

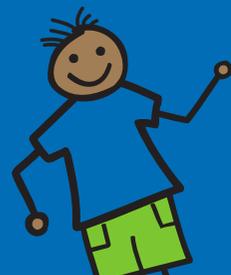


**Every parent wants the best for their child – a place where they can learn, be loved, and, above all – be happy!**

Enrolling your child in a high-quality centre can significantly contribute to their language and social skills, as well as their physical, mental and emotional development.

Children naturally learn through play, as their brains are wired this way. The skills that are developed in ECE centres provide them with a strong foundation for school and a lifelong journey of learning.

Choosing the perfect early childhood education centre for your child can feel like a daunting task, but we've gathered a few points to keep in mind when you begin looking for an Early Learning Centre.



**BestStart is for families who want more from early childhood education.**

As New Zealand's largest Early Childhood Education provider, BestStart has been looking after New Zealand's youngest for over 25 years.

Here's some facts about us:

- We're licensed to educate and care for over 19,500 children
- 15,000 families use BestStart services annually
- We have over 260 centres nationwide
- Te Whāriki, the world-wide acclaimed national early childhood education curriculum, is used in all centres
- We have over 4,500 employees nationally. Over 90% of our permanent teaching staff are fully qualified with a diploma or Bachelor of Teaching (ECE), or higher, or are in training.

**Find a BestStart Centre Today!**



**Visit us today!**

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plunket



**Choosing an Early Learning Centre for your Baby**



## Seek Recommendations

A great place to begin your search is recommendations from parents in your community. This can be friends, relatives or people within your community you trust. If there's a particular centre you're interested in, you can request a copy of their latest ERO report.

## Instincts & Observations

As a parent, you know when something feels right for your child and family. When visiting centres observe your gut feelings while you're there. Think about how the centre and staff make you feel – do you feel comfortable, safe and welcome?

Stand back and observe the atmosphere, environment and interactions happening in the centre. Take notice of how your child is interacting in the centre, and how teachers are interacting with your child. It's important to note that children can initially be shy and reserved when in new environments and around new faces.

Observe whether children have the freedom to play and explore. Ensure that the centre is clean and equipped with age-appropriate activities and materials to foster your child's development. You may like to look at the older room as well to get a sense of the rooms your child will transition into later on.

## Connection

Children thrive on connection with their teachers, which nurtures their brain development and establishes a sense of security in the world. Observe whether the babies are given plenty

of 1:1 time, cuddles, and loving language. Look at how teachers connect with your child and how they engage a group of children together. The relationships children make during their time in early learning help them develop core social and emotional skills for their development.

## Parent-Teacher Communication

It's important to talk to the centre teachers and gain an understanding of how they will communicate with you about your child's daily experiences and learning development. Ask about ways you and your family can be involved with your child's experience at the centre, and how you can bring the learning back home to practice with your child.

## Teacher-Child Ratios

Teacher-child ratios are an essential indicator of quality. For children under two, the minimum ratio is one teacher for every five children, and for older children, it's one teacher for every ten children. Ask about the centre's specific teacher-child ratios.

## Qualifications

There are a range of qualified and unqualified teachers who may be in the centre and part of your child's learning experience. Ask about the qualifications of the centre's staff to gain a better understanding of the teachers around you and your child.

## Centre Routines & Policies

Familiarise yourself with the centre's policies, especially concerning food, nutrition, health and safety, positive guidance, and illness protocols. Ask what the centre's daily rhythm is so you know when your baby will have nap times, mealtimes, nappy changes and play time. Ask whether the teachers will be able to accommodate the routine you follow at home if it differs from that of the centre.

## Diversity

Look for centres that actively celebrate diversity in their daily activities. This enriching environment provides valuable learning opportunities for your child and teaches them core social development skills. If you speak another language at home, find out which centres have teachers speaking your home language and celebrating your important cultural events, to ease your child's transition to their new environment.

## Help to Cover the Costs of Early Childhood Education (ECE)

Some families might be eligible for a childcare subsidy from Work and Income. From the age of 3, all children are eligible for 20 hours free ECE help, even if non-resident. BestStart centres can help you find out what you're eligible for and support you with the application process for this assistance.

## When should you enrol?

Depending on the area you live, some centres will have a waitlist. It's a good idea to enquire as soon as possible if you know you want to enrol your child in an ECE centre. Keep in mind, you will also need to factor in some time for several transition visits between enrolling and starting to ease your child's transition into their new environment.

