

# Primary school teachers' perspectives from the 2024 National Survey

## Uiuinga ā-Motu o ngā Kura

### He whakarāpopototanga | Executive summary

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NZCER conducted the National Survey of Primary Schools from October to December 2024. We invited teachers from a nationally representative sample of all English-medium full primary, contributing, and intermediate schools in Aotearoa New Zealand to complete our survey.

Teachers from a sample of 324 schools were invited to participate in the survey. After data cleaning, the final responses included in this report were from 639 teachers from 148 schools, giving a school response rate of 46%.

NZCER has run a National Survey of Primary Schools regularly since 1989, with the last survey of primary school teachers taking place in 2019. This enables us to monitor trends over time.

The report presents the findings in each of the six survey domains alongside a section on teachers' working experiences and future plans.

Key findings that stood out to us in each of the survey domains were:

#### Teaching and learning

- Teachers showed a high commitment to making data-driven decisions in the classroom.
- Half of the teachers reported insufficient support to teach students with learning support needs, such as neurodiverse students, and students with disability, learning difficulties, physical or mental health needs, or behaviour issues. Other findings in this report confirm that teachers want more support to teach students with learning support needs. The most selected thing that teachers would like to change about their work is having more support staff.
- Nearly all teachers explicitly teach strategies and topics that support students' social and emotional learning.

- Nearly all teachers (90%) ensured opportunities for students to be physically active, but fewer (59%) provided learning opportunities about healthy eating.
- Teachers had mixed views on whether their health programme included the impact of social media, healthy use of digital devices, and gender identity.
- Most teachers adopted explicit and intentional practices in the teaching of literacy either daily or several times a week.
- Most teachers supported cultural diversity through their literacy programme, but fewer than half (45%) reported understanding how to support students' home languages. Additionally, most teachers (70%) reported teaching students who are learning English as an additional language. Over half (57%) of these teachers are confident about catering for English language learners, but a third said they did not have access to sufficient support for them.
- Nearly all teachers frequently provided opportunities for students to share prior knowledge, practise new learning, and encounter new learning through a gradual release of responsibility.
- Most teachers identified as “he kākano (emerging/limited)” or “he whanake (developing)” level. Kaiako Māori were more likely to use te reo Māori in their classrooms with high proficiency. More teachers were confident in using short phrases and sentences in te reo Māori than in 2019.
- Nearly half (46%) of the teachers reported using AI tools in their teaching. The most common use of AI was to develop learning materials (85% of teachers who use AI reported this use). Lack of AI knowledge and training was the biggest barrier preventing teachers from integrating AI into their practice (74% of non-users reported this). While many teachers were positive about AI, uncertainty remained, especially among those without experience.
- More than two-thirds of the teachers expected moderate to major climate impacts in their students' lifetimes. Half of the teachers (51%) were confident to address climate change issues in their classroom programme.

## Curriculum and assessment

- Nearly all (93%) teachers made good use of formative assessment practices and most (78%) used the results from standardised tools to inform their teaching. Use of assessments that reflect students' lived experiences and cultural heritage was not widespread.
- Half (53%) of the teachers indicated that curriculum changes were going in the right direction and 37% were neutral. Non-Māori teachers showed higher levels of agreement (55%) than kaiako Māori (39%), while kaiako Māori were more likely to express disagreement (22%, compared with just 8% of non-Māori teachers). This may highlight a need for deeper engagement with Māori voices in the development and implementation of curriculum changes.
- Our survey findings provide an important early snapshot of teacher confidence in implementing the updated curriculum before widespread professional development had taken place. Around half of the teachers felt confident in teaching the updated English (50%), and mathematics and statistics (49%) learning areas. This is echoed by teachers' professional learning and development (PLD) needs: 59% of teachers selected “effective teaching of mathematics” and 46% selected “effective teaching of structured literacy” (both ranked among the top three priorities).
- Nearly all teachers (96%) indicated that learning Aotearoa New Zealand's histories is important, and three-quarters (76%) enjoy teaching the curriculum content.

## Inclusion

- More teachers felt equipped to teach about cultural diversity and diversity of abilities than religious diversity or diversity in gender identity or sexual orientation. Overall, patterns point to a decline in the proportion of teachers feeling equipped to teach students about diversity, compared with 2019.
- Most teachers were positive about their school culture and support for diversity and inclusion, although fewer (57%) of the teachers felt they had school-wide support to understand and address biases they may have as teachers.

## Wellbeing

- Since 2013, teachers' views on job enjoyment, workload, and morale have remained relatively stable. In 2024, job enjoyment continued to be high, with 90% of teachers indicating that they enjoyed their work. Most teachers (75%) indicated that their overall morale was good and that they received the support they needed inside the school to do their job effectively.
- Workload concerns and work-related stress remained, but since 2016 the proportion of teachers working more than 11 additional hours a week has decreased.
- Nearly all teachers (92%) felt confident trying new practices and most (77%) reported having enough autonomy over how they plan, teach, and assess learning. However, just below half (48%) agreed or strongly agreed that teaching time was protected from unnecessary interruptions.
- Most teachers (75%) indicated their school has an effective plan for student wellbeing but only half (54%) said they can access timely support for students with wellbeing needs. Fewer than half agreed or strongly agreed that they had sufficient training to recognise trauma-related responses (48%) or mental health warning signs in students (44%).
- Most teachers were positive about their schools' approaches to supporting positive student behaviour, but the strength of agreement has declined since 2019.
- Most teachers (just over 70%) indicated that school-wide approaches for addressing unwanted behaviours (bullying, racist or discriminatory behaviour) were clear, but fewer (61%) were positive about their effectiveness.
- Compared with 2019, more teachers (82%, compared with 68%) had experienced student behaviour that caused serious disruption to their teaching.

## Support and resourcing

- PLD in the past 5 years has grown teachers' ability to use culturally sustaining pedagogies, but challenges remained in accessing specialist advice outside the school when teachers needed it.
- Compared with 2019, fewer teachers reported opportunities to explore the ideas and theory underpinning new approaches (55%, down from 65% in 2019) and engage with teachers in other schools (35%, down from 46% in 2019).
- More teachers than in 2019 said that PLD provided practical help with tikanga Māori, te reo Māori, and teaching ākonga Māori. The increases from 2019 in support to both learn and teach te reo Māori are likely to be attributable to Te Ahu o Te Reo Māori, which was launched the same year. Fewer than half of the teachers reported that PLD had provided practical help for teaching Pacific students.

- The most-selected PLD priorities for teachers are effective teaching of mathematics (chosen by 59% of teachers), using AI (53%), and effective teaching of structured literacy (46%), followed by PLD around providing mental health and wellbeing support (45%).
- Most early-career teachers with less than 3 years' experience felt well supported (73%) and guided into effective practices (89%).

## Collaborative relationships

- Compared with 2019, collaborative practices within schools have improved. All five areas of collaboration were rated positively by more than three-quarters of teachers.

## Teachers' working experience and future plans

- The most-selected changes to their work that teachers would like were more support staff (selected by 76% of teachers) and smaller class sizes (selected by 70% of teachers), both up from 64% in 2019 and 59% in 2016.
- Perceptions of availability of career progression opportunities has declined. Just under half (49%) of the teachers believed they could progress their careers within their current school, down from 58% in 2019, though this figure remains above the 43% reported in 2016. Just over half (54%) of the teachers felt that career progression opportunities existed for them within education beyond their schools, down from 66% in 2019.
- Interest in leadership development and professional growth has increased since 2019. In the next 5 years, more teachers plan to develop leadership skills (40%, up from 23% in 2019), take on leadership roles with management units (23%, up from 16% in 2019), and increase their level of responsibility within teaching (22%, up from 14% in 2019).
- Just under one-fifth of teachers expressed interest in becoming a principal in the future.

## Responding to the research questions

The 2024 National Survey of Primary Schools addresses five research questions on how the education system in Aotearoa New Zealand is progressing over time in: 1) honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi; 2) serving ākonga Māori and 3) serving Pacific students; 4) achieving equitable outcomes for all learners; and 5) supporting the success of everyone within the system, while assessing the impacts of recent policy changes and identifying strengths and areas for improvement.

The 2024 teacher survey shows clear progress in **honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi**, with more schools embedding Treaty principles in values and increasing confidence in te reo Māori use. However, this progress is uneven across school types, and kaiako Māori continue to lead much of this work. Concerns about genuine partnership with Māori in curriculum reform persist. Sustained investment and shared responsibility are essential to ensure lasting, system-wide change.

There is a mixed picture of how well the system is **serving ākonga Māori**. While culturally responsive practice is growing, supported by targeted PLD and increased reo Māori use, equity gaps remain. Variable practices around use of te reo Māori and enactment of Te Tiriti o Waitangi contribute to inconsistent experiences for ākonga Māori. Addressing these disparities is critical to ensuring all ākonga Māori can thrive in culturally sustaining environments.

While the education system is becoming more culturally inclusive overall, **Pacific students** are not yet fully reflected or supported in this progress. Targeted support for teaching Pacific students remains limited. Gaps in addressing religious diversity, bilingualism, and home language literacy highlight a need for more intentional, specific strategies. Advancing equity for Pacific learners requires moving beyond general inclusion to focused and culturally grounded approaches that affirm their unique identities and needs.

In addressing the broader goal of **achieving equitable outcomes for all students**, the survey shows teachers' strong engagement in culturally responsive teaching and social-emotional learning. However, equity is not yet fully realised for students with additional learning and wellbeing needs. Gaps in access to specialist support and limited coverage of contemporary wellbeing issues highlight areas for improvement.

Finally, regarding **support for all people in the system**, teachers enjoy their work and show strong commitment to inclusive practice and high-quality teaching, enabled in part by a high degree of classroom autonomy. Work-related stress remains an issue, particularly for kaiako Māori who are more likely to report workload pressures. This could be linked to additional cultural responsibilities, expectations to support Māori students and whānau, or roles in leading culturally responsive practices within their schools. Support for teachers beyond the classroom remains uneven. Issues such as school-wide support and access to external specialists for students with wellbeing needs, and limited career development opportunities are increasingly pressing. As these challenges accumulate, interest in leadership roles tends to wane with teachers' experience, reflecting growing concerns about workload, sustainability, and the lack of clear pathways for professional growth.

**Full report:** Li, M., MacDonald, J., Boyd, S., Bolstad, R., Rowe-Williams, J., Dong, J., Durie, K., Smaill, E., Campbell, N. (2025). *Primary school teachers' perspectives from the 2024 National Survey—Uiuinga ā-Motu o ngā Kura*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research. <https://doi.org/10.18296/rep.0081>