teaching the basics brilliantly through significant investment into primary and intermediate education. Budget 2026 moves the focus to secondary achievement and assessment as we begin the reform of our secondary qualification system.

“This budget provides substantive investment into the development of our national secondary curriculum, providing resources for students and essential professional development for teachers.

- **\$61 million** to develop resources for the refreshed New Zealand Curriculum and Te Marautanga o Aotearoa and to enhance the curriculum website, Tāhūrangi.
- **\$20 million** to provide professional learning and development for 32,000 secondary school teachers to implement the new curriculum and national qualifications.

“This Government is backing more young people to participate in industry-led, vocational pathways through investing in a high-quality curriculum and the expansion of trades training places. Budget 2026 makes two contributions to this:

- **\$15 million** to enable Industry Skills Boards to develop at least eight new industry-led secondary subjects each focused on a specific industry (e.g. construction or primary industries). This will support more students getting high-quality vocational education and training while at secondary school.
- **\$69 million** to nearly double the number of places in Trades Academies to 20,000 by 2030 offering industry-led learning.

“These investments will enable New Zealand students to develop practical, job-ready skills, relevant to business and industry whilst at secondary school. This is good for innovation, entrepreneurship, reducing unemployment and ultimately economic growth. It improves productivity and enables Kiwis to obtain high-skilled employment and live the lives they choose.

“Industry Skills Boards are leading curriculum development to ensure the new vocational education pathways in school align closely with real-world labour market demands, reducing skills mismatches and building the workforce of the future.

“To deliver reform of our national qualifications we are providing **\$90 million** in funding for the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). This will ensure that NZQA are supported by modern, fit-for-purpose, digital systems as they develop and deliver our new, national qualifications.

“Budget 2026 continues our investment into the education workforce including funding for the Government’s increased KiwiSaver contributions, a cost adjustment for places in the School Onsite Training Programme and substantial payroll technology improvements to ensure paying teachers is more accurate, timely, and smoother than before.

“As recently announced, the Government is investing **\$131 million** in the next phase of Teaching the Basics Brilliantly. These initiatives build on the major literacy and maths reforms funded through Budgets 2024 and 2025 as we continue to build the foundations of a world-leading education system.

“Budget 2026 also provides additional cost pressure funding for learning support to better meet the needs of students. This includes **\$22 million** for students with High Health needs, **\$3 million** for Deaf Education services and **\$10 million** to meet the increased demand for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

“Additionally, Budget 2026 includes substantial investments in other priority education areas including:

- **\$160 million** representing a 2 per cent increase in operating grants for schools.
- **\$559 million** into growing and maintaining school property, delivering:
 - more than 4,700 student places through new schools, expansions, and classrooms, including **\$21 million** Kaupapa Māori Education roll growth.
 - Accelerating up to 10 major redevelopments and up to 150 learning support modifications.
 - 1 new special school and 20 learning support satellite classrooms
- A contingency amount to support schools with fuel related costs.

“To deliver this investment, we have assessed underspends and reprioritised initiatives that are underperforming or lack clear evidence that they’re delivering intended outcomes. Around **\$65 million** within the vote has been identified for reinvestment into priority education initiatives.

“Budget 2026 embeds and builds on the strong foundations of the Teaching the Basics Brilliantly reforms. We will continue to invest to raise achievement and close the equity gap, so that all Kiwi kids gain the knowledge, skills and competencies they need to reach their full potential,” Ms Stanford says.

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For more information visit www.education.govt.nz/budget-2026