

# EMMANUEL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

---

24 August 2026

Dear Emmanuel Christian School Parents, Caregivers, Staff, and Early Childhood Partners,

### CONFIRMING OUR TRANSITION TO COHORT ENTRY FROM TERM 1, 2027

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we want to express our sincere gratitude for your active participation and valuable feedback during our recent community consultation. Following our initial proposal in June, we reached out to existing school families, prospective parents who have applied for places for 2027, our school teaching staff, and local Early Childhood Education (ECE) providers. The constructive engagement and thoughtful perspectives shared by all groups have been invaluable in helping us consider this important change for our school.

We are pleased to report that the consultation demonstrated overwhelming positive support across our entire community, confirming that the proposal is "generally acceptable" under the requirements of the Education and Training Act 2020:

- **Early Childhood Education (ECE) Providers (9 responses):** 100% (unanimous) support, finding the transition generally acceptable. Providers noted that starting school in a peer group supports child wellbeing by eliminating the awkwardness of being the 'new child' and helps children establish a sense of belonging quickly. Eight out of nine providers anticipated no significant impact on their operations, and one anticipated a positive impact.
- **Existing Parents (54 responses):** 83% (45 out of 54) of current parents support the proposal. Parents highly valued the social and learning benefits, noting that entering with peers reduces fear and creates a more supportive starting environment. For children already in class, parents agreed that grouping intakes would prevent continuous, year-round classroom disruptions.
- **Prospective Parents (12 responses):** 92% (11 out of 12) of families who have applied for places in 2027 preferred cohort entry over the traditional continuous model, believing it would make social integration and friend-making easier for their children.
- **School Staff:** The Junior School teaching team strongly advocated for this shift. Teachers report that continuous entry forces them into a perpetual cycle of repeating basic classroom routines, which disrupts learning. Cohort entry allows for a structured, collective induction program, preserving uninterrupted learning blocks for existing students.

While we acknowledge that this transition represents a change in practice and that four surveyed parents expressed valid concerns regarding potential wait times for children turning

five, the Board is confident that the comprehensive benefits of this model far outweigh the drawbacks. Research from the Education Review Office (ERO) shows that starting school together fosters stronger peer relationships, reduces transition anxiety, and significantly improves student engagement in learning. It also strengthens our community, enabling the school to host dedicated group welcome events, such as mihi whakatau, and parent information evenings that help families connect and build lasting supportive networks.

**Based on these compelling pedagogical, social, and operational advantages, the Board of Trustees has formally decided to transition Emmanuel Christian School to a Cohort Entry policy starting from the beginning of the 2027 academic year.**

To help our families prepare, here are the key operational and legal guidelines that will apply under this new policy:

- **Two Intakes per Term:** Children will start school in group cohorts at set dates twice per term—either at the start of the term or at a designated mid-term point.
- **Minimum Starting Age of Five:** The legal requirement that a child must be five years old to begin instruction remains absolute. If a child's birthday falls after a cohort date, they must wait until the next scheduled cohort date to start school. They cannot start earlier, even if their birthday is only a few days after.
- **No Loss of ECE Funding:** For families concerned about additional costs during any waiting period, please be reassured that children continue to receive full ECE funding after their fifth birthday until they officially start school.
- **Compulsory Enrolment by Six:** The legal requirement that all children must be enrolled in school by their sixth birthday is unchanged. Parents who feel their child is not yet ready at age five may still choose a later cohort entry date closer to their sixth birthday.
- **Exemption for Transferring Students:** If a child has already been enrolled at another school that does not use cohort entry and subsequently transfers to Emmanuel Christian School, this policy does not apply, and they may start immediately.

### Statutory Cohort Entry Dates for 2027

| Term   | Start-of-Term Cohort Date                                          | Mid-Term Cohort Date |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Term 1 | Between 28 January and 3 February<br>(aligned with school opening) | 8 March              |
| Term 2 | 27 April                                                           | 31 May               |
| Term 3 | 19 July                                                            | 23 August            |
| Term 4 | 11 October                                                         | 15 November          |

Over the coming terms, school leadership will work closely with families and our local ECE partners to ensure a warm, smooth transition process for all our new students. This will include

targeted parent information evenings, joint transition visits, and the sharing of supportive development portfolios. We are excited about the opportunities this change brings to strengthen our community, support student wellbeing, and preserve instructional excellence in our classrooms.

Thank you once again for your partnership, your valuable insights, and your shared dedication to the children of Emmanuel Christian School.

Blessings,

**The Board of Trustees**

*Emmanuel Christian School*