



Charter school funding

March 2026

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There has been some confusion about how charter schools are funded, and the level of funding charter schools receive.

To be clear, charter schools receive roughly the same level of funding as an equivalent state school.

Flexibility in exchange for accountability

Charter schools have more freedom about how they use their funding, how they teach, and how they structure their school day to meet the needs of their communities. This flexibility comes with high accountability to deliver results. They must meet performance targets about their students attending school and achieving.

Unlike state schools, if these performance targets are not met, their funding can be withdrawn. Most charter school funding isn't guaranteed, even in their first year, as opposed to the state system where much of their funding is guaranteed for the first three years.

Comparing state and charter school funding

In 2024 the average state primary school was funded \$8,762 per student. A charter primary school of the same size receives around \$8,278 per student.

In 2024 the average state secondary school was funded \$11,040 per student. A charter secondary school of the same size receives around \$10,741 per student.

Table 1: Comparing second year charter school funding to state school averages

	Primary school	Secondary school
2024 State school average per student funding (Salaries and operations) * Per student funding for schools Education Counts	\$8,762	\$11,040
2026 Charter school funding model** per student (Salaries and operations)	180*** students: \$8,278 Up to 10 students (Maximum rate): \$9,319 500 students: \$7,351 2,500 students: \$6,988	1,005*** students: \$10,741 Up to 50 students (Maximum rate): \$16,197 500 students: \$11,403 2,500 students: \$8,892

There are costs to set up any new school

Most charter school funding so far has gone towards start-up and first-year costs. All new schools have set-up costs, and the Government helps pay for these.

Table 2: How Government funds new schools

Type of support	State school	Charter school
Establishment/notional roll	Based on fourth year roll	Term 5 roll
Establishment support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding in first three years based on notional roll. Can receive staffing for several years before they open, along with new buildings and set-up grants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive a one-off payment to cover property and staff costs for up to six months before opening. Some funding in year one based on establishment roll.
When actual rolls inform all funding	Year 4	Year 2
Funding recoverable	No	Yes

Further information

For more information on how state school funding was used to develop charter school funding see: [Charter-Schools-Kura-Hourua-Funding-Model Final-Proposed-Redactions-05.08.2024 Redacted.pdf](#)

Notes on table 1

All values are GST exclusive.

Property and services funding

Property and services funding are excluded from the above comparisons as state school property and services funding are not reported in a comparable way.

The costs of purchasing, building or renting a new state school property is managed through the Ministry of Education (MoE). State schools receive some funding for day-to-day maintenance and operating costs, but most costs are managed directly via the MoE.

Services such as IT, Payroll and Professional Learning and Development are provided to state schools via the MoE.

Charter school property and services funding is based off the average per student cost of these services for state schools.

Further caveats

* State school averages cover all schools of various sizes and set ups. There is no fixed per student rate for a school type either by size or any other characteristic. Different schools with a similar set up may receive significant variations in funding.

***Charter school model is based on a school in the “Fewest” EQI band and one that isn’t offering Māori or Pacific medium learning.

***Number is based on the average roll size of a state or state integrated school. See [School rolls | Education Counts](#)

- Across 332 secondary schools (years 9- 15) in 2024 the average roll size was 1,005 students. In 2025 it was 1028 students.
- Across 1,019 Full Primary schools in 2024 the average roll size was 180 students. In 2025 it was 179 students.