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For immediate release

## Media release

### New sports programme for West Coast students with intellectual disabilities

West Coast secondary school students with intellectual disabilities now have a new opportunity to get involved in sport, with the launch of Special Olympics New Zealand's West Coast schools programme today.

Special Olympics New Zealand is a nationwide organisation that provides a year-round programme of sport and training to children and adults with an intellectual disability. The West Coast schools programme is the first opportunity for secondary school students with an intellectual disability to get involved in Special Olympics on the West Coast.

"The development of the programme was really driven by demand from students locally," says Graeme Bain, Regional Sports Coordinator for Special Olympics New Zealand. "We started getting a lot of enquiries about Special Olympics in the West Coast area, which prompted us to look at what we could do to make our programmes available here.

"As well as the chance to take part in sport locally, regionally, nationally and even internationally, Special Olympics offers invaluable opportunities to make new friends, build confidence, and develop leadership skills. It's great that students on the West Coast can now experience that."

The programme's first event will be a swim meet at the Grey District Aquatic Centre in Greymouth on 4 March, where students will compete against others from the area in freestyle, breaststroke and backstroke, as well as a team relay.

Swim officials from local swim clubs will be involved in the event, and Year 13 students from local schools will assist with timing.

"We've already experienced a great deal of support from the local community, which is what Special Olympics is all about. We're really excited about the upcoming swimming event and about making more sporting opportunities available to students with intellectual disabilities on the West Coast as the programme develops," says Graeme.

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### About Special Olympics New Zealand

Special Olympics New Zealand is a year-round programme of sports training and competition for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. More than 7000 athletes throughout the country train and compete in 13 different Olympic-type summer and winter sports.

Founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Special Olympics provides athletes continuing opportunities to develop fitness, demonstrate courage and experience joy as they participate in the sharing of gifts and friendship with other athletes, their families and the community.

[Words Matter—Special Olympics Language Guidelines for media](#)

Special Olympics New Zealand: [www.specialolympics.org.nz](http://www.specialolympics.org.nz)