



ERO Early Childhood Akatea | Governing Organisation Evaluation Report

Governing Organisation Name: Best Start Educare Limited

Head Office Location: Auckland

1 ERO's judgement of Best Start Educare Limited:

Indicator	Below the threshold for quality		Above the threshold for quality	
Organisational conditions	Improvement required	Working towards	Embedded	Excelling
Learning conditions	Improvement required	Working towards	Embedded	Excelling

For an explanation of the judgement terms used and of the evaluation process please refer to the last page of this report. These judgements are based on the evidence provided to ERO during the evaluation process.

Children's health and safety	Improvement required	Taking reasonable steps
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2 ERO's Judgements

A **Governing Organisation Evaluation** evaluates the extent to which organisational and learning conditions support equitable and excellent outcomes for all learners. [Te Ara Poutama Indicators of quality for early childhood education: what matters most](#) is the basis for making judgements about its effectiveness. The [Early Childhood Education \(ECE\) - Improvement Framework \(teacher led services\)](#) derived from the indicators, is used to inform the ERO's judgements about the organisation's performance. Evaluation for improvement | Ngā Aronga Whai Hua is integrated across all of the above areas.

3 About the Organisation

Best Start Educare Limited is a national early childhood organisation comprised of 265 centre-based services, seven of which have been established since ERO's 2024 evaluation. A governing board with delegated management responsibility to a Chief Executive Officer and a senior leadership team oversee organisational operations. A national education leader works with a team of regional professional practice leaders, and a quality assurance manager to provide curriculum leadership to services. They also audit how well Best Start services implement the organisation's expectations and comply with licensing requirements. At the time of this evaluation 258 services hold a full licence with six new services on a probationary licence and one service having a temporary relocation licence.

Findings from ERO's evaluation at the governance and organisational level included evaluating the extent to which Best Start Educare Limited's strategic intentions, quality improvement systems, processes and practices support the provision of quality education and care at individual service level.

4 Organisation Progress

There has been significant progress to address the improvement actions identified in ERO's 2024 report.

Three improvement actions were identified which related to:

- increasing the monitoring of actions taken to rectify areas of non-compliance
- strengthening capability across the regional leadership team to enable them to better guide and mentor services to do and use internal evaluation more effectively
- continuing to implement a national and strategic approach to distributing the learning and best practices from current initiatives. This included a local curriculum focus to build cultural confidence for younger children, to benefit all groups of learners including Māori and Pacific.

There has been significant progress in establishing robust systems to monitor and maintain compliance with regulatory standards. Self-review processes have been used effectively to inform changes to compliance systems. Targeted capability-building for area managers, centre managers, and head teachers has resulted in improved oversight and clearer reporting on compliance matters. These developments have enabled more responsive and targeted support to services to maintain licensing requirements.

A deliberate and well-resourced approach including strategic resourcing and intentional appointments has supported regional leaders to deepen their understanding of internal evaluation. Professional learning hubs have been used effectively to build shared knowledge and practice among area and centre managers. This has led to increased collaboration and more consistent use of evaluation to guide improvement. Implementation with teaching teams is underway.

Over the past 18 months, good progress has been made in extending strategic initiatives focused on local curriculum. Monitoring and reporting processes are in place and supporting tools have been developed and shared with services. Many services are beginning to use this tool to extend on the progress they have made to date.

5 Evaluation findings for July 2025

Senior leaders use well-planned approaches to achieve strategic intentions and sustain improvements over time. The organisations' strategic intent continues to have a strong focus on children's learning and wellbeing guided by five appropriate long-term goals:

- Quality teaching and learning.
- Delight and inspire our parents.
- Empowered teams.
- Operational excellence.
- Innovation culture.

These goals are clearly understood across the organisation. Progress is regularly monitored and reported to the board, enabling transparency and accountability. Project teams carry out extensive evaluation of strategic initiatives which contributes to a national strategy and informs decision-making and future planning. A wide range of relevant information is analysed and used to monitor progress, with a strong focus on outcomes for children and equity. Research-informed innovation continues to drive purposeful and sustained improvement.

Key initiatives currently being implemented include:

- supporting children's successful transition to school through the 'Set for School' programme, with a focus on enhancing communication
- local curriculum development with a clear focus on building culturally responsive practices to better support Māori and Pacific learners in consultation with whānau.

Development continues on the revitalisation of 'Our Pēpē', a deliberate approach to supporting infants and toddlers learning through play.

Leaders are actively building teaching capability through the phased introduction of *Kōwhiri Whakapae*, a Ministry of Education online curriculum resource designed to extend teaching strategies and deepen children's learning.

International and provisionally certificated teachers are well supported through professional development opportunities and network support groups to improve their knowledge of teaching and learning.

6 Leadership to support quality education and care for children

An experienced senior leadership team provide specific and targeted support to build leadership capability, fostering an organisational culture of collective responsibility and accountability. Area managers and their regional managers have operational oversight of centres along with Professional Practice Leaders who provide targeted curriculum support and guidance to centre leaders.

Area managers and professional practice leaders effectively use a broad range of data to identify teaching teams' strengths and development needs. To further enhance teaching quality, more consistent and rigorous feedback from area managers and centre leaders is required.

- Regular service level visits facilitate ongoing discussion and monitoring of the quality and effectiveness of teacher practice and curriculum provision.
- Leaders support teaching teams to understand and enact the organisation's vision, values and priorities for children's learning. This includes actively monitoring each service's contribution to achieving strategic priorities.
- Area managers provide sustained mentoring, creating ongoing opportunities for centre managers and head teachers to reflect, collaborate, and strengthen practice.

7 Summary of findings from visits to sample services

ERO visited a sample of 22 services to verify what Best Start Educare Limited knows about the quality of each of the services' learning conditions and to what extent the organisational conditions support service improvement. ERO selected the service sample.

Children's social and emotional learning is well supported by responsive relationships with their teachers that enhance children's learning and wellbeing.

- Children of all ages experience warm and respectful relationships with teachers who genuinely listen and engage with their ways of communicating.
- Clear and useful guidance for documenting assessment, planning and evaluation is in place. A few services have developed more specific guidance for teachers that has strengthened their understanding and enactment of intentional teaching strategies. This is not yet widespread across the sample services.
- All children have individualised plans with planned strategies and experiences to progress their learning in relation to the learning outcomes from *Te Whāriki*, the early childhood curriculum. Evaluation of these plans do not show the extent to which identified strategies have contributed to children's learning.
- A recent organisational focus on early literacy including language, communication, and mathematics, is supported by professional learning to strengthen teachers' intentional interactions and planning. While teacher capability is growing, especially in formal group times, their professional learning is not consistently embedded in play-based contexts or for different age groups of children.

The capability of centre leaders and teachers to do and use internal evaluation to inform improvement is increasing.

- Teachers are well supported to engage in a range of quality improvement practices including professional growth cycles, teacher inquiry, review and evaluation that leads to improvement.
- Area managers use audit tools effectively to make informed judgments that guide service-level improvement in curriculum and compliance. Centre leaders and teams are increasingly using evaluation practices to respond to audit findings and monitor change.
- Implementation of effective internal evaluation continues to be variable across the services sampled.

8 Where to next for improvement?

Prior to the next ERO evaluation Best Start Educare Limited will progress the following actions through its quality improvement planning:

- Senior leaders to further build the capability of centre managers to improve the quality of teaching and support their teams to do and use effective evaluation.
- Leaders to provide clear feedback and critique that builds teacher knowledge and supports effective use of a wider range of intentional teaching strategies to enhance and extend children's learning within a play-based curriculum.
- Give greater prominence to early literacy and mathematics within a play-based curriculum across the organisation.

9 Management Assurance on Legal Requirements

As part of this review, a representative of Best Start Educare Limited completed an *ERO Governing Organisation Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklist*. In these documents they stated that the organisation has the systems, processes, and practices to be assured that service providers for licensed services within the organisation are meeting legal requirements related to:

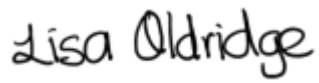
- curriculum
- premises and facilities
- health and safety practices
- governance, management, and administration.

The licensed service provider/s of the sampled services listed at the end of this report also completed an *ERO Assurance Statement and Self-Audit Checklist* for their service. In these documents they attested that they have taken all reasonable steps to meet legal requirements, including those detailed in Ministry of Education Circulars and other documents, related to these areas.

All early childhood services are required to promote children's health and safety and to regularly review their compliance with legal requirements.

10 Next ERO Review

The next ERO evaluation is likely to be in 12 months.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa Oldridge". The script is cursive and fluid.

Lisa Oldridge
Director of Early Childhood Education (Acting)

11 September 2025

[*Further information about how ERO evaluates Akatea | Governing Organisations is available here.*](#)

11 About the Governing Organisation

Service types	Education and care service	
Total number of licensed services	265	
Total number of children licensed for across all services	23,376	
Total number of children enrolled across all services	20,255	
Ethnic composition <i>Using rounded percentages</i>	Māori 20%; NZ European/Pakeha 25%; Indian 19%; Samoan 3%; Tongan 2%; Cook Island 1%; Fijian 1%; other Pacific 1%; other ethnic groups 30%	
Number of full-time equivalent teachers	Qualified	2,128
	Unqualified	769
Review team on site	May/June/July 2025	
Date of this report	11 September 2025	
Most recent ERO report(s) These are available at www.ero.govt.nz	Akatea Governing Organisation Evaluation First Report, February 2024	

12 List of sampled services

All sampled services are on a full licence.

Services sampled in this evaluation included:

Profile Number	Name of service	Service Type
45256	BestStart Alexandra	Education and care service
25055	BestStart Coronation Road, Auckland	Education and care service
45957	BestStart Elles Road	Education and care service
45877	BestStart Flat Bush, Auckland	Education and care service
45192	BestStart Glasgow Street, Whanganui	Education and care service
46393	BestStart Greenwood Street, Hamilton	Education and care service
45673	BestStart Kaikorai Valley Road	Education and care service
90032	BestStart Kelvin Street	Education and care service
40058	BestStart Lynmore	Education and care service
70403	BestStart Marchwiell	Education and care service
45295	BestStart Montel Avenue, Auckland	Education and care service
80081	BestStart Montessori Mosgiel	Education and care service
20131	BestStart Mount Eden	Education and care service
55456	BestStart Omaha Road, Hastings	Education and care service
52537	BestStart Palmerston North 1	Education and care service
40243	BestStart Palmerston North 2	Education and care service
45277	BestStart Riverbend Road, Napier	Education and care service
65186	BestStart Rugby Park	Education and care service
20289	BestStart Seymour Road Kindy, Auckland	Education and care service
47302	BestStart Warrington	Education and care service
46011	BestStart Weymouth, Auckland	Education and care service
65158	BestStart Wigram	Education and care service

Activities undertaken by the evaluation team

- Pre-visit contact with the service provider/organisation leader(s).
- Meetings and / or conversations with governance, management and leaders.
- Verification and validation of what the organisation knows about the quality of education and care in its services.
- Reading documentation.
- Sampling of information related to compliance.

Activities undertaken by the evaluation team in the service sample visits

- Pre-visit contact with the service leader.
- Meetings and / or conversations with leaders and teachers.
- Verification and validation of information shared by the organisation at service level.
- Reading documentation as service level.
- Scanning the learning environment and resources.
- Observations of interactions and teaching practice while onsite in the sample services.
- Sampling of information related to compliance.

Description around ERO's judgement terms

ERO's judgements are based on *Te Ara Poutama* and the *Early Childhood Education Improvement Framework (teacher led services)*.

	Above the threshold for quality
Excelling	The organisation is excelling in the learning and organisational conditions to support high quality education and care for children.
Embedded	The organisation has embedded its learning and organisational conditions to support ongoing improvement in the provision of quality education and care for children.
	Below the threshold for quality
Working towards	The organisation is working towards establishing the learning and organisational conditions to support improvements in the provision of quality education and care for children.
Improvement required	The organisation has not yet developed the learning and organisational conditions to support the provision of quality education and care for children.