

January 2014

## *Schools at the **Heart***

School Hubs; ensuring education is a route out of poverty.

*“**all persons**, whatever their ability, rich or poor, whether they live in town or country, have a right as citizens to a free education of the kind for which they are best fitted and to the fullest extent of their powers. So far is this from being a mere pious platitude that the **full** acceptance of the principle will involve the reorientation of the education system.”*

– Clarence Beeby 1939

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*Education remains the most effective route out of poverty. But school **only works** for children if they are in a position to be able to learn.*

## *Introduction*

For almost a century New Zealanders regarded our education system as the foundation of our free society. Education was the great equalizer. It allowed all of us, whether we were rich, or poor, to be all we were capable of being.

Education remains the most effective route out of poverty. But school only works for children if they are in a position to be able to learn.

Many Kiwi kids come with a complicated mix of social, health and family issues, often related to low income, that need to be addressed before they can get the most out of school.

Children can be blocked from a good education and become trapped in poverty unless barriers such as hunger and sickness are addressed.

This paper outlines a significant reshaping of New Zealand schools in order to meet these challenges.

It proposes equipping schools as hubs, or 'one stop shops', which function as the anchor for a range of health, education, and welfare services, and offer cultural and other opportunities.

By bringing services to schools we ensure every child is ready to learn, their family is included and is better able to support their learning, and we free up teachers to do what they do best – teach.

Schools are already the heart of their communities and, with additional support, they can play an even greater role in engaging families and ensuring a great education is accessible to all children.

*Schools at the **Heart**:  
four core services  
ensuring education  
is a route out of  
poverty.*

### *A Green School Hub solution*

We propose establishing community hubs, or health, welfare and education 'one stop shops' in all decile 1 to 4 primary and intermediate schools.

We will do this by providing four new core services at every decile 1 to 4 primary and intermediate school. We will also build new early childhood education/community centres onsite at decile 1 to 4 schools where there is a need.

#### **The four core services will be:**

**1.** A dedicated **School Hub Coordinator** in all decile 1 to 4 primary and intermediate schools.

The Hub Coordinator will work for the school to recruit adult and community educators, early childhood, social and health services and explore other opportunities to develop a unique hub in conjunction with the community.

**2.** Free **afterschool and holiday care** programmes.

We'll provide free after-school care and holiday programmes for every child at decile 1 to 4 schools, and we will expand access to Out of School Care and Recreation (OSCAR) low income subsidies to children at decile 5-10 schools.

**3.** A **national school lunch** fund.

The fund will make lunch available to those that need it at all decile 1 to 4 primary and intermediate schools, but will be available to other schools based on need.

**4.** Dedicated **school nurses**.

School nurses at all decile 1 to 4 schools will deliver primary health care to children and their families in the school environment where they are known and trusted.

We will also:

- **Build at least 20 new Early Childhood Education Centres onsite at low decile primary schools.** These Early Childhood Education (ECE) Centres will be built onsite at schools in communities that need them over the first two years of our Schools at the Heart programme and we'll develop a long-term plan for onsite ECE in more schools.
- **Establish a community hub resource centre.** We will set up a resource centre within the Ministry of Education to collect evidence, provide expertise and eventually produce best practice guidelines and templates for the further development of school hubs.

- **Work with secondary schools to devise a hubs plan.** We can ensure medical, social and special education support is delivered more effectively in a centralised hub model at secondary schools, by working closely with the secondary sector.

Ultimately we would ensure every school, regardless of decile, has the support they need to establish hubs on site.

Communities can define their own problems and aspirations and come up with their own solutions, knowing they will have the resources they need to back that up.



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**Childhood** in New Zealand has changed dramatically over the last 30 years, but the **school system** has not kept pace with this change.

## *Inequality and the role of school hubs*

*“Health, environment, security, prosperity: all are linked by education. Not only is education a human right – it is also the best route out of poverty.”* Background to the Millennium Development Goals.

Childhood in New Zealand has changed dramatically over the last 30 years, but the school system has not kept pace with this change.

The percentage of New Zealand children living in poverty has increased from 11 per cent in 1986, to 25 per cent in 2011 using the same measure<sup>1</sup>.

Parents are working longer hours, often in two or more jobs, but low incomes and hugely increased housing costs<sup>2</sup> mean many are spending longer at work and are struggling to make ends meet with less money.

For children, the combination of less parent time and less family income means less access to healthcare, good food and safe housing, and fewer opportunities to do sports, music and other activities which can boost their learning.

This, combined with a much greater concentration of deprivation in lower decile schools, leaves schools in those communities facing unique challenges.

In decile 1 to 4 schools, for example, about one in every 11 kids goes to school hungry.

Children in these schools are three times as likely as other children to end up in hospital suffering from preventable diseases. This

*While most countries have become more effective at mitigating the impact of poverty on education, equity is deteriorating **further** under the National Government.*

means days and weeks off school, which can put them permanently behind their peers.

Many schools manage to mitigate poverty remarkably well, but successive Governments have failed to keep pace with such huge societal change, and inequality is becoming entrenched.

One way to meet these new challenges is to bring health, welfare and family services to the places where kids learn - in schools.

This is called a school hub.

It's not hard to see that a child who is healthy and well fed, who has access to extracurricular activities, and whose family is engaged in their education, is in a better position to get the most out of school.

### *The New Zealand school system does not do well for poorer kids*

In New Zealand the chances of a child escaping poverty through education are more limited than in other developed countries, because our system is less equipped than others to mitigate the impact that poverty has on their learning.

While New Zealand has one of the top performing education systems in the world, it is also one of the least equitable and has the widest achievement gap between the top and bottom performers in the OECD.

While most countries have become more effective at mitigating the impact of poverty on education, equity is deteriorating further under the National Government.<sup>3</sup>

*For the **quarter of Kiwi kids** living in poverty, material hardship means they start school behind their peers and each year they slip further and further behind*

### *How low income impacts on education*

There are three main ways that poverty reduces a child's educational outcomes. These are:

1. The effect that stress from poverty and hardship has on parents, their relationships, mental health and parenting ability.
2. The long term impact of stress on a child's health, including damage to their nervous, immune and metabolic systems which not only causes them to have days off school, but has lifelong impacts on their health and work prospects.
3. The fact that poorer families can't afford to access the books, resources and experiences such as music and sport that wealthier families can, so their child's education suffers as a result.

For the quarter of Kiwi kids living in poverty, material hardship means they start school behind their peers and each year they slip further and further behind.<sup>4</sup>

Last year, 25 per cent fewer children in the lowest three deciles achieved Level 1 NCEA in year 11 than those in the top three deciles.<sup>5</sup>

Knowing this, it's not good policy to simply demand results of schools, as the National Government has, without giving them the means to address the reasons their pupils are unable to meet those standards.

We agree with Victoria University Professor Jonathan Boston: *"If our policy goals include raising average educational performance, reducing the attainment gap and enhancing equality of educational opportunity, it would be misguided for policy makers to ignore child poverty"*.

*By **providing** health care, after-school activities, early childhood education and food, hubs can **mitigate** the impact poverty can have on a child's education.*

### *The benefits of a school hub*

Around the world there is growing evidence that families will access the help they need if they know what is available and can physically get to it.

When schools become community hubs, kids health and welfare needs can be met earlier, while evidence shows parents involved in a hub feel more welcome, see schools as more relevant and they engage more with their children's learning.<sup>6</sup> This engagement is crucial to a child's success at school.

By providing health care, after-school activities, early childhood education and food, hubs can mitigate the impact poverty can have on a child's education.

International research has found that a 'one stop shop' model can have a significant impact on educational opportunities for young people<sup>7</sup>, among other benefits including<sup>8</sup>:

- reduced family violence
- increased access by families to preschool and child care
- improved school enrolment and less roll turnover<sup>9</sup>
- improvement in service collaboration and coordination
- introduction of bilingual workers in hubs
- increased levels of participation by parents in school activities

Recent work on child poverty by The Early Childhood Taskforce, the PPTA and the Children's Commissioners' Expert Advisory Group on Child Poverty recommended

hubs based at schools and ECE centres as a way to ensure more equitable access to education by mitigating the negative impact of poverty.

Becoming a hub brings other benefits to schools including: additional space and resources, extra income from sharing their facilities, teacher time focused on teaching and learning, better use and sharing of the costs of school facilities, and having parents engaged in education, such as English as a second language and job skills training.

We think all schools could become hubs in the future.

But we are first targeting those communities most likely to benefit from a hub approach.

## *Case Study - Victory School*

Victory School is a decile 1 school in the community of Victory in Nelson, which is probably regarded as New Zealand's most well known and successful school community hub.

After partnering with the Victory Health Clinic, which moved to the school in the mid 2000s, Victory Community has grown to host a range of social service providers at a community centre adjacent to the school, including the Victory health centre, adult and community education, language teaching, budgeting advice, a Kōhanga Reo, a crèche, neighbourhood police and a large community garden.

Over ten years, school roll turnover at Victory has dropped from 65 per cent to 10 per cent, and student achievement has increased from 50 per cent to 90 per cent.

By enrolling the family along with the child, and purposefully choosing to be the heart of their community, schools like Victory have not limited their successes to improved academic results.

More than 2500 people are now actively involved in the Victory Community.<sup>10</sup>

We believe hubs like Victory work because the community has been able to define its own problems and aspirations and specifically tailor its own solutions.

Schools at the **Heart**, the four core components

1

*The Green Party will provide funding for a **School Hub Coordinator** to be employed directly to develop and coordinate an integrated hub or Learning Community at their school.*

## *School Hub Coordinators*

**The Green Party will provide funding for a School Hub Coordinator to be employed directly by the average decile 1 to 4 school, or with two or three smaller schools, to develop and coordinate an integrated hub or Learning Community at their school.**

The Coordinators will be the initial backbone of their school hub.

A School Hub Coordinator will work with the school board and principal to establish what's needed in their community and liaise with community organisations and groups who might want to be part of a school based hub.

They'll help ensure the school welcomes and supports all whanau including those students with learning disabilities.

Some of the expectations of hub coordinators include:

- Establishing and managing the network of community services that are based on the school site and oversee the hub's on-going development.
- Establishing a relationship with nearby community ECE services, and advocating with the Ministry for new services onsite at the school if there is a need.
- Managing the school food programme.
- Recruiting OSCAR services for the school if there is no approved after-school care programme in place. However, these services will be independently managed as will all other community services that

work in the school.

- Working with outside agencies such as budgeting services, parent educators, fitness providers, adult educators, maternity providers, health and welfare organisations, disability organisations and Māori and Pacific cultural groups to form a hub that serves and builds their unique school community.

We envisage these Coordinators will be familiar with the community they are working in and will have experience in teaching, social work, public health nursing or community development.

Our funding estimates are based on salary and basic admin costs as we envisage the coordinators will, in most cases, work from existing spaces in the school.<sup>11</sup>

Education Ministry data shows low decile schools have, on average, 25 per cent unused building space at each school.<sup>12</sup> By using that space schools could become more financially sustainable, earn income through occupancy arrangements, while invigorating their school community leading to sustainable roll growth.

**Total Cost:**

**School Hub Coordinators: \$26.75m per annum based on employing 350 Coordinators<sup>13</sup> plus \$5000 per coordinator for administration costs.**

2

*The Green Party will provide free, **good quality** after-school and holiday **care** programmes for all children at decile 1 to 4 primary and intermediate schools.*

### *Free after-school and holiday care*

**The Green Party will provide free, good quality after-school and holiday care programmes for all children at decile 1 to 4 primary and intermediate schools.**

Our plan will support working parents by providing after-school and holiday care for children in low decile schools that's free, fun, educational and reliable.

Parents who work need after school care they can trust.

But the benefits of good quality after school and holiday care go beyond minding kids while parents work; it can also give poorer children an opportunity to get involved in sports, cultural and music activities, and the space to do homework which they might not have at home.

Improving access to these opportunities has been identified by the Children's Commissioner's Expert Advisory Group on child poverty (EAG) as a key way of improving a low income kid's chances at school.

For this reason we will extend eligibility for OSCAR subsidies to the children of families who are not in work and training.

This will mean the children of beneficiaries who attend decile 5 to 10 schools can also get access to high quality after-school care and holiday programmes.<sup>14</sup>

Low income kids have the most to gain from quality after school and holiday programmes.

A lack of access to after-school enrichment opportunities is one of the reasons why low family income impacts on educational achievement.

The EAG found that 40 per cent of children from families with the lowest incomes were missing out on music, sport and cultural activities because of the cost and many did not have a computer or space in their home to do homework.

Over summer, the lack of exposure to learning opportunities among poorer children is particularly damaging to their education.

New Zealand research at a decile 1 school found children reading at below average levels went backwards by a further 5.8 months over summer, and that this loss was compounding and enduring.<sup>15</sup>

This is known as the *summer holiday slip*, where a lack of exposure to books, trips and other learning opportunities over the summer holidays leads these kids to fall behind and lose some of the progress they have made at school during the year.

All kids need a break from school and time to relax and have fun over summer, but all kids also deserve the opportunity to have fun and learn together and retain the educational gains they made over the school year.

Improving the quality and training of OSCAR services, and making them free or affordable for low income children,

would support parents, make enrolment at low decile schools more sustainable and provide powerful opportunities for children which limit the impact of poverty on their education.

The Green Party will:

- Provide free, quality, after school and holiday programmes at all decile 1 to 4 schools.
- Extend eligibility to OSCAR subsidies to all other children.
- Extend eligibility for the OSCAR holiday supplement to the children of families not in work or training for a maximum of three weeks over summer.
- Improve the quality of OSCAR services by making OSCAR training compulsory for all OSCAR caregivers, and following that up with regular audits and review.

**Total cost:**

**Approximately \$10 million per annum, with training, monitoring and auditing funded from existing baselines.**

3

*The Green Party will employ a dedicated **school nurse** to work in all decile 1 to 4 primary and intermediate schools to ensure children who need basic healthcare get it when they first **need it.***

## School nurses

**The Green Party will employ a dedicated school nurse to work in all decile 1 to 4 primary and intermediate schools to ensure children who need basic healthcare get it when they first need it.**

School nurses intervene earlier to ensure children get the healthcare they need to stay well, attend school and keep learning.

In June 2013 the Green Party released a discussion paper on our proposal for a nurse in every decile 1 to 3 school. The feedback from schools, parents and nurses was overwhelmingly positive.

As a result of this feedback we're convinced there is also need for a dedicated school nurse in decile 4 schools and we have extended our nurse in schools proposal to include these schools.

The entire programme will involve employing up to 350 new school nurses, based on a ratio of one nurse for every 400 pupils. That will be enough for one nurse per school for a typical large urban primary or intermediate school, while smaller schools will share a nurse.

Children who live in the most deprived areas, where families have the lowest ten percent of incomes, are three times more likely to be hospitalised for preventable illnesses than children from the least deprived areas.<sup>16</sup>

For the child, it means time away from school, an inability to learn when they are there, and sometimes a lifetime of health

problems that prevent them from reaching their full potential.

Kiwi kids with asthma, for example, lose around 550,000 school days per year. Yet effectively managed, most asthma does not need to have such a devastating effect on a child's education.

School nurses won't replace doctors, but could help provide a gateway to health care from a GP, as well as provide health education and illness prevention to children and their whānau.

Basic nurse-based care and disease prevention works to stop minor illnesses such as a sore throat from becoming life threatening later on.

Studies show that school-based health interventions have long term economic benefits to society, from improving health over a child's lifetime, in that child's ability to earn more because they are better educated, and even an improved IQ.

**Total cost:**  
**\$40m per annum** <sup>17</sup>

It is our intention to extend school based health services to all schools over time.

For more information on our Nurse in Schools proposal go to: <https://www.greens.org.nz/education/healthy-kids-ready-learn-proposal-put-nurses-schools>

4

*The Green Party will provide funding for all decile 1 to 4 primary and intermediate schools to provide a **lunch programme**, and we will make lunch funding available to other schools based on need.*

## School lunch

**The Green Party will provide funding for all decile 1 to 4 primary and intermediate schools to provide a lunch programme, and we will make lunch funding available to other schools based on need.**

It is a parent's responsibility to feed and look after their children, but where a lack of food is getting in the way of a child's education the state should step in and ensure they have what they need to learn.

There is plenty of evidence that family incomes are often too low to provide the basics.

A survey of low income families in Dunedin and Wellington found nearly half regularly run out of food.<sup>18</sup>

About 9% of kids at low decile schools are likely to be without lunch at school on any given day.<sup>19</sup>

When children go to school hungry they are less able to learn. Kids whose families regularly run out of food have lower academic achievement, difficulty concentrating and are more likely to take time off school.<sup>20</sup>

We think that allowing kids to be hungry at school is not only unfair to that child, but a waste of teacher time, and most importantly a waste of each individual child's potential.

This is a loss for all of us.

Most political parties now agree that the

Government has a role to play in providing healthy food in school.

However, the Green Party doesn't agree that schools should need to rely on corporate generosity to provide that food. This is not sustainable long-term, and our research suggests a breakfast programme alone risks missing those kids who get to school too late to participate.

We believe a better, and more sustainable idea is to equip schools to provide lunch, to all children who need it, based on agreed national nutritional guidelines.

### Why lunch?

Lunch is the only meal time kids spend at school. It may be the only time many children get to sit down and eat a meal with others. Eating lunch together helps build relationships, teach children about food, health and nutrition and creates a sense of community. Another way to express this is as *whakawhānaungatanga*.

There is also evidence that some parents don't send their kids to school if they have run out of food because they are ashamed to send them to school with empty lunch boxes.

### How would school lunch work?

School food programmes work best if they're delivered in a way that suits the individual school.

Through our lunch programme, School Hub Coordinators would apply for funding, then each individual school would develop

a unique lunch programme that suits their pupils' needs.

For some schools this may mean food prepared by pupils or parents from produce from a community garden, for others, it may mean working with existing school food charities, while others may team up with other schools in the district in a different scheme.

### Funding

Decile 1 to 4 schools would automatically qualify for funding for a lunch programme to feed children in need at their school.

We estimate the average urban low decile school will receive about \$520 a week for lunches based on \$3 per hungry child.<sup>21</sup>

The number of children funded will be 9 per cent of the school roll, based on KidsCan figures that estimate that amount of children are likely to be without lunch.

Higher decile schools could apply based on their individual needs.

We know, for example, that in some larger decile 5 to 10 urban schools there can still be large numbers of children who would benefit from the scheme.

We would work with officials to develop criteria for those schools based on a high trust model, which would not require means testing of individual families.

**Total cost:**  
**\$11.6 million per annum.**<sup>22</sup>

*We will build 20 new early childhood centres **onsite** at low decile schools where they are **needed**.*

### *Onsite ECE*

**The Green Party will build 20 new early childhood centres onsite at low decile schools where they are needed.**

These new centres would be owned by the public and operated as community based, non-profit centres, such as kōhanga reo and kindergartens. They will be funded to employ 100 per cent trained staff.

The centres are designed to start filling the gap in the availability of ECE centres in lower socioeconomic areas. A lack of services in low income areas means Maori, Pacific and poorer kids are much less likely to attend ECE than other children, 89 per cent versus 95 per cent in the general population.<sup>23</sup>

The National Government's response to this problem has been to threaten beneficiary parents with cuts to their benefits if they don't enrol their children in ECE.

We have a number of concerns with this:

It is contrary to Health Ministry advice which states that sanctions will hurt children; it encourages the proliferation of lower quality home based care services to fill a gap in supply, and it doesn't deal with the reasons why low income, Maori and Pasifika children are less likely to attend ECE in the first place, which is a lack of suitable services in their area.

Research shows that Māori, Pasifika and low income kids have the most to gain from participating in a good quality early childhood programme.<sup>24</sup>

New Zealand research shows that kids who attend good quality ECE are better prepared for school, and go on to achieve higher academic results which in turn increase their chances of having a good job and ultimately a happier life.<sup>25</sup>

But the opposite is also true. When ECE is not available to these children their educational disadvantage is compounded, making learning harder at every stage, pushing them further and further behind.

Getting families involved in good quality ECE has benefits for the child's wider family and community.

New Zealand researcher Cathy Wylie found that parents involved in ECE services experienced better relationships with their children, less stress, upgraded their own qualifications and training and went on to have better, more reliable jobs.<sup>26</sup>

We believe it makes sense to provide ECE onsite at schools and that evidence shows that this, rather than sanctions, will increase participation in ECE.

Our building programme would be in addition to the existing Targeted Assistance Participation Fund, which provides full and partial funding for new ECE centres.

These new onsite early childhood centres would also become some of the first purpose built community hubs, with the potential to have their first real impact on large scale new school building projects such as in Christchurch.

Alongside our ECE building programme we would establish a comprehensive network

review of ECE to ensure that new centres are not established where they would damage the roll of existing not for profit, quality ECE centres.

We would also amend the Education Act to ensure that quality, not for profit ECE centres, would have priority over other centres for any occupancy arrangements on site at state primary schools.

**Total cost:  
20 purpose built ECE centres onsite at  
low decile schools: \$25 million.<sup>27</sup>**

### *Case Study - Owhiro Bay*

Experience by learning communities such as Owhiro Bay, near Wellington, is that an onsite kindergarten built in the grounds of the school has dramatically improved rates of ECE attendance among its new entrants, improved school readiness, increased parental participation and led to an increase in the school roll.<sup>27</sup>

*We propose a **unit** be established, where schools could apply for seed funding to establish a hub.*

### *Community Hubs Fund and Resource Centre*

We propose a unit be established, jointly funded by the Ministries of Health, Social Development and Education, where schools could apply for seed funding to establish a hub, receive the food in schools funding and on-going financial support and training for their school Hubs Coordinator.

The unit would monitor and collect information about the first school hubs and develop shared principles and guidelines that will eventually help future schools learn from early experiences to develop their own purpose fit hubs.

It would also coordinate supportive policy between the Ministries of Education, Health and Social Development to enable joint ventures on school sites such as joint ownership and after-hours access to schools.

The unit would provide expertise to School Hub Coordinators and school boards, as well as training, mentoring, templates and guidelines that would form the basis for future funding models and hubs frameworks.

**Total costs:**  
**The unit will be funded out of existing baselines.**

## Summary

- In a country as rich as ours every child deserves the opportunity to fulfil their potential, no matter what family they're born in to or what school they go to.
- All Kiwi kids deserve the right to be safe after school, to be cared for and inspired during the holidays, to play and to be part of their community.
- Every New Zealand child deserves the right to the best possible education free of the distraction from being too hungry, sick or tired to learn.
- Making the school hubs programme work as part of an overall child poverty reduction strategy, including measurements and clear targets for eradicating child poverty, is a smart step to ensuring all our kids have the chance to learn.
- The best investment this country can make in its future is to invest in the capabilities of its children and to allow those in poverty to escape it through education.
- By drawing on the good will and energy of communities and bringing that to schools through hubs we could transform the lives of 270,000 children in poverty.
- By feeding the approximately 24,000 primary school aged children who are regularly hungry at school, we will put them in a much better position to be ready to learn.
- By ensuring kids in low income communities get access to primary health care at school, we could make a serious dent in the 10,000 avoidable hospital admissions each year that are associated with poverty.
- By taking parents on their children's educational journey with them, we not only improve the child's chances at an education, but can give their parents an opportunity to improve their own education.
- Schools are already the hearts of their communities. But too many schools and teachers are filling the void left by a failure of successive Governments to realise what's really holding kids back.
- The Green Party's Schools at the Heart policy is about supporting communities and investing in children, so their lives can be transformed, and we can unleash their potential for the benefit of us all.

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23. Paper for the Welfare Working group. Services are less likely in lower socio economic areas. <http://igps.victoria.ac.nz/WelfareWorkingGroup/Downloads/Working%20papers/Childcare-paper-for-WWG.pdf>
24. Children who are socially and economically disadvantaged have the most to gain from participating in good quality ECE in terms of their cognitive and social-emotional development. Intervention studies targeting children from low-income families that combined good quality ECE with parenting support and education were found to have positive impacts on children's cognitive growth, school performance, and long-term outcomes. Karoly, L., Kilburn, M. R., & Cannon, J.S. (2005). Early childhood intervention: Proven results, future promise. Rand Labor & Population, Division of Rand Corporation, USA.
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Green discussion paper

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