

# Pay parity explainer (updated 2025)

Teachers in the early childhood education (ECE) sector are typically paid significantly less than their school-based peers. The main exception is teachers employed by Free Kindergarten Associations—their pay is aligned with school teacher salaries under a collective agreement.

In July 2019, the Office of Early Childhood Education (OECE) launched a campaign for pay parity for all ECE teachers with school/kindy teachers. At that time, NZEI was focused on pay equity. Though the two terms sound similar, they refer to different goals:

- **Pay parity** ensures teachers receive the same pay for the same level of qualification and experience, regardless of the age group of children they teach.
- **Pay equity** ensures female-dominated professions (like ECE) are paid fairly compared to similar male-dominated occupations.

In the absence of a collective employment agreement to guarantee minimum pay rates, a key tool for ensuring employer accountability in the pay parity system is **salary attestation**. Through attestation, an ECE service commits to paying its qualified and certificated teachers according to government-set pay scales. This helps ensure that additional funding intended for teacher salaries is actually used by services to increase teacher pay.

## Key Milestones Toward Pay Parity

- > **2020** Teacher-led centre minimum attestation rates were aligned to Step 1 of the Kindergarten Teachers Collective Agreement
- > **2021** The attestation scale expanded from one to six pay steps
- > **2022** An “extended pay parity” scale was introduced, covering up to Step 11 plus one manager grade
- > **Budget 2023** Centres opting into the **full kindergarten pay scale** from 1 Nov 2023 were **promised** the same funding as kindergartens
- > **Since December 2023** There have been no further increases to the minimum pay scales for non-kindergarten ECE teachers

## Outstanding Issues

- > ECE teachers outside the Kindergarten Teachers Collective Agreement **remain underpaid and lack parity with school teachers**
- > Home-based visiting teachers and other groups have **yet to be included**. While Ngā Kōhanga Reo are funded for kaiako pay parity this is at even lower salaries than education and care centre teachers

## Progress Frozen: Recent Funding Rule Changes Reverse Gains

Since Oct 2024, relaxations in funding rules have shifted parity **money away from ECE teachers**—without reducing the funding services are paid:

- Services no longer need to attest that they pay minimum salary rates to teachers who are not employed as permanent staff.
- Unqualified teachers can be used to replace qualified, certificated teachers for up to 80 hours per funding period—without needing to show that no qualified teacher is available
- Employers are no longer required to factor in higher qualifications and previous ECE or related experience when setting the starting salary of new teachers.

## School and kindergarten teacher pay and Government’s “Full Pay Parity” rates for teachers in other teacher-led centres and hospital-based services

Step	School teacher	Kindergarten Assn Teacher	ECE Teacher
1	\$61,329	\$61,329	\$57,358 (per hour \$27.58)
2	\$64,083	\$64,083	\$59,544 (per hour \$28.63)
3	\$66,586	\$66,586	\$61,948 (per hour \$29.78)
4	\$70,779	\$70,779	\$64,133 (per hour \$30.83)
5	\$75,340	\$75,340	\$67,794 (per hour \$32.59)
6	\$80,224	\$80,224	\$71,869 (per hour \$34.55)
7	\$86,123	\$86,123	\$76,261 (per hour \$36.66)
8	\$90,960	\$90,960	\$81,566 (per hour \$39.21)
9	\$97,920	\$97,920	\$85,915 (per hour \$41.31)
10	\$103,086	\$103,086	\$92,175 (per hour \$44.31)
11			\$96,820 (per hour \$46.55)

View more: Office of Early Childhood Education <https://oece.nz>

## Management positions on the Full Pay Parity Scale

Position	Kindergarten	Non-Kindergarten ECE Teachers
Relieving Head Teacher (less than 10 weeks)	\$105,664	Non-permanent teacher - not eligible for pay parity
Head Teacher/ Centre Manager	\$107,664	\$101,120
K3 Senior Teacher for staff at more than 1 centre	\$113,315	\$106,427
K4 Senior Teacher manager of the K2 and K3 managers	\$122,574	\$115,123

## Salary Scales Employers Can Opt-in for Higher Funding

STEP	Step 1 only	Steps 1-6	Extended	Partial Full
1	\$57,358 (per hour \$27.58)	\$57,358 (per hour \$27.58)	\$57,358 (per hour \$27.58)	\$57,358 (per hour \$27.58)
2		\$59,544 (per hour \$28.63)	\$59,544 (per hour \$28.63)	\$59,544 (per hour \$28.63)
3		\$61,948 (per hour \$29.78)	\$61,948 (per hour \$29.78)	\$61,948 (per hour \$29.78)
4		\$64,133 (per hour \$30.83)	\$64,133 (per hour \$30.83)	\$64,133 (per hour \$30.83)
5		\$67,794 (per hour \$32.59)	\$67,794 (per hour \$32.59)	\$67,794 (per hour \$32.59)
6		\$71,869 (per hour \$34.55)	\$71,869 (per hour \$34.55)	\$71,869 (per hour \$34.55)
7			\$74,152 (per hour \$35.65)	\$76,261 (per hour \$36.66)
8			\$76,403 (per hour \$36.73)	\$81,566 (per hour \$39.21)
9			\$78,715 (per hour \$37.84)	\$85,915 (per hour \$41.31)
10			\$81,112 (per hour \$39.00)	\$92,175 (per hour \$44.31)
11			\$85,457 (per hour \$41.09)	\$96,820 (per hour \$46.55)
Manager Centre Head Teacher			\$85,457 (per hour \$41.09)	\$101,120 (per hour \$48.62)

An indicative hourly rate can be found by dividing the minimum salary level by 2080 (40 hours x 52 weeks), rounding is to be applied to at least two decimal places.

**Calculating pay parity salary steps** – <https://www.education.govt.nz/education-professionals/early-learning/funding-and-financials/pay-parity-opt-scheme-education-and-care-services/calculating-pay-parity-salary-steps>

**Read full wage and conditions** - <https://oece.nz/public/information/teacher/wages-rates-pay-scales/>

**See full funding rates for different service types** - <https://oece.nz/public/information/fees/government-ece-funding-rates/>

**Facebook group** - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/pay.parity>

**For news and updates go to our** [Office of Early Childhood Education](https://oece.nz) website at <https://oece.nz>