



COVERSHEET

Minister	Hon Erica Stanford	Portfolio	Immigration
Title of Cabinet paper	Adding Primary School Teachers to the Green List Straight to Residence Pathway	Date to be published	7 April 2025

List of documents that have been proactively released

Date	Title	Author
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Information redacted

YES / NO (please select)

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Some information has been withheld for the reasons of privacy of natural persons.

In Confidence

Office of the Minister of Immigration

Cabinet Economic Policy Committee

Adding primary school teachers to the Green List Straight to Residence pathway

Proposal

- 1 This paper seeks agreement to add primary school teachers to the Straight to Residence pathway under the Green List to address forecast workforce gaps in the immediate-medium term. A more substantive review of the current Green List settings will be conducted later this year.

Relation to government priorities

- 2 This change supports the Government's priority of focusing the immigration system on attracting and retaining the skills and talent that New Zealand needs.

Executive Summary

- 3 Workforce gaps in primary school teachers presents a growing challenge for the New Zealand education workforce. Despite the sector's intention to grow a sustainable domestic supply of teachers through Initial Teacher Education (ITE) provision and initiatives to attract New Zealand-based teachers back into teaching, current ITE enrolment numbers mean that there will be a shortage of primary school teachers in the short to medium term for certain regions.
- 4 Ministry of Education modelling shows the education workforce has insufficient primary school teachers to meet the growing school roll demand. Under a 'medium-supply' scenario, we expect to see an approximate undersupply of 750 primary school teachers in 2025, reducing to 260 in 2026, before shifting to a surplus of 230 in 2027, if no further policy interventions are implemented. Such shortages need to be supplemented through overseas recruitment while continuing to invest in the domestic supply of teachers through ITE.
- 5 In March last year, the Cabinet Economic Policy Committee agreed to shift secondary school teachers from the Work to Residence pathway to the Straight to Residence pathway under the Green List [ECO-24-MIN-0024]. This change has been effective in supporting an increase in the supply of secondary teachers. Between May and December 2024, INZ approved over 400 secondary school teacher applications through the Straight to Residence pathway.
- 6 To support an increase in the supply of primary teachers, I am seeking agreement to move the following primary school teacher roles from the Work to Residence to the Straight to Residence pathway under the Green List:

- 6.1 Primary School Teacher (ANZSCO 241213);
 - 6.2 Middle School Teacher / Intermediate School Teacher (ANZSCO 241311);
 - 6.3 Kaiako Kura Kaupapa Māori (Māori-medium Primary School Teacher) (ANZSCO 241211); and
 - 6.4 Pouako Kura Kaupapa Māori (Māori-medium Primary School Senior Teacher) (ANZSCO 241212).
- 7 This proposal has the following key benefits:
- 7.1 increased attraction benefits by using the Straight to Residence pathway under the Green List, which is considered a desirable attraction tool in a globally competitive market;
 - 7.2 supporting existing overseas recruitment and overseas and domestic teacher retention initiatives being led by the Ministry of Education; and
 - 7.3 increased certainty and a more streamlined residence application process for both applicants and Immigration New Zealand (INZ) by enabling overseas teachers to apply for residence from outside New Zealand and without having to accumulate work experience (on a work visa) in New Zealand first.
- 8 Following Cabinet’s agreement to this proposal, I intend to announce these changes as soon as possible. These changes will be implemented on 26 March 2025, allowing primary school teachers to arrive in New Zealand and start teaching as early as mid-2025 (for Terms 3 and 4). Alongside these changes, I have directed officials to continue work to ensure the process for recruiting offshore teachers is as streamlined as possible while managing the risk of oversupply in the long term through regular reviews of the Green List.

Background

Immigration settings already provide temporary and residence pathways for teachers

- 9 A key function of the immigration system is to address both short-term labour and longer-term structural skills shortages in the economy by providing access to offshore labour.
- 10 There are several existing temporary and residence immigration pathways to New Zealand for teachers, including:
- 10.1 *The Accredited Employer Work Visa (AEWV)* - New Zealand’s main temporary skilled work visa. Under these settings, migrants can work in New Zealand for up to five years if they have a job or job offer from an Accredited Employer. Immigration data shows that as at 31 December 2024, 350 primary school teachers had their AEWV applications approved.¹ These visa holders are likely to be eligible for residence under the Green List Work to Residence pathway after they complete two years of work in New Zealand.

¹ Privacy of natural persons

- 10.2 *The Green List* – New Zealand’s streamlined residence pathway for migrants in specific highly skilled or hard-to-fill occupations of national importance. Primary school teachers are currently on the Work to Residence pathway, meaning they must work in New Zealand for two years before qualifying for a resident visa. Immigration data shows that as at 31 December 2024, 8 primary school teachers had been approved for residence through this pathway.² The number of approvals are expected to increase in coming months as teachers complete their two years of work required in these roles as applications for work visas only re-opened to offshore applicants in mid-2022, following border closures.
- 10.3 *The Skilled Migrant Category (SMC)* - New Zealand’s main skilled residence policy. Under these settings, migrants can demonstrate human capital through pay, qualifications, or professional registration. Most teachers would be eligible for residence under the Skilled Migrant Category. Depending on their qualifications, they may be required to complete up to three years of work experience in New Zealand before qualifying. Immigration data (from October 2022 to December 2024) shows that 63 primary school teachers have applied for residence via this pathway.³

The Green List is one lever that can be used to address labour and skills shortages

- 11 The Green List helps to address ongoing skill shortages by providing a clear, occupation-based offer of residence where it is particularly important to attract people in the current labour market context. The Green List facilitates easier entry for specified highly skilled or hard-to-fill and high-national importance roles,⁴ by offering favourable immigration settings, including:
- 11.1 not requiring a labour market test to be completed, meaning employers do not need to show that they have advertised the position domestically first, and
- 11.2 Immigration New Zealand prioritises the processing of Green List Straight to Residence applications.

The Ministry of Education’s initiatives to support overseas teacher recruitment

- 12 Immigration is not the only lever for addressing supply challenges in the teacher workforce. The Ministry of Education has also been progressing the following initiatives to support overseas teacher recruitment:
- 12.1 providing financial support for overseas and returning New Zealand teachers through the Overseas Relocation Grant of up to \$10,000 towards the cost of relocating to New Zealand; and

² Privacy of natural persons

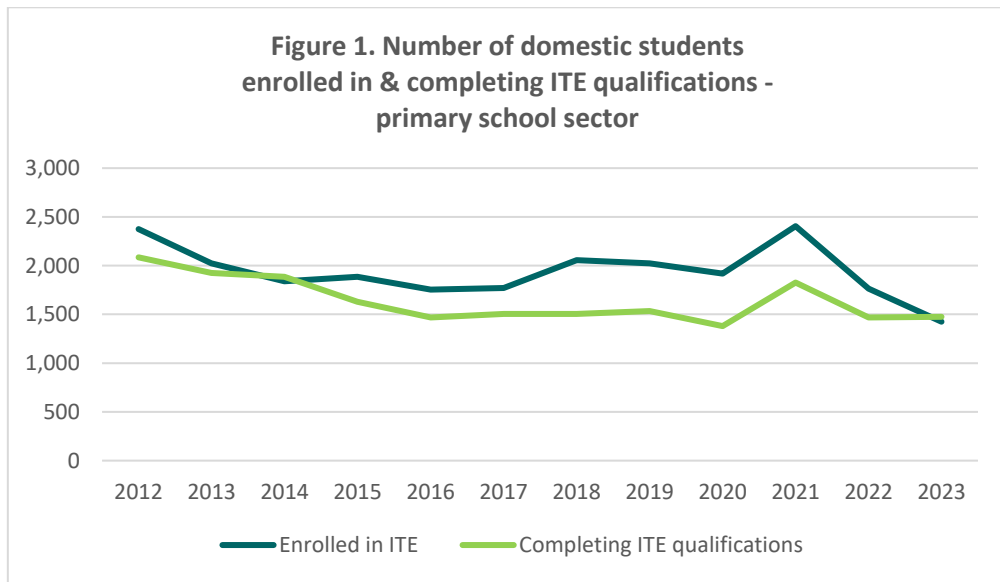
³ The numbers include approvals from both the old and new SMC skilled residence policy settings since 2022. The new SMC settings have only been in place since 9 October 2023. 57 primary and 6 intermediate school teachers were approved under the SMC settings.

⁴ All occupations on the Green List require a job offer paying median wage or higher, and for applicants to meet health, character, and English language requirements, as well as be aged 55 or younger.

12.2 supporting schools with the costs of hiring overseas teachers. Eligible schools, kura and early learning centres who successfully recruit an overseas teacher can apply for the Overseas Finder’s Fee of \$3,450 to help meet recruitment costs. Funding of the finder's fee is capped each year. The fee is offered across the primary, secondary and early learning sectors each year and allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

Workforce shortages are projected in the immediate-medium term

13 Despite the sector’s intention to grow a sustainable domestic supply of teachers through Initial Teacher Education (ITE) provision and initiatives to attract New Zealand based teachers back into teaching, current ITE enrolment numbers are lower compared to pre-COVID levels (outlined in Figure 1 below). At the same time, the numbers of domestic students completing ITE qualifications are relatively similar to pre-COVID levels.



14 In addition, supply challenges in certain geographic areas is a growing concern. Some areas are facing increasing challenges in finding primary school teachers. Auckland is experiencing this, alongside regions with a large number of small schools spread over a wide geographical area, such as Northland.

15 With real and projected primary roll numbers having increased, the demand for primary school teachers is projected to increase by 1,100 teachers from 2024 to 2025, before gradually declining from 37,900 teachers in 2025, to 37,700 teachers in 2027.

16 The Ministry of Education Teacher Demand and Supply tool modelling projects possible supply of teachers by considering several factors to understand whether there will be sufficient supply of teachers to manage the projected demand. Factors include the number of people undertaking teacher training (as noted above), retention rates of teachers and projecting the impact of teacher supply initiatives and investments aimed at growing the workforce.

17 This modelling highlights concerns for the supply of primary school teachers in the immediate term. The recent Teacher Demand and Supply Planning projection

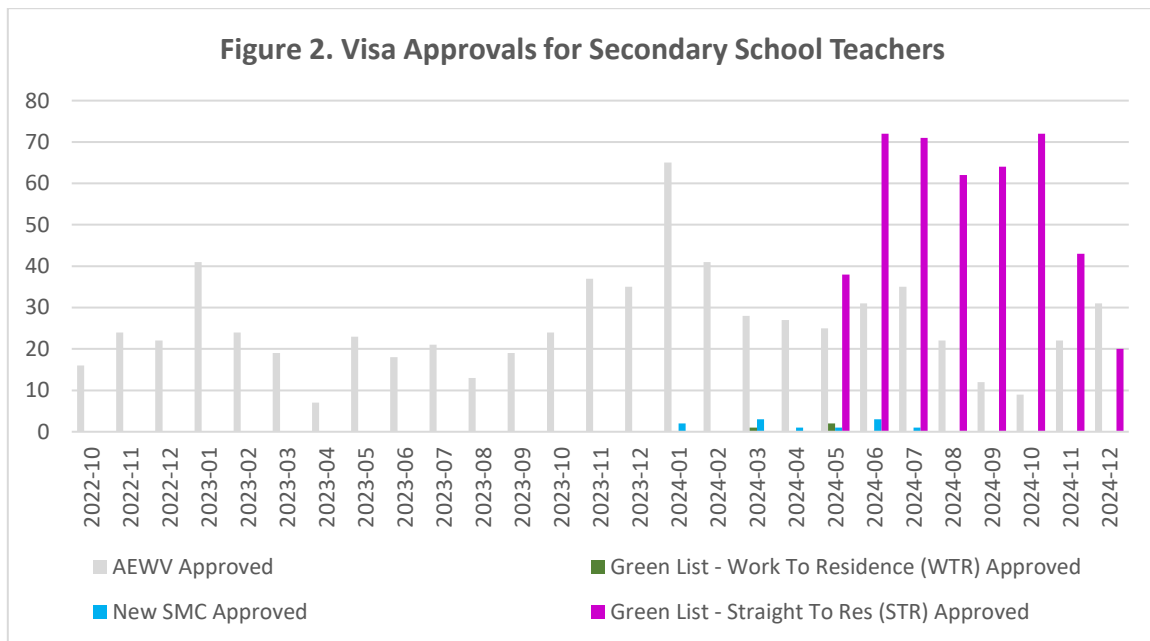
estimates that the primary sector is expected to have an overall shortfall of between 300 and 800 roles at a national level in 2025 and 2026. In 2027, there may be a small surplus of fewer than 250 roles. In some regions, the shortfall will be particularly significant. For example, the Bay of Plenty and Waikato are expected to have combined shortfalls of 300-400 between 2025 and 2027.

- 18 I have also heard concerns about shortages raised by primary school principals across New Zealand and by 19 Education Agencies⁵ including NZEI Te Riu Roa, the primary teacher’s union, around the teacher supply shortage at the Teacher Supply Summit held last year.

Proposal to add primary school teachers to Straight to Residence

Adding secondary teachers to the Straight to Residence pathway last year has been effective in increasing supply in that role

- 19 In March 2024, the Cabinet Economic Policy Committee agreed to move secondary school teachers from the Work to Residence pathway to the Straight to Residence pathway under the Green List [ECO-24-MIN-0024]. This change appears to have been effective at increasing the supply of secondary teachers and helping to address the ongoing workforce challenges in the New Zealand education system. For example, between May and December 2024, INZ approved over 400 secondary school teacher applications through the Straight to Residence pathway. The Ministry of Education indicates that secondary teacher arrivals were 63 percent higher in 2024 compared to 2023.



⁵ Te Akatea, Teacher Education Forum Aotearoa New Zealand (TEFANZ), NZ Council for Deans of Education, Tertiary ITE providers (Universities: Victoria, Massey, Waikato, Otago, Auckland, Auckland University of Technology; Other: Manukau Institute of Technology, Bethlehem Tertiary Institute), Unions (NZEI, SPANZ, NZPF, NZPPTA), Teaching Council, Ministry of Education, Te Whakarōputanga Kaitiaki Kura o Aotearoa (formerly known as NZSTA), Normal and Model School Association (NAMSA) and several early childhood organisations.

The Straight to Residence pathway will ensure the most competitive immigration offering is available for primary school teachers to support overseas recruitment

- 20 The case for strengthening immigration offerings for primary school teachers is based on the evidence of growing shortages, recruitment challenges and lower ITE volumes, promising results from adding secondary teachers to the Straight to Residence pathway last year, and the fact that teaching is an occupation of national significance. A teacher is required to have a confirmed job offer in order to be granted a Straight to Residence visa.
- 21 Moving primary school teachers from the Work to Residence to the Straight to Residence pathway under the Green List is likely to offer additional attraction benefits, including but not limited to:
- 21.1 providing increased certainty and a more streamlined immigration pathway for eligible overseas teachers by enabling application for residence from outside New Zealand without needing to accumulate work experience in New Zealand first;
 - 21.2 allowing for faster immigration processing than under the Work to Residence pathway, given there are fewer requirements to meet; and
 - 21.3 reducing the immigration costs for those coming directly from offshore who would no longer have to pay the costs associated with an initial work visa (i.e. the Accredited Employer Work Visa).
- 22 There are some risks associated with this change, including that it may create increased pressure on the immigration system and encourage stakeholders to request that other occupations currently on the Work to Residence pathway be moved to the Straight to Residence pathway, where concerns around retention may be greater.⁶ However, this will be addressed in a more substantive review of the Green List to take place later this year. The Ministry of Education's Teacher Supply-and-Demand projection forecast reflects a potential risk of oversupply from 2027. If this forecast oversupply was to come to fruition New Zealand trained teachers could experience higher competition. The regular review of the Green List will help manage this potential risk.
- 23 Teachers will also continue to be required to have a genuine job offer from a New Zealand school in order to be granted a visa. Given that the time required to recruit a teacher from overseas and for them to then relocate is often significant, employing a teacher already in New Zealand will continue to be more attractive than an overseas one.
- 24 I propose adding the following primary school teachers' roles to the Straight to Residence Pathway under the Green List:

⁶ Generally, occupations have been placed on the Work to Residence pathway where there is a globally competitive market, but some risk that migrants will leave the occupation after gaining residence owing to conditions or other factors. This was intended to ensure skills shortages we are seeking to fill will be addressed for at least two years by all migrant workers in these roles. I do not consider this risk material for moving a few trained Primary School Teacher roles on the Straight to Residence pathway.

- 24.1 Primary School Teacher (ANZSCO 241213);
 - 24.2 Middle School Teacher / Intermediate School Teacher (ANZSCO 241311);
 - 24.3 Kaiako Kura Kaupapa Māori (Māori-medium Primary School Teacher) (ANZSCO 241211); and
 - 24.4 Pouako Kura Kaupapa Māori (Māori-medium Primary School Senior Teacher) (ANZSCO 241212).
- 25 All other overseas-based teachers considering teaching in New Zealand will continue to be eligible for residence via the Work to Residence pathway and are also likely to be eligible under the SMC (but may be required to complete some onshore work experience first).

Implementation

- 26 Subject to Cabinet agreement, INZ will implement these changes on 26 March 2025. This would allow primary school teachers using this pathway to start teaching in Term 3, 2025. However, given the timing of the school year and the longer lead-in required for people to relocate countries it is more likely most teachers will arrive to start teaching from Term 1, 2026.

Cost-of-living Implications

- 27 As immigration fees apply for these residence applications, there is a cost to applicants of up to \$6,450 per application, in line with other skilled residence application fees. This proposal may reduce costs for primary school teachers who no longer need to pay a fee for a temporary work visa to accrue New Zealand work experience, prior to applying and paying a fee for a residence visa.
- 28 This proposal has no cost-of-living implications for other New Zealanders.

Financial Implications

- 29 There are no direct financial implications of this proposal.

Legislative Implications

- 30 There are no legislative implications of this proposal. However, the proposal in this paper does require amendments to immigration instructions.
- 31 Immigration instructions are the rules and criteria for the granting of visas and entry permission to New Zealand and are set out in the Immigration New Zealand Operational Manual. Section 22 of the Immigration Act 2009 authorises the Minister of Immigration to certify immigration instructions. Subject to Cabinet's agreement, I will certify new immigration instructions in line with the decisions taken.

Impact Analysis

Regulatory Impact Statement

- 32 This proposal does not require a Regulatory Impact Assessment as it has no direct legislative implications.

Climate Implications of Policy Assessment

33 There are no direct climate implications of this proposal.

Population Implications

34 This is intended to supplement employers looking to the domestic labour market, and training and development of the existing workforce where possible. Given this, and existing pathways already available, this change is not expected to displace New Zealand workers.

Human Rights

35 The proposal in this paper does not have direct implications for the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993.

Use of external Resources

36 There has been no use of external resources in the context of this proposal.

Consultation

37 The following agencies and departments have been consulted on and/or informed of the proposal in this paper: The Ministry of Education, Te Puni Kōkiri, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand, the Treasury, the Ministry of Social Development, and Immigration New Zealand.

Communications

38 I intend to communicate this change shortly after Cabinet decisions. Updated information on Green List occupations will be available on the INZ website, to give teachers and employers certainty about residence pathways and enable them to plan accordingly.

Proactive Release

39 This paper will be proactively released subject to redactions as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982 after announcements are made.

Recommendations

The Minister of Immigration recommends that the Committee:

- 1 Note that shortages in primary teachers have been a growing challenge for the New Zealand education workforce;
- 2 Note that primary school teachers are currently on the Work to Residence pathway under the Green List;

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- 3 Note that moving specified primary school teacher roles to the Straight to Residence Pathway under the Green List is intended to provide the following key benefits;
 - 3.1 It will provide some attraction benefits by using the Straight to Residence pathway of the Green List which is considered a desirable attraction tool in a globally competitive market;
 - 3.2 It will support existing overseas recruitment initiatives being led by the Ministry of Education;
 - 3.3 It will provide increased certainty and a more streamlined residency application process for both applicants and Immigration New Zealand by enabling overseas teachers to apply for residence from outside New Zealand without having to accumulate work experience in New Zealand first;
- 4 Agree to add the following primary school teacher roles to the Straight to Residence Pathway under the Green List:
 - 4.1 Primary School Teacher (ANZSCO 241213);
 - 4.2 Middle School Teacher / Intermediate School Teacher (ANZSCO 241311);
 - 4.3 Kaiako Kura Kaupapa Māori (Māori-medium Primary School Teacher) (ANZSCO 241211); and
 - 4.4 Pouako Kura Kaupapa Māori (Māori-medium Primary School Senior Teacher) (ANZSCO 241212);
- 5 Note that the Minister of Immigration will certify new immigration instructions under Section 22 of the immigration Act 2009 to give effect to the decisions in this paper;
- 6 Note that following Cabinet decisions, Immigration New Zealand will implement this change on 26 March 2025.

Hon Erica Stanford

Minister of Immigration

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