



10 SEP 2019



Dear 

Thank you for your email of 23 July 2019 to the Ministry of Education requesting the following information:

*Could I please request under the Official Information Act the following information about truancy in Rotorua:*

1. *Truancy figures for Rotorua.*
2. *Trends on truancy over the last 5 years in Rotorua.*
3. *Breakdown of truancy figures school by school in Rotorua over the last 5 years.*
4. *Trends on truancy over the last 5 years in New Zealand.*
5. *Ministry of Education prosecutions for truancy in Rotorua in the last 5 years.*
6. *Ministry of Education prosecutions for truancy in New Zealand over the last 5 years.*
7. *What action or enforcement has the MoE taken in relation to truancy in Rotorua?*
8. *What action or enforcement have schools taken in relation to truancy in Rotorua?*
9. *What interactions/referrals have there been with Oranga Tamariki by schools or MoE regarding truanting?*

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

## 1. Attendance breakdown

The information below looks at the data generated by the 2018 Term 2 Attendance Survey, which is a voluntary survey run across primary and secondary schools. The 2018 survey includes data from 86.6% of all schools and represents 92.5% of enrolled students in New Zealand.

This report looks at four patterns of student attendance:

- **Regular attendance**, students attending school for more than 90% of available half-days,
- **Irregular absence**, students attending between 81% and 90% of available half-days,
- **Moderate absence**, students attending between 71% and 80% of available half-days, and
- **Chronic absence**, students attending school 70%, or less, of available half-days.

More information regarding the attendance survey and associated data considerations can be found online via the following link:

<http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2503/>

Table 1 below shows the headcount and percentage of attendance in all New Zealand Schools between 2014 and 2018, broken down by the four patterns of student attendance.

**Table 1: Headcount and percentage of attendance for New Zealand 2014-2018**

Year	Chronic Absence		Moderate Absence		Irregular Absence		Regular Attendance		Grand Total
	0-70%		70-80%		80-90%		>90%		
	Headcount	Percentage	Headcount	Percentage	Headcount	Percentage	Headcount	Percentage	Headcount
2014	30,344	5%	41,608	7%	119,314	20%	420,048	69%	611,314
2015	29,487	5%	39,847	6%	124,751	20%	441,890	69%	635,975
2016	32,143	5%	42,839	7%	132,299	21%	424,211	67%	631,492
2017	37,769	6%	50,669	8%	150,941	23%	407,744	63%	647,123
2018	43,196	6%	54,919	8%	160,572	22%	456,220	64%	714,907

Table 2 below shows the headcount and percentage of attendance in all Schools in the Rotorua District between 2014 and 2018, broken down by the four patterns of student attendance.

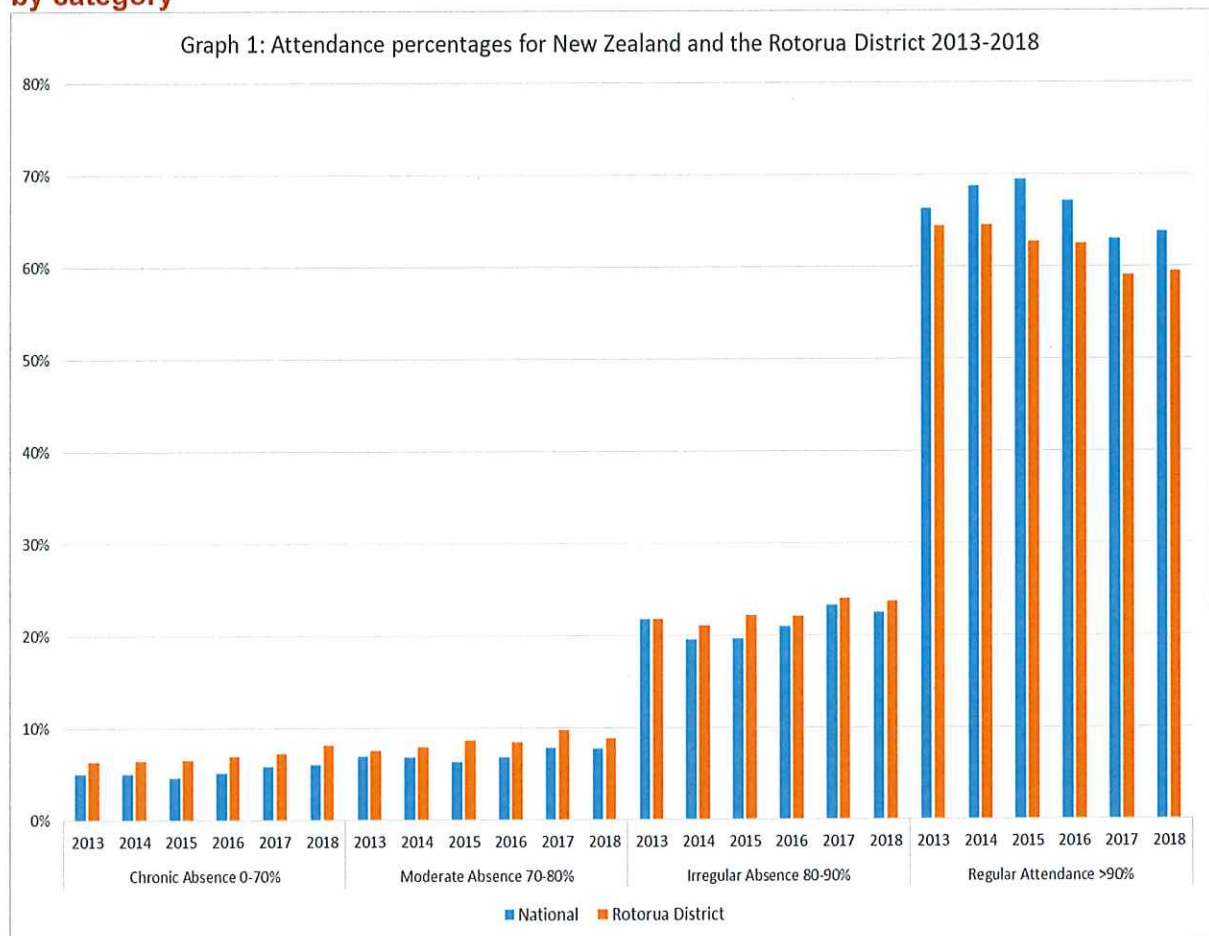
**Table 2: Headcount and percentage of attendance for Rotorua District 2014-2018**

Year	Chronic Absence		Moderate Absence		Irregular Absence		Regular Attendance		Grand Total
	0-70%		70-80%		80-90%		>90%		
	Headcount	Percentage	Headcount	Percentage	Headcount	Percentage	Headcount	Percentage	Headcount
2014	781	6%	965	8%	2,545	21%	7,813	65%	12,104
2015	693	7%	914	9%	2,342	22%	6,625	63%	10,574
2016	774	7%	950	8%	2,484	22%	7,022	63%	11,230
2017	852	7%	1,156	10%	2,848	24%	7,005	59%	11,861
2018	983	8%	1,070	9%	2,869	24%	7,207	59%	12,129

I am withholding the truancy figures broken down at school level for schools in Rotorua between 2014-2018 under section 9(2)(a) of the Act, to protect the privacy of natural persons.

## 2. Attendance trends

**Graph 1: Attendance percentages for New Zealand and the Rotorua District 2013-2018 by category**



### Notes

1. The total number of students includes the students enrolled for 30 half-days or more during Term 2, for years 2014-2018. 2019 data is not yet available.
2. Data is taken from the 2018 Term 2 Attendance Survey, which is a voluntary survey run across primary and secondary schools and hence excludes a number of schools and students. The 2018 survey includes data from 86.6% of all schools and represents 92.5% of enrolled students in New Zealand.
3. Rotorua has been defined as the Rotorua District, based on Regional Territorial Authority.
4. Note that we are unable to provide the breakdown at school level.
5. Please note that the percentages add across the table. For example, in 2018, 43,196 were recorded as having Chronic Absence. This represents 6% of the national student population for that year.

## 3. Prosecutions

Prosecution, or the possibility of it, is one way of emphasising to parents their legal responsibility regarding their child's attendance. Only when the non-attendance is ongoing and persistent and when all previous interventions to support a return to school have been unsuccessful would prosecution be considered. Prosecuting parents is a last resort.



Two types of prosecutions are possible, non-attendance prosecutions and non-enrolment prosecutions:

- a) *Non-attendance prosecutions* are considered when students have been absent for a consecutive number of days and all other options for re-engagement have failed. These are usually led by schools with the Ministry in a supporting role. We can lead this type of prosecution, but schools are in a better position to provide evidence as they will have attendance records and information about any past interventions.

Our role in non-attendance prosecutions is to provide schools with guidance on how to carry out prosecutions and, in some instances, provide reimbursement for legal costs incurred by the school.

- b) *Non enrolment prosecutions* are considered when students have failed to enroll in schools. If students are not enrolled we take responsibility to ensure students become enrolled in school.

Our role in non-enrolment prosecutions is to lead the prosecution against parents that have failed to enrol a child in school.

As school Boards are not obligated to advise us it has carried out a non-attendance prosecution this part of your request is refused under section 18(g) of the Act, as the information requested is not held by us. Boards are also not required to advise the Ministry if prosecution is successful.

There have been no non-enrolment prosecutions for truancy in Rotorua over the past five years.

Table 3 shows the number of non-enrolment and non-attendance prosecutions in New Zealand over the past five years.

**Table 3: Number of non-enrolment and non-attendance prosecutions in New Zealand, 2014-2018**

Prosecution Type	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total 2014-2018
Non-Attendance Prosecutions (NAP)	7	3	2	1	1	14
Non-Enrolment Prosecutions (NEP)	0	1	0	2	0	3

#### **4. Action/Enforcement**

Attending school is critically important for students' achievement and success. Parents are legally obliged under the Education Act 1989 to enrol their children in school from the age of six to 16, and to ensure their children attend school every day the school is open. If children under 6 are enrolled they are required to regularly attend school unless a transition plan is in place.

School boards of trustees are legally required to take all reasonable steps to ensure enrolled children attend school every day, unless there is a justifiable reason for their absence such as an illness or family bereavement. All schools should have policies, processes and personnel in place to monitor attendance, follow up on absences and take action quickly if a student has patterns of poor attendance.

Schools take action to try and get these students to attend school regularly again. Schools manage the vast majority of occasional unexplained absences well, without the involvement of an attendance service.

Attendance Services are contracted to support schools with attendance. If a student has been persistently unjustifiably absent and contact with their family/whanau has not improved their attendance, the school can refer the student to their local Attendance Service for additional support. Local attendance providers locate students and work with families to determine the best form of support to get students back into formal education. Cases are resolved when agreement is reached between the school and family that a student will begin attending regularly.

Attendance Advisors work with students and their families to address the root causes of non-attendance, which are often complex, looking at the factors contributing to a student's unjustifiable absence or non-enrolment, and identifying what support is required to improve attendance or transition to another learning environment.

Schools are not obliged to make a referral however they are encouraged to utilise the service.

## 5. Interactions/Referrals with Oranga Tamariki

The Ministry does not have records of school referrals to Oranga Tamariki. This information would be held by Oranga Tamariki. Therefore, I am refusing the part of your request for *"interactions/referrals have there been with Oranga Tamariki by schools or MoE regarding truanting"* under section 18(g) of the Act, as the information is not held by the Ministry.

The Ministry and Oranga Tamariki have an agreed Truancy Protocol which ensure schools can appropriately refer under section 19 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 for those children and young people considered to be in need of care or protection because of their non-attendance at school.

Please note, the Ministry now proactively publishes OIA responses on our website. As such, we may publish this response on our website after five working days. Your name and contact details will be removed.

Thank you again for your email. You have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review this decision. You can do this by writing to [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz) or Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Yours sincerely



Katrina Casey  
**Deputy Secretary**  
**Sector Enablement and Support**

cc Ezra Schuster, Director of Education for Bay of Plenty-Waiariki