

# Put neurodiversity on the education agenda in Election 2023



Neurodiversity  
in Education  
Coalition

# Did you know: 1 in 5 young people are neurodiverse



**Neurodiversity is a big issue, impacting many families and whānau across New Zealand, regardless of socio-economic status or ethnicity.**

With the right support, neurodiverse young people bring a wealth of creativity, fresh thinking and focus that employers are increasingly valuing and seeking out. Without support, neurodiverse young people are over-represented in the ranks of those who have disengaged with school, are unemployed, are in our jails, and suffer poor mental health.

Right now, too few of New Zealand's neurodiverse young people are able to achieve their potential. Most have to operate in an education system not designed for them. Despite the Government's 2019-2025 Learning Support Action Plan, too few are identified and supported as neurodiverse, too few ECEs and schools

have a comprehensive plan and trained staff, and many high-quality support programmes - in and outside of school - are only available to a few, often those who can pay.

## Who are we?

The Neurodiversity in Education Coalition comprises four peak bodies whose constituents make up a large proportion of neurodiverse people in NZ - the Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand, ADHD New Zealand, Autism NZ and the NZ Centre for Gifted Education. Our organisations have been operating for decades, and we know what works to support neurodiverse young people in education.



## What do we want?

In Election 2023, we want to see every political party address neurodiversity head on. We are putting three key policies on the table.



### **Build understanding**

The government should fund a multi-year awareness programme targeted at teachers, parents and young people themselves to ensure neurodiverse young people are identified early.



### **Require School Neurodiversity Action Plans**

Like in the tertiary sector, all primary and secondary schools in New Zealand should be required to have a clear action plan for how they identify and support their neurodiverse students.



### **Scale up programmes that work**

The government should scale up across NZ proven programmes such as the Structured Literacy programme (dyslexia), Early Steps (autism), MindPlus (gifted) and the government's own Learning Support Co-ordinators.

**We want a more inclusive education system.**



## In an optimal education system:

Neurodiverse children are **identified early** by well-trained early learning and primary school teachers and well-informed parents

Once identified, children are **assessed quickly at no cost** to their whānau

Support for neurodiverse children, their whānau, and the professionals involved in their **care is co-ordinated by a well trained Learning Support Co-ordinator** working with their ECE service or school

**High-quality programmes** to support specific learning needs are available free to all neurodiverse children, within their education setting or outside

**Every education setting is designed and run with the needs of neurodiverse students in mind**, with spaces like quiet rooms, resources like headphones, processes like break cards, teacher aides to provide flexible support, and at least one teacher with specialist expertise in one or more areas of neurodiversity and the ability to access external support as required

