

Jumping Beans takes great leap

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By [Lincoln Tan](#)



Sabrina Zhang, with Bailey and Kylie Johnston, says Chinese parents see early childhood education as very important. Photo / Greg Bowker

Kiwi baby gym business Jumping Beans is making the leap to Beijing on a one-year trial in a bid to hook an investor to help it expand.

Jumping Beans director Sophie Foster said the company's first foray into China was "exciting", because of the speed at which early education services were growing in China. Jumping Beans offers physical activity classes for children aged 6 weeks to 6 years.

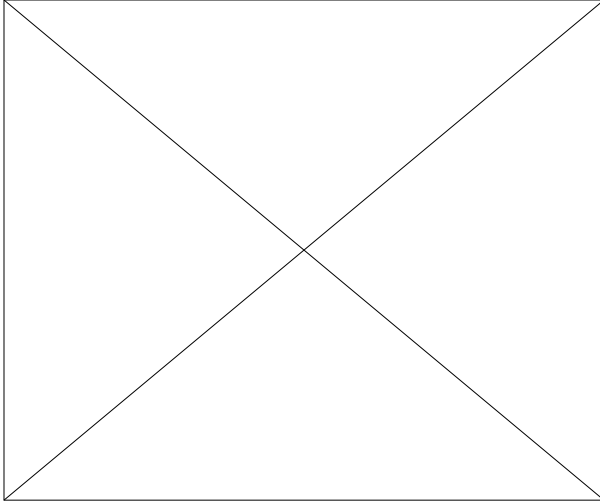
Within Jumping Beans' target group, there are 100 million children in China. Last year, about 25 million babies were born there.

The baby care market is worth 500 billion yuan (\$105 billion) a year, and is expected to double next year, reported China Daily.

The industry has seen annual growth of about 30 per cent since 2000, according to the Hangzhou Baby Care Industry Association.

"The potential is just huge, and the plan with the one-year licence is to attract an investor for the master franchise," said Foster, who established Jumping Beans in 1988.

She said the Chinese licensee, Cherry Cheng, a Chinese national, has the advantage of "having a foot in both cultures" to make it work in Beijing. She studied at Massey University where she graduated with a double masters in education and business.



Cheng, 35, has enlisted fellow Massey graduate Sabrina Zhang, 37, a former Chinese television actress and mother of a 3-year-old, to help with the operation in Beijing, which is expected to start in two months.

"Chinese parents see early childhood education as extremely important, and are prepared to spend to give their children an added advantage," said Cheng.

"In a country with millions and millions of children, parents who can afford it will spare no effort to help their children stand out."

Beijing Answer Marketing Consulting, a company engaging in researching statistics about children, found the average spending on children up to 6 years old accounted for one-third of a family's expenditure.

It also found most Chinese turned to overseas providers rather than domestic companies when searching for products and services because they have higher guarantees on quality and safety.

"The advantage we will have over our competitors is New Zealand's reputation for quality education, and how much importance it places on quality and safety," Cheng said.