



# **New Zealand Interschool Chess Competition Rules 2026**

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## 1 Definitions

### 1.1 Description of the New Zealand Interschool Chess Competition

The New Zealand Interschool Chess Competition is an official New Zealand Chess Federation (NZCF) event. It is a team competition, with **Regional Qualifying events** followed by a **National Final** held over the first weekend following the third school term. It is run in separate sections for Primary (year 1-6 students), Intermediate (year 7-8 students) and Secondary schools (year 9-13 students).

### 1.2 Primacy of NZCF Council

The NZCF Council (Council of the New Zealand Chess Federation) shall have power to make, alter, remove and interpret all rules and regulations. The NZCF Council may delegate any matters relating to the Interschool Competitions, National Finals or these Interschool Rules to a subcommittee or individual. Any decisions made under this delegation may be appealed to the NZCF Council within 5 working days of receipt. The outcomes of appeals are final.

### 1.3 Definition of a school

A school means a registered school as defined by the Education Act 2020. A student will be considered to attend a school if and only if they attend classes at that school and receives more than 50% of their curricular instruction during those classes.

### 1.4 Definition of teams

Teams comprise 4 players and 1 optional reserve who are:

- students enrolled at and attending the same school other than a correspondence or online school; or
- students enrolled at and attending the same correspondence or online school and living in the same interschool region (see 1.5); or
- home-schooled students living in the same interschool region (see 1.5)

Home-schooled students are those with approval from the Ministry of Education to be home-educated rather than attend a registered school. Where Council believes that students have taken up home-schooling to create an interschool team rather than for educational reasons, that team may be excluded from competitions. All members in the team must be of a correct school year (Primary years 1-6, Intermediate years 7-8, Secondary years 9-13). Exemptions will not be given to students who have skipped an academic year. A student may not play for more than one team in regional competitions in the same year.

#### Board Order

The overarching principle of these competitions is that players within a team are to be ranked for board order in what would be reasonably considered to be order of playing strength. For example, as a guide:

1. NZCF Rapid rating.
2. NZCF Standard rating.
3. Other official international (i.e. FIDE or foreign chess federation) rating.

Unrated players should be placed at the correct board based on the rest of the team's playing strength. Teams have automatic flexibility in ranking players whose published NZCF rapid ratings are within 100 points of each other. In all other cases the Arbiter can instruct a team to change the playing order if, in the Arbiter's opinion, they are blatantly not ranked in order of playing strength. Where NZCF rapid ratings do not provide an accurate reflection of playing strength, the team should discuss this with the Arbiter before the start of the competition.

Any Team, School or Team Captain attempting to manipulate board order (by not listing players in reasonable order of strength) may be reported to the NZCF Council, with possible sanctions including suspension from the following year's competition.

Players must keep to their team order for the duration of each competition.

**Reserves**

Reserves are optional i.e. teams are not required to have a reserve, but if a team has a reserve player, they may only play at board 4. Options for reserves at competitions are:

1. Reserves can only play if another player withdraws from the competition e.g. due to illness. In this case the reserve plays at board 4 and the rest of the players move up until the gap is filled.
2. A reserve may play in any round but only board 4 may be replaced.
3. A reserve may play in any round and any board may be replaced. The reserve plays at board 4 and the rest of the players move up (as in the Olympiad),

Regional qualifying competitions may use any of these options but should include their choice in their entry form or website. The National Finals may use options 2 or 3 but the National Finals Organiser must include their choice in the entry form or website. Team order and composition for the National Final may be different to that of the Regional Qualifying Competition.

**1.5 Definition of Regions**

Regions are defined using regional or unitary council boundaries as defined by the Local Government Act 2002 unless stated otherwise in these rules. Nelson and Tasman are considered one region, and the Chatham Islands are part of the Canterbury region. Auckland is divided into five separate regions. The regions are:

1. Northland
2. North Shore
3. West Auckland
4. Central Auckland
5. East Auckland
6. South Auckland
7. Waikato
8. Bay of Plenty
9. Gisborne
10. Taranaki
11. Hawkes Bay
12. Manawatū-Whanganui
13. Wellington
14. Marlborough
15. Nelson/Tasman
16. West Coast
17. Canterbury
18. Otago
19. Southland

Outside Auckland, a school is in the region indicated by the Education Counts website (<https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/directories/list-of-nz-schools>).

Within Auckland, the regions are based on Auckland Council wards as follows:

Interschool Region	Auckland Council Ward
<b>North Shore</b>	Rodney Ward Albany Ward North Shore Ward
<b>West Auckland</b>	Waitākere Ward Whau Ward
<b>Central Auckland</b>	Ōrākei Ward Albert-Eden-Puketāpapa Ward Maungakiekie-Tāmaki Ward
<b>East Auckland</b>	Howick Ward Waitematā and Gulf Ward
<b>South Auckland</b>	Manukau Ward Manurewa-Papakura Ward Franklin Ward

An Auckland school is in the Auckland region based on its [Auckland Council ward](#) as indicated by the Education Counts website (<https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/directories/list-of-nz-schools> – ‘territorial authority’ for the Auckland region). Where an Auckland school played in a different region in 2025 to that indicated in the table above, it may instead choose to play in the same region as in 2025. This arrangement will remain in place for future years but will cease to be available to any school that does not play in any particular year e.g. an Auckland school that does not play in a regional competition in 2026 will be required in future years to play in the Auckland region based on its Auckland Council ward.

Each region can have one representative team in the National Final for each section (Primary, Intermediate and Secondary). If a region has **20 or more teams in a section**, then that section receives **a second qualification place** to the National Finals. If a region has **30 or more teams in a section**, then that section receives three qualification places to the National Finals. *However, no one school shall win more than one qualification spot in a section.*

All Regional events must be completed no later than 15<sup>th</sup> August.

### 1.6 Interschool Co-ordinator

The National Interschool Co-ordinator provides a link for communication between the NZCF, the National Final Organiser, the Regional Organisers, and their representative schools. The NZCF Council appoints the Interschool Co-ordinator.

### 1.7 National Final Organiser

The National Final Organiser is responsible for organising the National Final. The NZCF Council appoints the National Final Organiser. The NZCF Council shall have the power to change the National Final Organiser, location and venue of the National Finals if circumstances require or if the National Final Organiser has acted or is likely to act in contravention of these rules or any other relevant NZCF or FIDE Laws, Rules or Regulations.

### 1.8 Regional Organisers

The Regional Organiser is responsible for organising Regional Qualifying competitions in order to select the school(s) to represent their region. There can be a different Regional Organiser for different sections (Primary, Intermediate and/or Secondary) within the same region. Individuals or organisations intending to be Regional Organisers contact the Interschool Co-ordinator who will communicate their intention to the NZCF Council.

The NZCF Council appoints the Regional Organiser(s) for each region. The NZCF Council shall have the power to change a Regional Organiser if circumstances require or if the Regional Organiser has

acted or is likely to act in contravention of these rules or any other relevant NZCF or FIDE Laws, Rules or Regulations.

### **1.9 Arbiters**

The Arbiter is responsible for the competition. Where there are multiple arbiters in a competition, one will be the Chief Arbiter who has overall responsibility. Arbiters should be experienced and familiar with FIDE regulations and appropriate chess tournament administration software.

Arbiters will be responsible for:

1. Making pairings.
2. Ensuring overall compliance with rules and regulations.
3. Handling disputes and making rulings.
4. Making sure that the participants and spectators observe a high standard of chess etiquette and refrain from disturbing their opponents.

The Arbiter and/or his/her assistants should be familiar with:

1. Appropriate chess tournament administration software.
2. Each type of chess clock in use (including how to pause and adjust the time mid game).
3. The FIDE Laws of Chess.
4. The rules provided in this document.
5. The FIDE tournament regulations.
6. Regulations for rapid play.

The arbiter is appointed by the Organiser of the competition (National Final or Regional).

### **1.10 Assistant Arbiters**

Assistant Arbiters support the Arbiter, and have the following specific tasks:

1. To ensure that the playing equipment is in order and is set up ready for the start of each game.
2. To check players are correctly seated, with correct colours and facing the correct opponents.
3. To prevent any unnecessary conversation in the course of play.
4. Report any infringements of the regulations to the Arbiter.

Assistant Arbiters cannot make rulings unless deputised by the Arbiter to do so.

## **2 Rules and Regulations**

### **2.1 Format**

Competitions comprise three sections:

- Primary (years 1-6 students).
- Intermediate (years 7-8 students).
- Secondary (years 9-13 students).

The competition of each section can be held over different times and venues. Sections may be played in multiple divisions e.g. A and B Grades.

### **2.2 Scoring System**

Match points will be used for scoring and pairing.

### **2.3 Standard Pairings**

Where there is more than one team from the same school participating in a competition, organisers may choose whether the teams will be paired against each other as normal if the situation arises, or if teams will not be paired against other teams from the same school.

### **2.4 Tie-Breaks**

Tie-breaks are used to determine final standings. The tie-break methods are applied in the following order (for Swiss systems):

1. Game Points

2. Extended Direct Encounter
3. Cumulative (Sum of progressive scores)
4. Buchholz Total
5. Sonneborn-Berger
6. Buchholz Cut 1

### **2.5 Chess rules to be followed**

All games are to be played according to the FIDE Laws of Chess and other NZCF Bylaws and Regulations, except as varied by these Interschool Rules. Unless otherwise stated in a competition's entry form or website, Appendix A5 of the Laws of Chess applies. The official FIDE Laws of Chess are available from FIDE at the following website:

<https://handbook.fide.com/chapter/E012023>.

Articles 9.2 to 9.6 of the Laws of Chess e.g. threefold repetition of position or the 50-move rule, continue to apply. In particular, Article A2 applies:

*Players do not need to record the moves, but do not lose their rights to claims normally based on a scoresheet. The player can, at any time, ask the arbiter to provide them with a scoresheet, in order to write the moves.*

### **2.6 Good Sportsmanship rule**

Notwithstanding the Laws of Chess and other rules in this document, NZCF considers it desirable that children learn sporting behaviour at the chessboard, and that game outcomes are decided by skilled play on the chessboard. Therefore, unless otherwise stated on the competition entry form or website:

1. The first two completed illegal moves do not lose the game. The move must be retracted and a legal move substituted. No time penalty will be applied.
2. The third completed illegal move in a game loses for that player unless the opponent cannot win by any legal series of moves, in which case the game is drawn.
3. For the avoidance of doubt, displaced pieces (including those knocked over and/or off the chessboard) should be reset on that player's time with no other time penalty. This is not considered to be an illegal move.
4. There is no default for late arrival at the chessboard – the time penalty suffered from the clock being started is sufficient.

### **2.7 Time control**

A single rapid time control with increments is used. Examples of rapid time controls:

- 25 minutes per player plus 5 seconds increment per move
- 15 minutes per player plus 5 seconds increment per move

Where increment time controls are not able to be used e.g. insufficient digital clocks, FIDE Laws of Chess, Guidelines III. Games without increment including Quickplay Finishes applies. In particular article III.4 will be applied.

If the player having the move has less than two minutes left on his/her clock, he/she may request that an increment extra five seconds be introduced for both players. This constitutes the offer of a draw. If refused, and the arbiter agrees to the request, the clocks shall then be set with the extra time; the opponent shall be awarded two extra minutes and the game shall continue.

Note that such a request is an offer of a draw to the opponent. If the opponent accepts, the game is drawn. If the opponent refuses to draw, the arbiter shall set the clocks to provide a time delay (Bronstein) of 5 seconds for both the player and the opponent. Additionally, the opponent's available time will be increased by 2 extra minutes. The game shall then continue. If this is not possible because there are no digital clocks available, Article III.5 applies.

## 2.8 Spectators

It is recommended that spectators e.g. accompanying adults, team managers, coaches, players who have finished their games etc. are not permitted in the playing area while play is ongoing other than for photography in the first 5 minutes of the round. It is also recommended that the playing area includes a buffer of at least 2m around the games if the venue size permits.

## 2.9 Rating of games

Regional Interschool Competitions will not be NZCF-rated. The National Finals will be NZCF-rated where possible and following the conclusion of the National Finals, the following information needs to be supplied to NZCF for each player in the rating file:

- Official name (surname, given names)
- Gender (male/female)
- NZCF ID number if available
- If NZCF ID number is not available, full Date of Birth (Year, Month, Day e.g. 2014.01.21)

## 2.10 Penalties regimen

The arbiter can apply one or more of the following penalties:

- Warning.
- Increasing the remaining time of the opponent.
- Reducing the remaining time of the offending player.
- Declaring the game lost (the arbiter shall also decide the opponent's score).
- Reducing the points scored in a game by the offending party.
- Increasing the points scored in a game by the opponent to the maximum available for that game.
- Exclusion from one or more rounds.
- Expulsion from the event.

These penalties may be applied to a team or match score if the arbiter considers that appropriate in the circumstances. The decision of the arbiter shall be final.

## 2.11 Rulings on topics not covered

For rules not covered in this document, NZCF and FIDE rules and regulations will apply. Refer to the NZCF Tournament Regulations and NZCF Rules for Team Matches available at:

<http://newzealandchess.co.nz/resources.html> and the FIDE Handbook available at:  
<https://handbook.fide.com>.

## 2.12 Rules specific to Regional Qualifying events

### 2.12.1 Entry Fee & NZCF Levy

Regional Organisers may charge an entry fee per team. Regional Organisers are responsible for collecting and paying a NZCF interschool levy of \$15 per team that participates in the regional tournament(s). This does not include teams of the host school for which no entry fee was collected or paid. Organisers must provide information for their competitions in advance for listing on the NZCF website, and the tournament files when reporting for their competitions (see 2.12.2). The NZCF Treasurer will invoice Regional Organisers for levies after the notifications are received per 2.12.2.

### 2.12.2 Notifying the Interschool Co-ordinator

At the completion of the Regional Qualifiers, the Regional Organiser must provide the Interschool Co-ordinator *and* the NZCF Administrator ([admin@newzealandchess.co.nz](mailto:admin@newzealandchess.co.nz)) by email:

- Results of all players (preferably as Orion or VegaTeam tournament folders and files).
- Contact details of the school(s) that qualified to represent the region at the National Finals.
- The amount payable in interschool tournament levies to the NZCF.

Additionally, the Regional Organiser must advise the organiser of the National Finals the contact details of the qualifying teams.

### 2.12.3 Exemptions and changes

Regional Organisers may apply for exemptions or changes to rules and regulations for their competitions from the NZCF Council through the Interschool Co-ordinator.

## 2.13 Rules specific to the National Finals

### 2.13.1 Budget

The National Final Organiser is responsible for financing the tournament. Each participating team in the Final must pay an entry fee to the National Final Organiser as outlined by the entry form or website. Acceptance of late entries after 1<sup>st</sup> September shall be at the discretion of the National Final Organiser and subject to a \$40 late entry fee. NZCF will provide the National Final Organiser with medals for the best-placed three teams in each section, as well as medals for the top individual scorers on each board. For the top individual scorers on each board, ties will not be broken and NZCF will provide additional medals as required. The National Final Organiser is responsible for paying the NZCF tournament levy in 2.12.1 for each team that participates in the National Finals. The NZCF Treasurer will invoice the National Final Organiser after the conclusion of the National Finals.

### 2.13.2 Registration of Teams

Teams must register their confirmed entry with the National Final Organiser by 1<sup>st</sup> September on an entry form provided by the National Final Organiser and published on the NZCF website, together with payment of the entry fee. This includes the names of the expected team members in intended board order and NZCF IDs. For any team members who do not have NZCF IDs, their dates of birth and genders must be provided. Any subsequent team member changes should be notified by at least one week before the Finals, except in extenuating circumstances.

Acceptance of late entries after 1<sup>st</sup> September shall be at the discretion of the National Final Organiser, and subject to an additional \$40 late entry fee. NZCF may, at its discretion, issue direct invitations (known as wildcards) to individual schools to participate in the National Finals. Schools or regional organisers may request a wildcard after the conclusion of their regional qualifying competitions by emailing the Interschool Co-ordinator with any supporting information and/or reasons. The Interschool Co-ordinator will advise them of the outcome of their request. A fee of \$150 per team shall be payable to NZCF on acceptance, in lieu of the usual National Final entry fee. For each wildcard entry, NZCF shall pay to the National Final Organiser the entry fee in 2.13.1. Teams should be listed on the NZCF website as entries are confirmed.

### 2.13.3 Format

The event comprises three sections:

1. Primary (years 1-6 students).
2. Intermediate (years 7-8 students).
3. Secondary (years 9-13 students).

Each section will be run as a Swiss with 7 rounds with the initial ranking being in order of average NZCF rating of the teams. The Chief Arbiter should estimate ratings for unrated players – as a guide, options suggested for use are:

- 400 for primary
- 600 for intermediate
- 800 for secondary
- a rating between the ratings of players e.g. estimating a rating for an unrated player at board 2 could be halfway between the ratings of the players at boards 1 and 3

Pairings must be done with Orion (download from Vegachess.com and email the NZCF Administrator at [admin@newzealandchess.co.nz](mailto:admin@newzealandchess.co.nz) for the license).

#### 2.13.4 Schedule

The event is held over the first weekend following the third school term. Duration is one and a half days. The schedule is usually as follows:

Saturday	Team check-in	8:30am-9:00am
	Players assembly	9:30am
	Round 1	10:00am
	Round 2	11:20am
	Lunch	12:20pm
	Players assembly	1:10pm
	Round 3	1:20pm
	Round 4	2:40pm
	Round 5	4:00pm
	Sunday	Players assembly
Round 6		9:40am
Round 7		11:00am
Prizegiving		12:30pm

#### 2.13.5 Time control

The time control will be 25 minutes plus 5 seconds increment per move using digital chess clocks.

#### 2.13.6 Special conditions for host school

A host school gains guaranteed qualification to the National Final as an additional place for their section of their region but must still participate in their regional competition. Additionally, if one week before the event an odd number of teams have entered, the National Final Organiser may allocate a second team from the host school (or if different section from host school, a team from a school in the region of the host school), in order to avoid byes.

#### 2.13.7 Appeals Procedure

If a team wishes to appeal a decision of an Arbiter then the following procedure will apply:

1. The appeal must be in writing and accompanied by payment of an appeals fee of \$50 (refundable if the appeal is successful) to the National Final Organiser.
2. An Appeals Committee consisting of three members will be formed by the National Final Organiser. The members shall be the arbiter concerned with the dispute and two other experienced and appropriate individuals (such as two other Arbiters). The National Final Organiser shall be entitled to appoint himself/herself as one of the Appeals Committee members.
3. The Appeals Committee will then consider the appeal in any way it considers appropriate.

The decision of the Appeals Committee is final.

#### 2.13.8 Results and Pairings

Results and pairings should be published on the NZCF website after each round where reasonably practicable to do so. The National Final Organiser should consider how they will ensure internet access is available for the Chief Arbiter.

### **3 Contact Information**

#### **3.1 Regional Organisers and Interschool Coordinator**

Details of Regional Organisers and updated information about this competition (including these rules and any updates) can be found on the NZCF website:

<https://newzealandchess.co.nz/events/interschools/>

Interschool Co-ordinator for 2026: **Craig Hall**, e-mail [craig.hall@newzealandchess.co.nz](mailto:craig.hall@newzealandchess.co.nz)

#### **3.2 NZCF Website – [www.newzealandchess.co.nz](http://www.newzealandchess.co.nz)**

Interschools events, results and organisational details are published on the official New Zealand Chess Federation website. Organisers must supply the Interschool Co-ordinator with advance details of events for inclusion in the NZCF Interschools calendar:

<https://newzealandchess.co.nz/events/interschools/>

#### **3.3 National Interschools Final for 2026**

Dates: Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> & Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2026.

Location: TBC

National Final Organiser: TBC