

Thank you for your email of 3 October 2017 to the Ministry of Education requesting the following information:

- *"A list of the number of exclusions, expulsions, stand-downs and suspensions handed to pupils in Otago schools during 2016? If possible, it would be good to know what they were for: ie arson, drugs, physical assaults, sexual misconduct and weapons on school grounds.*
- *Also, if you could provide nationwide figures for exclusions, expulsions, stand-downs and suspensions, that would be great.*
- *Could we please also have someone from the Ministry of Education provide comment on the stats - something along the lines of "It is important to note, stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions are not measures of pupil behaviour, so much as they were measures of schools' reactions to behaviours. What one school may suspend for, another may not. The number of these events should not therefore be used as a proxy measure for total student behaviour."*

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

There are many reasons why schools might stand-down, suspend, exclude, and expel a student. Trends in stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions are not necessarily reflective of trends in student behaviour. They also reflect schools' reactions to student behaviours and what one school may suspend for, another may not.

A stand-down is the removal of a student for a period of up to five days. The school principal makes this decision. A suspension is the formal removal of a student from a school until the school Board of Trustees decides the outcome at a meeting. The Board may decide to lift the suspension (with or without conditions), extend the suspension, or terminate the student's enrolment at the school. If a student's enrolment is terminated, this is known as exclusion if the student is under 16 years of age or as an expulsion if the student is over 16 years of age.

We are concerned that the number of stand-downs and suspensions has increased in Otago compared with last year. We are working closely with schools to see how we can best support them in terms of professional development for staff and the development of individual behaviour plans for students. We want to work with school proactively to plan approaches that will help avoid students ending up being suspended or excluded.

While there has been a rise in stand-downs and suspensions, this hasn't translated into higher numbers of exclusions. This shows schools are working hard to keep students engaged in education, rather than remove them from the school.

We know that difficult behaviours can hinder learning and disrupt school life. That's why in the past financial year we spent about \$95 million over and above special education grants, on behaviour assistance for about 10,000 children. This includes children receiving help from the Severe Behaviour Service and from specialist teachers in learning and behaviour. In this year's Budget, the Government provided an additional \$69 million over four years to support children with additional learning and behaviour needs. This includes \$34.7 million over four years to expand services for 1,000 extra children with severe behavioural difficulties.

We have a number of programmes and resources to ensure our most vulnerable students stay in school longer and are more engaged in learning. Our Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) programme is now in 61 schools in Otago / Southland and we are encouraged by the benefits that these schools have reported.

There are times when a student may need to be physically restrained to ensure their safety and the safety of those around them. In August 2017, new rules came into effect to provide greater clarity about when it is okay to do so. The rules have requirements for schools to notify, monitor and report on the use of physical restraint. To coincide with the release of the new rules, we have published updated guidance for schools on the use of physical restraint. If schools feel they would benefit from training in this area, a workshop, Understanding Behaviour, Responding Safely, is available to all schools. It focuses on prevention and de-escalation strategies and is run by experienced behaviour management specialists (who also offer ongoing support). Schools should contact their local Ministry office if they're interested in the workshop or if they think they need further support.

I am releasing to you data recording the number of stand-downs, exclusions and suspensions for the Otago region, as well as nationally, in 2016. This data has been attached to this response as **Appendix A**.

Please note that values less than 5 have been withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act, to protect the privacy of students. As there were fewer than five students expelled in the entire region in 2016, this data has not been included.

Further information about stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions, and expulsions can be found on the Education Counts website at the following link:

www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/indicators/main/student-engagement-participation/Stand-downs-suspensions-exclusions-expulsions.

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.

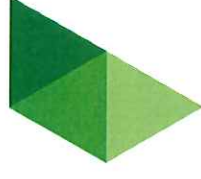
Thank you again for your email. If you have further questions please feel free to contact our media team in the first instance at media.team@education.govt.nz.

If you are unsatisfied with my response, you have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review it. You can do this by writing to info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'CJ' followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Dr Craig Jones
Deputy Secretary
Evidence, Data and Knowledge



Appendix A – 2016 Stand-downs, suspensions, exclusion and expulsion data for the Otago region and Nationally, by reason

Type of behaviour/reason	Nationally				Otago region		
	Stand-downs	Suspensions	Exclusions	Expulsions	Stand-downs	Suspensions	Exclusions
Alcohol	448	52	9	x	24	0	0
Arson	59	17	x	x	x	x	x
Continual Disobedience	3,257	636	265	22	176	45	9
Drugs (Including Substance Abuse)	992	511	103	16	14	23	8
Other Harmful or Dangerous Behaviour	1,808	343	109	24	70	14	x
Physical Assault on Other Students	4,318	523	169	26	218	14	x
Physical Assault on Staff	785	144	62	6	64	10	x
Sexual Harassment	87	25	9	0	7	x	0
Sexual Misconduct	150	29	9	x	5	0	0
Smoking	210	9	x	0	x	x	x
Theft	605	92	29	5	13	x	x
Vandalism	341	46	14	0	8	x	x
Verbal Assault on Other Students	395	32	18	0	30	x	0
Verbal Assault on Staff	1,615	144	62	5	74	12	x
Weapons	229	89	37	x	8	x	x
Total	15,299	2,692	905	113	718	134	33

Notes:

- Numbers below 5 have been redacted to protect privacy. These values are shown as 'x'.
- All data for expulsions has been redacted due to low numbers.
- International fee paying students, correspondence school students, adult students (aged 19 years or older), and private school students are excluded.