

## Helen Smith, an Early Intervention Teacher (EIT)

Based in Christchurch, Helen Smith joined the Ministry of Education in 2016.



### Helen's story

Helen started working in a kindergarten following graduation. She then progressed to a kindergarten head teacher position. Over the years she has also been a coordinator for a home-based service, a centre manager of a community-based preschool, and an early intervention teacher at CCSDA.

### Helen's day-to-day

Helen often works with the wider teaching team on their overall social curriculum, routines and environment as well teaching strategies so that collaboratively they can identify where changes can happen which will meet all children's needs. The intensity of intervention is deliberately varied and flexible in order to match intervention to the need. Helen's measure of change is when adults feel confident and capable of supporting their learners and know where to get further support if needed.

### Reflecting cultural values in her work

Early Intervention Teachers provide a flexible and tailored response to all requests for support which provides for them to connect meaningfully with whānau and teaching teams. Their work is culturally responsive and affirming and they are mindful of their commitments to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in their mahi with whānau and ELS.

In her region they have prioritised their Kaitakawaenga who take the role of first contact with any families who identify as Māori. The Kaitakawaenga work alongside an Early Intervention Teacher to support the whakawhanaungatanga, building connections together and working out what is important in their work together.

## Rewards of the role

For Helen, the main reward of the role is how fulfilling it is. She finds that *“this position requires passion and total commitment to support positive behaviour change and increasing adults’ capacity and confidence.”*

Other highlights include the training and teaching courses Helen has been able to do as part of her career. *“Some career highlights have been the Hōaka Pounamu bilingual and immersion teaching course I did in 2011 and the University of Canterbury, the Incredible Years training, and the 14 week workshops supporting parents with strategies to promote children’s social, emotional, and academic competence.”*

## Future aspirations

From being an Early Intervention Teacher, opportunities for advancing or changing roles at the Ministry of Education include being an Education Advisor for Early Childhood Education, and other support and management roles.

## Early Intervention Teacher – Role information

### Role responsibility:

- support the learning of children with special education needs by working closely with the adults in the child’s life e.g. parents, teachers and other professionals, including other Ministry staff and health specialists
- assess child and family needs by gathering information from the family/whānau about their needs in everyday settings and routines
- collect information from the ECE service or other professionals involved as part of the ongoing assessment and planning process
- assist with the development of an individualised intervention plan for the child, family/whānau and teachers
- play a key role in supporting the implementation of the plan, often through provision of coaching and mentoring for families/whānau and teachers
- often take a lead role in the facilitation of services for children and families/whānau
- support families/whānau at the time of their child’s transition to school. This support may include; facilitating any funding application processes, developing a plan for transition, visiting selected schools with the family/whānau.

### Qualifications and experience needed:

- a Bachelor or Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood)

- to be a registered teacher
- to have attained or be working towards a Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Teaching (Early Intervention) and
- have at least three years early childhood teaching experience.

**Early Intervention Teacher must have knowledge of or skills in:**

- Te Whāriki, the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum
- child development
- the range of different early childhood facilities and their philosophies
- effective early childhood teaching practices
- inclusive practices for children with a range of special education needs
- family centred practice
- working with culturally diverse families/whānau
- effective communication
- how to work effectively with adults to support children with special education needs.

**Career development**

Becoming an early intervention teacher with the Ministry of Education will give you the rewards and challenges of the job itself, as well as opportunities to develop your career.

**You will be:**

- be supported and supervised by experienced professional colleagues
- be kept up to date with the latest evidence
- take part in ongoing professional learning and development
- have opportunities to share and extend your knowledge and skills.

There might also be opportunities to take part in projects or working groups and in time, you might be considered for leadership roles.

## Further Information

**Special education careers and professional development**

For information about the role of the early intervention teacher and working in special education, visit our special education [careers webpage here](#)

**Special education scholarships and study awards**

If you're interested in a career in special education you may be eligible for a scholarship or study award. Find out [more here](#)