

## **No classrooms, lessons or homework: New Zealand school where children are free to roam**

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Deep among the streams and Kauri trees of rural south Auckland, New Zealand's newest and most alternative school is in session. The weather is fine so a bout of fishing is in order, followed by lunch cooked on an open fire. Homework and classes? Indefinitely dismissed. "We are called a school but we look nothing like any school out there," says Joey Moncarz, co-founder and head teacher at Deep Green Bush School, which is in term two of its inaugural year. "We don't do things like telling kids it is time to write or learn maths. When they are interested in doing it, they do it."

Moncarz is an ex-mainstream teacher. After five, frustrating years in mainstream schools in [New Zealand](#) he quit to found Deep Green Bush school, which has a roll of eight, and no classroom walls, time-out chairs or tests. Concerned that mainstream schools were not preparing children for the global problems of the future – such as climate change – Moncarz envisioned a radically different kind of education, rooted in the primal skills of hunting, gathering and survival.

If the weather allows, pupils spend the majority of their day outdoors, exploring the New Zealand bush, learning to fish and hunt, trapping possums (which are considered a pest) and learning about the flora and fauna of their home. The more traditional school skills, such as reading, writing and arithmetic, are acquired at their own pace, after they begin showing an interest in them. Not, says Moncarz, when the teacher dictates it is time to learn.

"We don't have what you'd traditionally consider problem kids," says Moncarz. "Our parents saw their kids were unhappy and stressed in mainstream education and they started questioning; is it normal or right for kids to come home stressed and unhappy? Having taught in a mainstream school, I'd say most kids are stressed and unhappy."

Bush school is registered with the Ministry of Education as an independent school, and therefore does not have to abide by the standard New Zealand curriculum, although it is subject to ministerial oversight. (...) Dr David Berg, a senior lecturer in education at the University of Otago, says there is a growing precedent for alternative "bush" schools worldwide, especially in Scandinavia, where some kindergarten children go ice-fishing during the school day.

However he says educators need to be careful that children are offered the full-range of skills required to get by and find employment in the modern world. “Lots of people feel there is a disconnection with nature and the outdoors and people value that and are drawn to it,” says Dr Berg. “In a modern society to be successful there are a range of skills to be developed and perhaps only some of those can be developed outside.” (...)

Moncarz insists that the school isn’t an “experiment” in education, and is based on two millions years of evidence of how parents have raised their kids, at one with nature. “We don’t want to be one of a kind, we want to replace mainstream schools,” Moncarz. “We are using the same wisdom parents have used to teach their kids for millions of years. Locking kids in a classroom and forcing them to learn just causes a lot of problems.”

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#### Questionnaire :

#### **I- True or False ? (Justify your answers with a few words from the text)**

1. A new alternative type of school is being tested in the city of Auckland, New Zealand. T / F
  
2. This school has been working for two years now. T / F
  
3. It’s not based on telling pupils what to do and when to do it. T / F
  
4. Deep Green Bush school is radically different from mainstream schools in its educational purposes and values. T / F
  
5. Joey Moncarz is not very optimistic as to the future of our civilisation. T / F
  
6. Traditional subjects are not taught because they are considered useless. T / F

7. This school attracts pupils who are not really happy in traditional schools where they have to sit for hours and receive a theoretical kind of teaching. T / F

8. Deep Green Bush school is unique in the world . T/ F

9. One concern which may arise with alternative schools is for pupils to get the proper amount of traditional teaching so that they can fit in modern society. T / F

10. Joey Moncarz thinks that alternative schooling has a right to coexist peacefully with mainstream education. T / F

**II- Vocabulary : Find synonyms for the following words :**

1. a short period of : \_\_\_\_\_
2. to create, set up sthg : \_\_\_\_\_
3. the 3 Rs : \_\_\_\_\_
4. basic : \_\_\_\_\_
5. to follow some rules : \_\_\_\_\_
6. a university teacher : \_\_\_\_\_
7. capacities : \_\_\_\_\_
8. to succeed : \_\_\_\_\_
9. a certain amount of : \_\_\_\_\_
10. exceptional : \_\_\_\_\_

**III- Translation: translate the first and the last paragraphs into French.**