

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE USE



5 July 2010

Western Bay of Plenty Region's new entrants fit to learn

They may still arrive at school with tickly tummies and Mum or Dad in tow but at least the Bay of Plenty's newest school pupils are entering the classroom ready to learn to the best of their ability.

Since 2008 the region's four-year-olds have been offered a B4 School Check, a free comprehensive health and development check aimed at finding any problems and addressing them before the child starts school.

B4 School Check Co-ordinator, Noeline White, says 1657 children have been seen at special clinics in the region - that's about half of all four-year-olds - and it's hoped that will rise to 80 per cent over the next year.

Noeline says, from the children checked so far, more than 500 referrals have been made for significant issues that, if gone unnoticed, could have affected the child's learning ability once they got to school. Some children have needed several referrals.

"The most common issues showing up are hearing loss or vision impairments. Children who have difficulty hearing or seeing properly can also develop behavioural problems out of sheer frustration."

Noeline says there has been a very positive reaction from parents who welcome the chance to talk with a health professional about their child.

“They are often surprised the check is so thorough and that they get up to 45 minutes without interruption to discuss their child and raise any concerns they have.”

The B4 School Check includes a check of the child’s vision and hearing, teeth and gums, and height and weight. It also includes social, emotional and developmental screening, and is a valuable opportunity for parents to talk to a health professional about any aspect of their child’s health.

The check may take place at a community clinic, preschool, community centre, or other setting.

Parents and caregivers of children in the Bay of Plenty, who are turning four, will receive an invitation from their local B4 School Check team for their child to attend a check. If they don’t they should contact Providers: Plunket, Tauranga 07 578 7811, Te Manu Toroa 07 577 4182, Public Health Nurses 07 577 3307 or contact Noeline White, B4 School Check Coordinator, Bay of Plenty District Health Board, 07 5773329, 021 241 6837.

For further information, call Noeline White, B4 School Check Coordinator, Bay of Plenty District Health Board, 07 5773329, 021 241 6837.

Noeline.white@bopdhb.govt.nz