



# Inclusive Education Country Profile

COOK ISLANDS



*This information was provided by government and civil society during a regional mapping of inclusive education undertaken in 2020–2021. Led by the Inclusive Education Taskforce, the mapping supports implementation of the Pacific Regional Inclusive Education Framework (PRIEF) and the Pacific Regional Education Framework (PacREF).*

## Inclusive Education Policy Framework

**Legislation:** Cook Islands Education Act 2012

**Inclusive Education Policy:** Cook Islands Inclusive Education Policy 2017  
Assistive Technologies Guideline

**Operationalizing Inclusive Education:** Implementation is embedded in the Cook Islands Education Master Plan 2008–2023

**Inclusive Education Standards:** Cook Islands Teacher Professional Standards  
Cook Islands Building Code 2019

## Inclusive Education in the Budget

What does the budget cover?

- \$\$\$\$ Community awareness on disability and education
- \$\$\$\$ Teacher aide/assistant salaries
- \$\$\$\$ Training for school staff
- \$\$\$\$ Assistive devices/technologies
- \$\$\$ Outreach/itinerant support to schools by specialists
- \$ Infrastructure funding for accessibility modifications
- Transport assistance specifically for disadvantaged or disabled students

**Legend:** Extent to which inclusive education activities are covered in the Ministry of Education (MoE) budget:

- \$\$\$\$ = A great extent
- \$\$\$ = A lot
- \$\$ = A moderate amount
- \$ = A little
- = Not at all



Special/inclusive education a mandatory part of teacher training

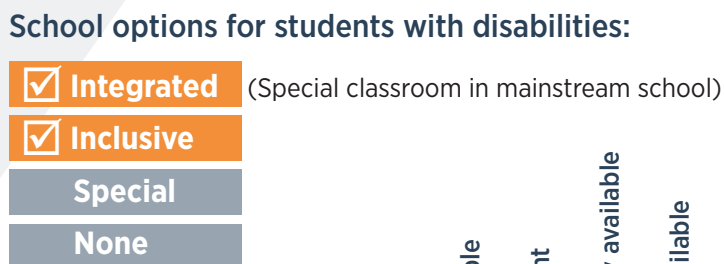
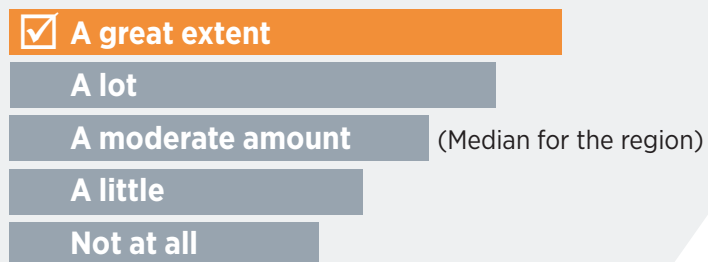
Frequency of teacher in-service training in inclusive education

- More than once a year
- Once a year
- Less than once a year
- Not sure

**45%** of teachers have participated in in-service training on inclusive education

Teacher aides/assistants are part of the workforce

To what extent are schools encouraged to implement strategies that support students to build a school environment that is positive for all?



Use of Individual Education Plans?

Availability of reasonable accommodations across the country:

	Not available	Small extent	Moderately available	Widely available
Student sits close to board or teacher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Lessons are modified or reduced in complexity based on individual student	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Enlarged printed materials are provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Additional time is provided during assessments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Personal assistance is provided during assessments (e.g. note-taking)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Physical education activities are modified	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Personal assistance is provided (e.g. assistance with note-taking, communication, managing behaviour)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Assistive technologies are provided (e.g. magnifier, electronic devices, computers, communication boards)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Culture of inclusion: To what extent is there a culture of inclusion at all levels (national, sub-national, schools)?



What proportion of schools have...

	No schools	Small proportion of schools	About half of all schools	Most schools	All schools
classrooms that are accessible and safe for all? (people with difficulties moving and seeing can get in and around)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
handwashing facilities that are accessible and safe for all?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
sanitation (toilet) facilities that are accessible and safe for all?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
menstrual hygiene management facilities that are accessible and safe for all?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
a disaster response plan in place that is inclusive of all students?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
measures to address bullying?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Encouraging retention**

- Schooling is compulsory from 5 to 16 years; MoE reviews educational programmes to ensure high student engagement.
- The MoE Attendance, Truancy and School Transition Policy requires monitoring of students.

**Encouraging transition**

- The Student Progression Policy requires progression with age-appropriate cohorts from Year 1 to Year 11.
- Internal reporting systems via the Education Management Information System (EMIS) and Term Returns assist monitoring transition.

**Supporting out-of-school children**

- Bridging courses are available, although not specifically for students with disabilities. Tupuanga Rakau is a programme working on alternative learning and transitioning back into school. The Tumanava programme at Cook Islands Tertiary Training Institute (CITTI)

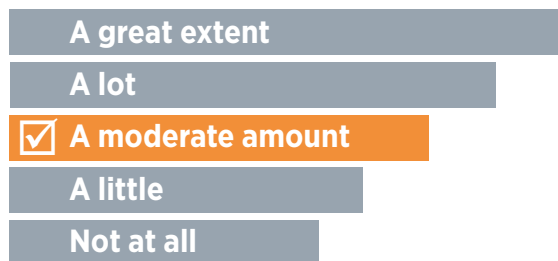
is for early school leavers transitioning into work places.

**Supporting post-school pathways**

- The careers advisor coordinates with schools and teachers.
- Accessibility for people with disabilities to technical and vocational education and training includes a dual pathways programme with CITTI that provides a one-year course in trades such as carpentry, electrical work, mechanics and hospitality; the courses are open to everyone.
- Life skills programmes through New Zealand Qualification Authority are implemented by all secondary schools; courses are tailored to suit the needs of each island.
- CITTI has literacy and numeracy support available to all learners, including a specific IE policy for vocational learning.

**Partnerships for Inclusive Education**

How much are school committees or working groups encouraged to support inclusive education? (e.g. student associations, school boards, parent-teacher associations)



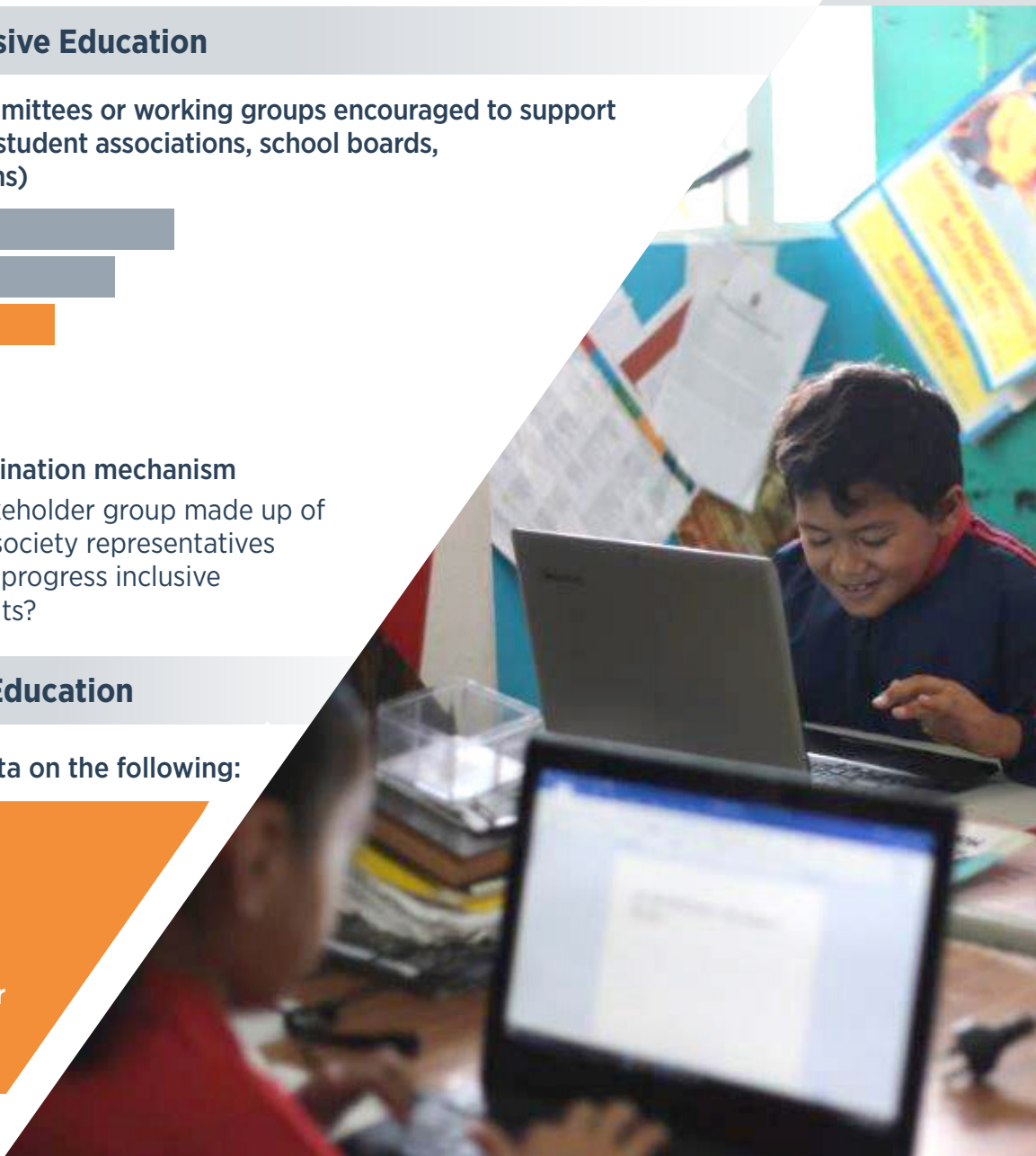
**Inclusive education coordination mechanism**

- Is there a national stakeholder group made up of government and civil society representatives that meet regularly to progress inclusive education commitments?

**Monitoring Inclusive Education**

Does the EMIS include data on the following:

- YES**
- Disability?
  - Students who have dropped out?
  - Rural/remote ?
  - Cultural, linguistic or ethnic minorities?





**Available almost everywhere in the country**

- Organizations of Persons with Disabilities
- Social protection/welfare services
- Medical/pharmaceutical services
- Vision services (screening, glasses, Braille services, orientation and mobility training)
- Hearing services (screening, audiology, hearing aids)
- Rehabilitation/therapy
- Mobility device services
- Counselling
- Sign language services
- Early intervention services

**Looking Forward**

**ENABLERS:**

- Awareness programmes in schools implemented by inclusive education advisors have seen positive outcomes for school staff and parents.
- Sustained relationship between Autism Cook Islands and MoE.
- Support for teacher aides by the inclusive education advisor.
- The 2017 review of the Inclusive Education Policy involved consultation with schools and communities, which provided clarity and information.
- There is a move towards assessing and planning for students' actual and apparent learning needs in schools and a move away from focusing on diagnosis alone.

**CHALLENGES:**

- Attitudes of teachers and leaders: low expectations of children with disabilities; perceptions that children are "dumb" or "being naughty."
- Expectations that all students with disabilities need a teacher aide.

- Getting families to support their children to become independent.
- Working with families that do not believe their child has additional needs.
- Diagnosis services.

**FUTURE PRIORITIES:**

- In-house support for all education advisors so they can support students with disabilities.
- Upskill ALL school leaders, then work with teaching staff and teacher aides.
- Upskill inclusive education advisors.
- Increase partnerships and communication between MoE and organizations that are active in schools.
- Improved monitoring and evaluation processes for inclusive education across the Cook Islands.
- Increase transparency between ministries and non-governmental organizations for sharing data and information.

