



Briefing Note: Release of 2021 Student Engagement Data

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Purpose of Report

This briefing informs you about the 2021 student engagement results ahead of their release on 8 December 2022. It covers data on stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions (SSEE); early leaving exemptions; and transient students.

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

- Note** that the Ministry intends to release the 2021 student engagement results and associated data products via Education Counts on 8 December 2022.
- Note** that there was an increase in the age-standardised rates of stand-downs compared to 2020, however the rate is still lower than 2019. The age-standardised rates of suspensions, exclusions and expulsions¹ were similar to 2020 and all lower than 2019.
- Note** that while stand-downs have increased overall between 2020 and 2021, from August to December 2021, the number of stand-downs was lower compared to the same period in 2020. This coincides with Auckland being at COVID-19 Alert Levels 3 and 4. Overall the total number of days that students were required to learn at home due to COVID Alert Levels 3 and 4 was greater in 2021 than in 2020.

¹ Exclusion and expulsion are the most serious of outcomes from suspension. An exclusion means the formal removal of a student aged under 16 from the school or kura by the Board of Trustees and there remains a legal requirement that the student is enrolled in education. An expulsion is the formal removal of a student aged 16 years and over from the school or kura, the student is not required to enrol elsewhere but may be supported to do so.

- d. **Note** analysis of stand-down reasons shows that smoking accounts for 59% of the increase in stand-down cases between 2020 and 2021. There has also been an increase in the frequency of vaping being mentioned in the *other harmful or dangerous behaviour* and *continual disobedience* categories, with about half of the increase in these categories linked to vaping behaviour.
- e. **Note** that the rate of early leaving exemptions increased to close to the 2019 rate and the transience rate was similar to 2020.
- f. **Note** that draft Frequently Asked Questions are attached (Annex 3).
- g. **Note** that we will liaise with your office about the communications for the release.

Summary

- This briefing informs you about the 2021 student engagement results. It covers data on stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions (SSEE); early leaving exemptions; and transient students.
- There was a mixture of COVID-19 Alert Level settings across different regions during 2021. While stand-downs have increased overall between 2020 and 2021, from August to December 2021 the number of stand-downs was lower compared to the same period in 2020. This coincides with Auckland being at Alert Levels 3 and 4 and students learning from home. Overall, the total number of days that students were required to learn at home due to COVID Alert Levels 3 and 4 was greater in 2021 than in 2020.
- In 2021, there was an increase in age-standardised² rates of stand-downs compared to 2020. The age-standardised rates of suspensions, exclusions and expulsions were similar to 2020. There was an increase in the rate of early leaving exemptions and the transience rate was similar to 2020. The statistics are summarised in the table below.

Indicators	Age-standardised Rate (per 1,000 students)			
	2019 (Pre COVID-19)	2020	2021	Change 2020- 2021
Stand-down	29.7	23.6	26.8	3.2
Suspension	4.4	3.0	3.1	0.1
<i>Exclusion</i>	<i>1.7</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>0.0</i>
<i>Expulsion</i>	<i>1.4</i>	<i>1.1</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>-0.1</i>
Early Leaving Exemption	13.1	11.4	13.0	1.6
Transience	4.0	3.0	2.9	-0.1

- In 2021, there were **20,980 stand-down cases** affecting 15,968 students. These students account for 2.0% of the student population. Of these students, 78% were stood down only once. There were 2,793 more stand-downs in 2021 than in 2020. There were 18,187 stand-down cases affecting 14,025 students (1.8% of the student population) in 2020.
- More secondary schools and kura than primary schools and kura made use of stand-downs, with 92% of secondary schools and kura choosing to use stand-downs compared to 53% of primary schools and kura in 2021. This pattern is similar to previous years. The age-

² All rates represent the prevalence per 1,000 students. For stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions, rates are age-standardised. This allows for a fair comparison across years, since there is an increased prevalence of schools and kura taking these actions for the 12-15 age group.

standardised stand-down rate for secondary schools and kura was 26.7 per 1,000 students (11,437 stand-downs) compared to 27.1 per 1,000 students (8,400 stand-downs) for primary schools and kura. Stand-down rates in primary and secondary schools and kura have been similar since 2019 (see Figure 2).

- The age-standardised **suspension** rate was 3.1 per 1,000 students (2,442 suspension cases) in 2021. These suspensions were received by 2,266 students, accounting for 0.3% of the total student population. Following the suspension process, schools and kura **excluded 730 students and expelled 100 students**.
- Schools continued to stand-down and suspend **ākonga Māori** at the highest rates. In 2021, the stand-down rate for ākonga Māori was 44.7 per 1,000 students (9,133 stand-downs), and the suspension rate was 6.1 per 1,000 students (1,229 suspensions). Following the suspension process, schools excluded ākonga Māori (2.2 per 1,000 students) and expelled ākonga Māori (2.3 per 1,000 students) at higher rates than students of other ethnicities.
- Of the **ākonga Māori in Māori Medium Education (MME)**, there were 105 stand-down cases (1.1% of total ākonga Māori stand-down cases) and 21 suspension cases (1.7% of total Māori suspension cases). In 2021, 5.7% of ākonga Māori were enrolled in MME.
- Schools stood-down **Pacific students** at the rate of 26.2 per 1,000 students in 2021 (2,088 stand-downs), and the suspension rate was 2.5 per 1,000 students (202 suspensions). Following the suspension process, schools expelled Pacific students at a rate of 1.4 per 1,000 students. This rate has decreased from 2.9 per 1,000 students 2020.
- In 2021, **physical assault** on other students continued to be the main reason for stand-downs, accounting for 28.2% of all stand-downs, with a rate of 7.6 stand-downs per 1,000 students. This rate has decreased by 0.1 per 1,000 students from 2020.
- Three **behaviour types** (smoking or alcohol, other harmful or dangerous behaviour and continual disobedience) accounted for **91%** of the increase in stand-down cases between 2020 and 2021. The number of stand-downs due to smoking accounts for 59% of the increase in stand-down cases between 2020 and 2021. There has also been an increase in the frequency of vaping being mentioned in the “other harmful or dangerous behaviour” and “continual disobedience” categories, with about half of the increase in these categories linked to vaping behaviour.
- Physical assault on other students was the main reason for suspensions, accounting for 24.0% of all suspensions, with a rate of 0.7 suspensions per 1,000 students in 2021. Suspensions for physical assault on other students decreased by 0.1 per 1,000 students from 2020.
- In 2021, 781 **early leaving exemptions** were approved, a rate of 13.0 per 1,000 15-year-old students. This is an increase over 2020 which had a rate of 11.4 per 1,000 15-year-old students. Ākonga Māori continued to have the highest rate of early leaving exemptions at 26.7 per 1,000 15-year-old students.
- Nationally the **transience rate** in 2021 was 2.9 per 1,000 students in 2021. This is a small decrease from 2020 (3.0 per 1,000 students). There were 2,378 students changing schools or kura twice or more, and 93% of them transferred schools or kura exactly twice in 2021. Ākonga Māori continued to have the highest transience rate of 6.3 per 1,000 students.

Proactive Release

Agree that the Ministry of Education release this briefing in full once it has been considered by you.

☒ **Agree** ☐ **Disagree**



Tom Dibley
**National Director
Evidence, Data and Knowledge**
25/11/2022



Hon Jan Tinetti
**Associate Minister of
Education**
04/12/2022

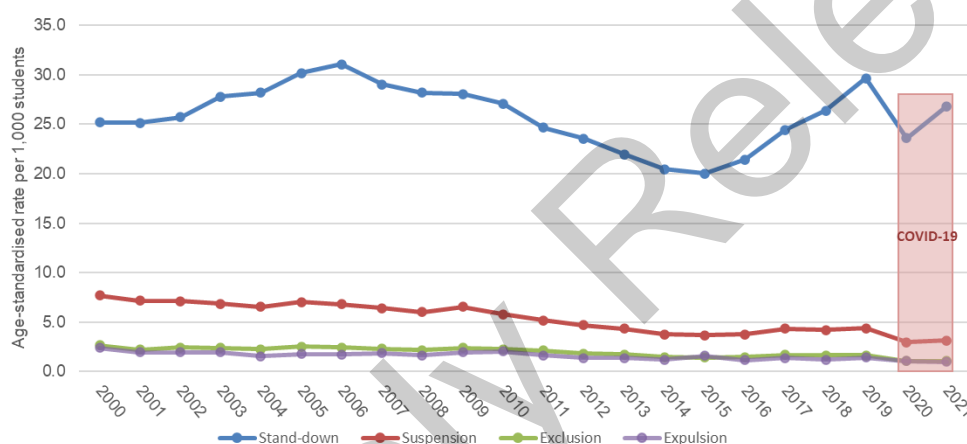
Background

1. This report summarises the 2021 results from the Ministry of Education's student engagement release, which covers three data collections:
 - i. stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions, and expulsions (SSEE)
 - ii. early leaving exemptions and
 - iii. transient students.
2. A stand-down is the formal removal of a student from school or kura by the principal for a specified time. A suspension is the formal removal of a student from school or kura by the principal until the board decides to lift or extend the suspension, or to progress to exclusion or expulsion. Expulsion (for students aged 16 or over) and exclusion (for students aged under 16) are decisions by a board to permanently remove a learner from their school or kura. Annex Two provides definitions for the collections.
3. The Ministry of Education provides guidance to schools and kura on the processes for stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions, and expulsions as set out in legislation, to incorporate guidance from the courts. Part 1 of these guidelines are designed to assist school boards, principals, and teachers with their legal options and duties and to meet their obligations under relevant statutory requirements. Part 2 provides good practice in planning for and managing situations that may or may not lead to stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions.
4. Stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions, and expulsions are not measures of student behaviours, but of a school's or kura's response to behaviours. Schools and kura have their own plans, based on Ministry guidance, that outline different strategies for managing student behaviour. These plans can help reduce certain behaviours and can help schools and kura deal with difficult situations as they arise.
5. All rates represent the prevalence per 1,000 students. For stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions, all rates are age-standardised. This allows for a fair comparison across years, since there is an increased prevalence of schools and kura taking these actions for the 12-15 age group.
6. Early Leaving Exemption - Enrolment in school or kura is compulsory for all students aged from 6 to 15 years old. However, parents of 15-year-old students may apply to the Ministry of Education for an exemption from schooling based on educational problems, conduct, or the unlikelihood of the student benefiting from attending available schools or kura. Parents are required to give details about training programmes or employment that the student would move on to in the event of an early leaving exemption being granted.
7. Transient Students - A student is considered transient if they move school or kura twice or more over the period from the 1st of March to the 1st of November in the same year. Evidence suggests that it is important for teachers to work in partnership with these students, their parents and whānau to focus on students' engagement, progress and achievement.
8. Along with data tables, the Ministry releases three indicator reports which summarise the results for these three collections annually via the Education Counts website.
9. There was a mixture of COVID-19 Alert Level settings across different regions during 2021. Overall, the total number of days on which students were required to learn at home due to COVID-19 Alert Levels 3 and 4 was greater in 2021 than in 2020. Nationally in 2021, there were fewer school days where students were required to learn at home (15 school days) compared to 2020 (25 school days). However, Auckland, parts of Waikato and Tai Tokerau experienced additional days at Alert Levels 3 and 4 in 2021. Auckland experienced 59 additional days at Alert Levels 3 and 4 in 2021, compared to 13 additional days in 2020.

Stand-down, Suspension, Exclusion and Expulsion (SSEE)

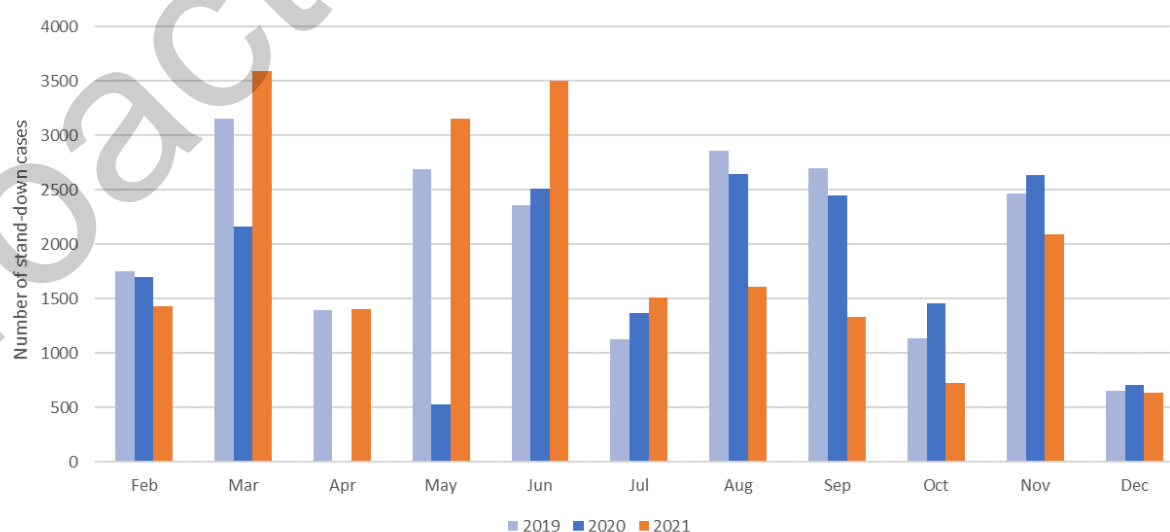
10. In 2021, there were 788,737 students attending 2,448 state and state-integrated schools and kura. Tables of the student engagement results for SSEE are provided in Annex One.
11. There were 20,980 stand-down cases involving 15,968 students in 2021. This was an increase from 2020 (18,187) and a decrease compared to 2019 (22,282).
12. Nationally the stand-down rate in 2021 was 26.8 per 1,000 students. This was an increase from 2020 (23.6 per 1,000 students) and a decrease from 2019 (29.7 per 1,000 students). The age-standardised suspension rate was 3.1 per 1,000 students in 2021 which was similar to 2020 (3.1 per 1,000 students) and a decrease from 2019 (4.4 per 1,000 students). Following the suspension process, students were excluded at the age-standardised rate of 1.1 per 1,000 students and expelled at the age-standardised rate of 1.0 per 1,000 students. The exclusion and expulsion rates were similar to 2020 and were lower than the 2019 rates (See Figure 2).

Figure 2: The age-standardised stand-down rate increased in 2021 compared to 2020; suspension, exclusion and expulsion rates remained similar



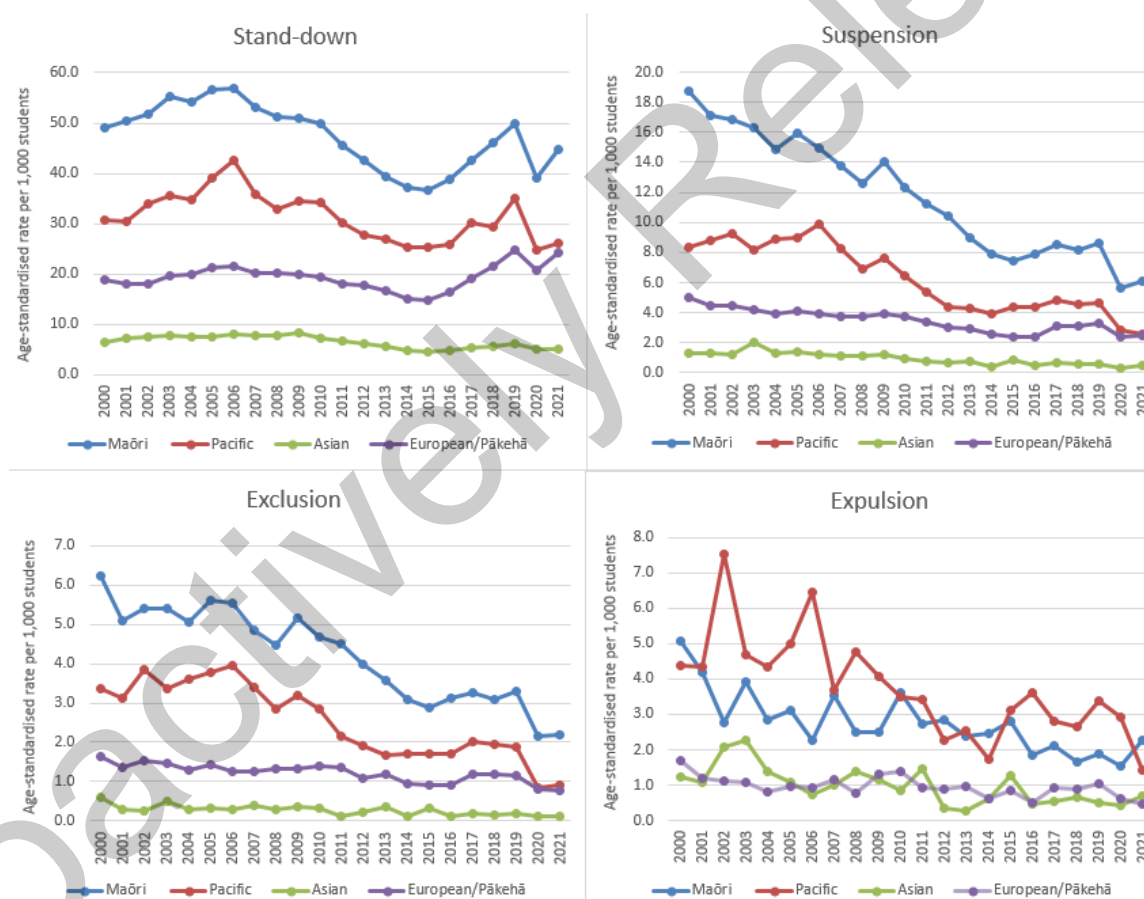
13. All or parts of New Zealand were under COVID-19 Alert Level 3 or 4 during August to December 2021. From August to December 2021, the number of stand-downs were lower than the same period in 2020 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Stand-down cases increased in 2021 compared to 2020



14. Three **behaviour types** (smoking or alcohol, other harmful or dangerous behaviour and continual disobedience) accounted for **91%** (2,546 out of 2,793) of the increase in stand-down cases between 2020 and 2021. Breakdown of the smoking or alcohol category indicates that the number of stand-downs due to smoking has increased from 1,210 in 2020 to 2,865 in 2021. This accounts for 59% of the increase in stand-down cases between 2020 and 2021. There has also been an increase in the frequency of vaping being mentioned in the other harmful or dangerous behaviour and continual disobedience categories, with about half of the increase in these categories linked to vaping behaviour. The data shows that for 75 percent of increase in stand-downs from 2020 to 2021 smoking or vaping was cited as part or all of the reason.
15. Schools continued to stand-down and suspend ākonga Māori at the highest rates. In 2021, the stand-down rate for ākonga Māori was 44.7 per 1,000 students (9,133 stand-downs), and the suspension rate was 6.1 per 1,000 students (1,229 suspensions). Following the suspension process, schools excluded ākonga Māori (2.2 per 1,000 students) and expelled ākonga Māori (2.3 per 1,000 students) at higher rates than students of other ethnicities (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Schools continue to stand-down or suspend ākonga Māori at the highest rates



16. In 2021, there were 9,133 stand-down cases involving 6,863 ākonga Māori. 105 cases (1.1% of total ākonga Māori stand-down cases) were from ākonga Māori in Māori Medium Education (MME). There were 1,229 suspension cases (out of a total of 2,442 suspension cases) for Māori involving 1,131 ākonga Māori. 21 suspension cases (1.7% of total Māori suspension cases) were from ākonga Māori in Māori Medium Education (MME). In 2021, 5.7% of ākonga Māori were enrolled in MME.
17. Schools stood-down Pacific students at the age-standardised rate of 26.2 per 1,000 students in 2021. There were 2,088 stand-down cases involving 1,747 Pacific students.

The age-standardised suspension rate for Pacific students was 2.5 per 1,000 students. There were 202 suspension cases involving 198 Pacific students.

18. Following the suspension process, 733 (involving 730 students) of the 2,442 suspension cases were excluded in 2021. This is a small increase from 2020 (713 cases) and a decrease from 2019 (1,071 cases). Schools excluded ākonga Māori at the age-standardised rate of 2.2 per 1,000 students (396 ākonga Māori). The age-standardised exclusion rate for Pacific students was 0.9 per 1,000 students (63 Pacific students).
19. Following a suspension process, 100 (involving 100 students) of the 2,442 suspension cases were expelled in 2021. This is a decrease from 2020 (138 cases). Schools expelled ākonga Māori at the age-standardised rate of 2.3 per 1,000 students (49 ākonga Māori). The age-standardised exclusion rate for Pacific students was 1.4 per 1,000 students (15 Pacific students). The exclusion rate for Pacific students has decreased from 2.9 per 1,000 students 2020.

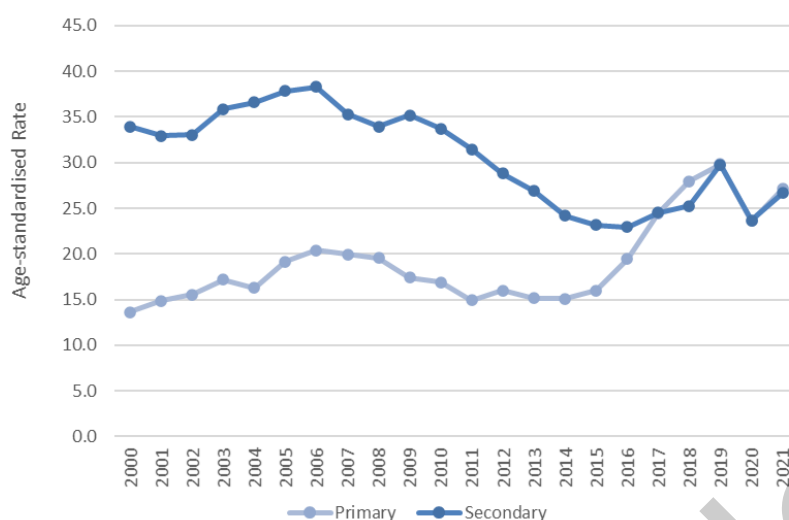
SSEE by Decile

20. In 2021, the age-standardised stand-down rate for decile 1-2 schools and kura (38.8 per 1,000 students) and decile 3-4 schools and kura (44.5 per 1,000 students) were more than three times the age-standardised stand-down rate for decile 9-10 schools (12.7 per 1,000 students).
21. Schools stood-down **European/Pākehā** students at the highest age-standardised rate (68.0 per 1,000 students) in decile 1-2 schools compared to other ethnicities. **Ākonga Māori** were stood-down at the highest rates in all other decile groups, ranging from 23.7 per 1,000 students for decile 9-10 to 58.0 per 1,000 students for decile 3-4.
22. In 2021, the age-standardised suspension rate for decile 1-2 schools and kura (5.0 per 1,000 students) was more than four times the suspension rate for decile 9-10 schools and kura (1.2 per 1,000 students).
23. Schools suspended **European/Pākehā** students at the highest age-standardised rate (8.6 per 1,000 students) in decile 1-2 schools compared to other ethnicities. **Ākonga Māori** were suspended at the highest rates in all other decile groups, ranging from 2.6 per 1,000 students for decile 9-10 to 6.6 per 1,000 students for decile 3-4.

SSEE by Decile and School Type

24. In 2021 there were 469,345 students learning in primary schools and kura, and 8,400 stand-downs were used in primary schools and kura. There were 277,127 students learning in secondary schools and kura, and 11,437 stand-downs were used in secondary schools and kura.

Figure 4: Primary and secondary schools and kura have similar stand-down rates since 2019



25. In primary schools and kura, the age-standardised stand-down rate was 27.1 per 1,000 students. This is an increase from 2020 (23.6 per 1,000 students) and a decrease from 2019 (29.8 per 1,000 students).
26. Primary schools stood down **ākongā Māori** at higher age-standardised rates in all decile groups except for decile 1-2, ranging from 23.9 per 1,000 students for decile group 9-10 to 62.7 per 1,000 students for decile group 3-4. The national age-standardised rates ranged from 10.7 per 1,000 students for decile 9-10 to 46.5 per 1,000 students for deciles 3-4 (see Figure 5).
27. Primary schools stood down **Pacific** students at age standardised rates between 10.8 to 26.4 per 1,000 students across the decile groups.
28. In primary schools and kura, the age-standardised suspension rate was 2.8 per 1,000 students. This is a decrease from 2020 (3.1 per 1,000 students) and 2019 (4.6 per 1,000 students).
29. Primary schools suspended **ākongā Māori** at higher rates in all decile groups except for decile 1-2, ranging from 1.2 per 1,000 students for decile group 9-10 to 7.4 per 1,000 students for decile group 3-4. The national age-standardised rates ranged from 0.8 per 1,000 students for decile 9-10 to 5.3 per 1,000 students for deciles 3-4 (see Figure 5).
30. Primary schools suspended **Pacific** students at an age standardised rate between 0.0 to 2.6 per 1,000 students across the decile groups.
31. In secondary schools and kura, the age-standardised stand-down rate was 26.7 per 1,000 students in 2021. This is an increase from 2020 (23.7 per 1,000 students) and a decrease from 2019 (29.8 per 1,000 students).
32. Secondary schools stood down **ākongā Māori** at the highest age-standardised rates among all decile groups except for decile 1-2, ranging from 23.3 per 1,000 students for decile 9-10 to 56.9 per 1,000 students for decile 3-4. The national age-standardised rates ranged from 14.2 per 1,000 students for decile 9-10 to 43.3 per 1,000 students for decile 3-4 (see Figure 5).

33. Secondary schools stood down **Pacific students** at age standardised rates between 20.7 to 48.7 per 1,000 students.
34. In secondary schools and kura the age-standardised suspension rate was 3.2 per 1,000 students in 2021. This is an increase from 2020 (2.9 per 1,000 students) and a decrease from 2019 (4.2 per 1,000 students).
35. Secondary schools suspended **ākongā Māori** at the highest age-standardised rates for all decile groups ranging from 2.9 to 8.7 per 1,000 students. The national rates ranged from 1.3 to 5.8 per 1,000 students (See Figure 5).
36. Secondary schools suspended **Pacific students** at age standardised rates ranging from 2.2 to 4.2 per 1,000 students across decile groups.

Figure 5: In 2021, schools stood down and suspended ākongā Māori at higher rates compared to overall rates

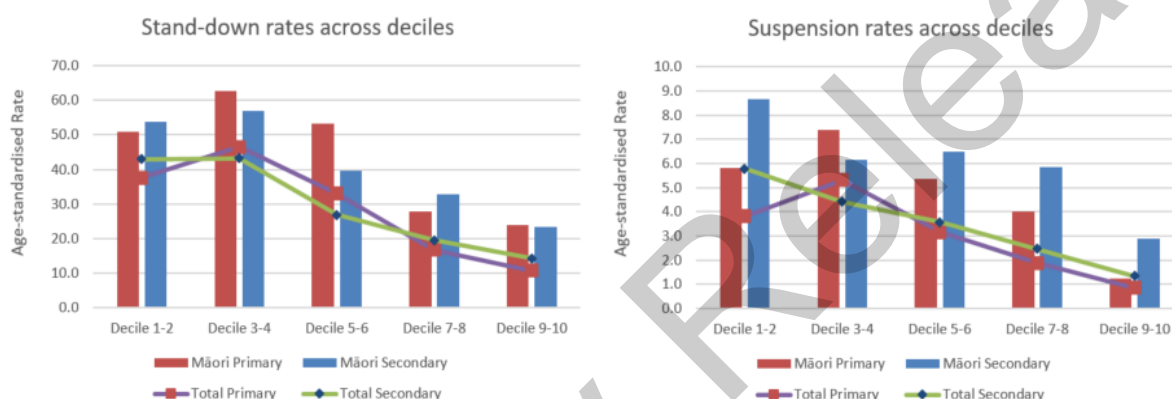
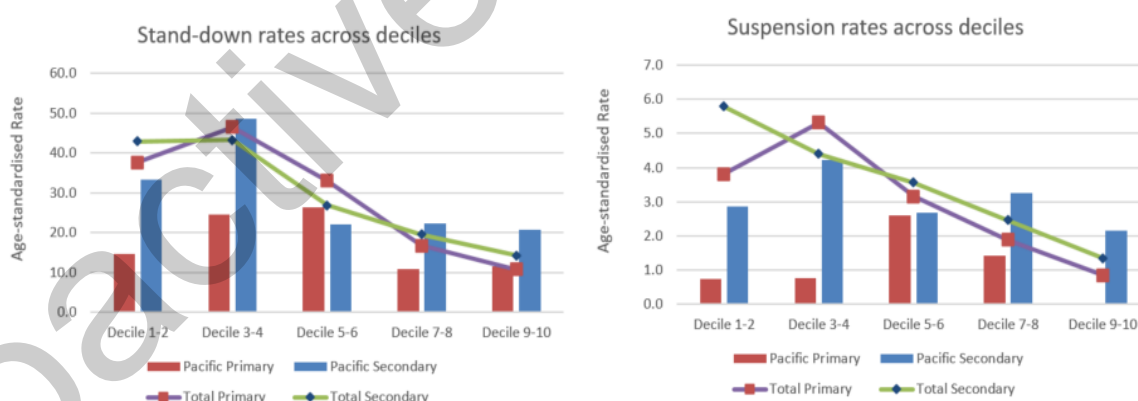
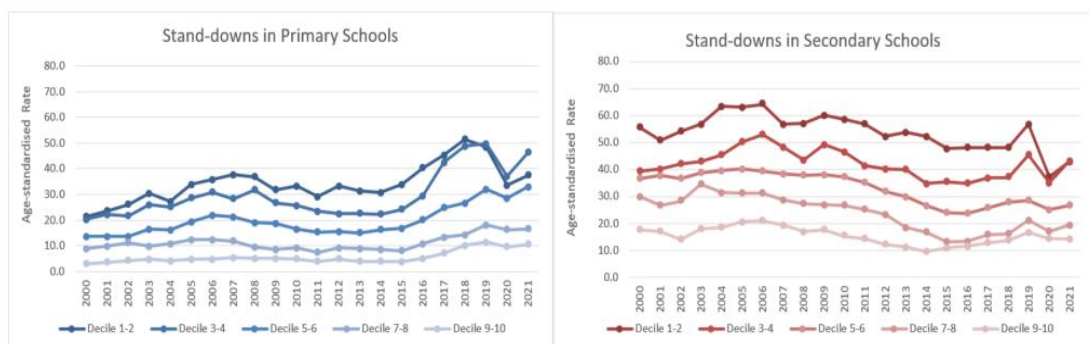


Figure 6: In 2021, schools stood down or suspended Pacific primary students at lower rates compared to overall rates



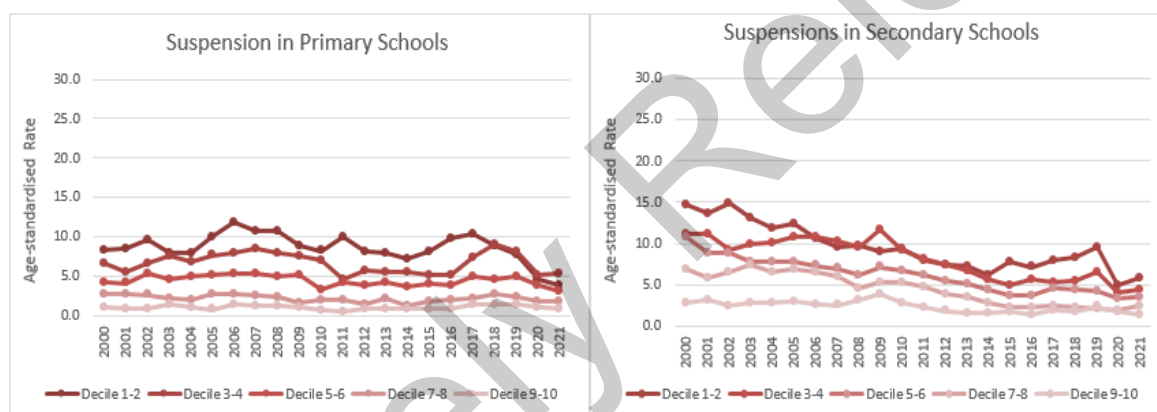
37. Age-standardised stand-down rates across all decile groupings have increased. This is most noticeable among decile 1-4 schools and kura, where rates increased between 2020 and 2021 for both primary and secondary schools (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Stand-down rates in most deciles have increased in 2021



38. Between 2000 and 2021, the gap in age-standardised suspension rates between lower decile schools and higher decile schools has decreased. This decrease was greater for secondary school students (see Figure 8).

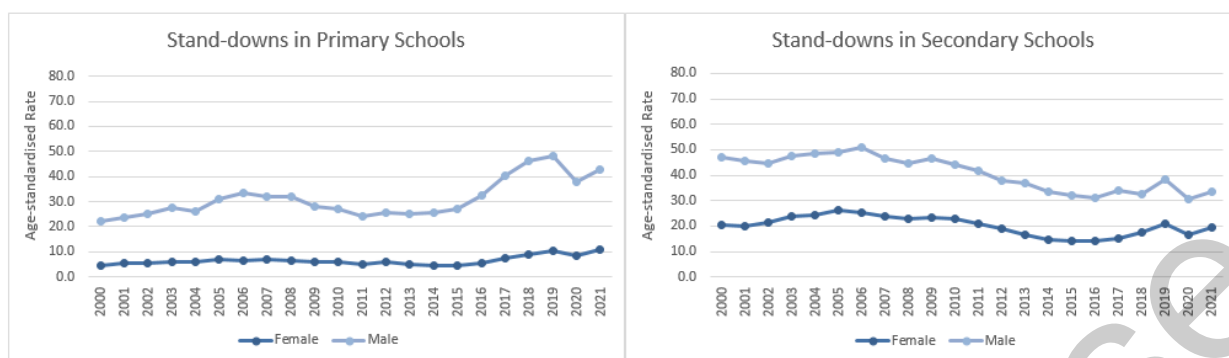
Figure 8: The difference in suspension rates across decile groupings decreased between 2000 and 2021



SSEE by Gender

39. The age-standardised stand-down rate for male students in primary schools and kura (42.5 per 1,000 students) was around four times higher than for female students (10.8 per 1,000 students).
40. Secondary schools and kura show less marked gender disparity, but male secondary students are also stood down at higher age-standardised rates compared to female secondary students. The age-standardised stand-down rate for male students was 33.5 per 1,000 students and 19.5 per 1,000 students for female students.
41. Prior to a drop in 2020 the stand down rates for male primary students had been increasing. The age-standardised stand-down rate for primary male students increased more than the age-standardised stand-down rate for primary female students in 2021 (see Figure 9).

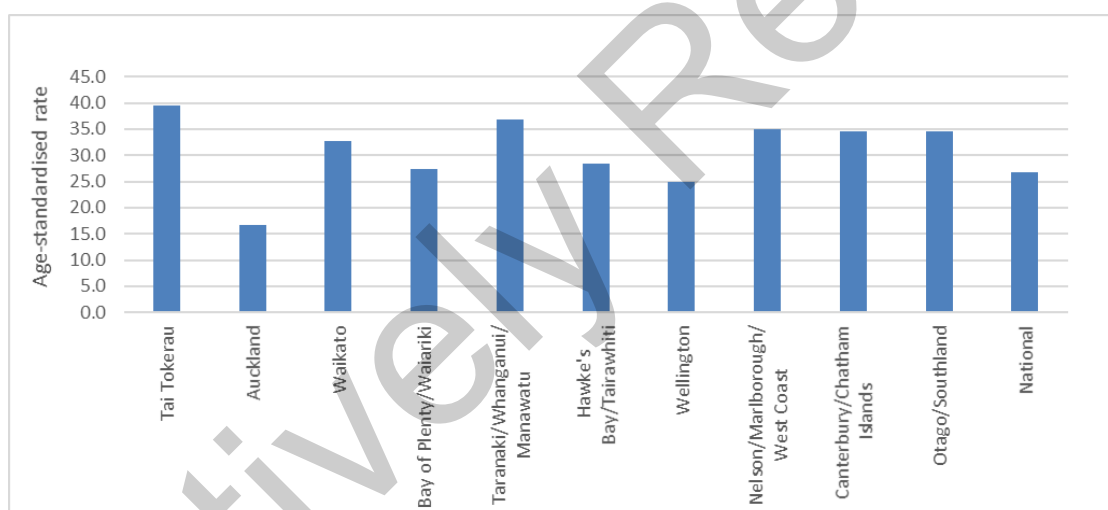
Figure 9: The gender disparity in stand-down rates increased in primary schools and kura



SSEE by Education Region

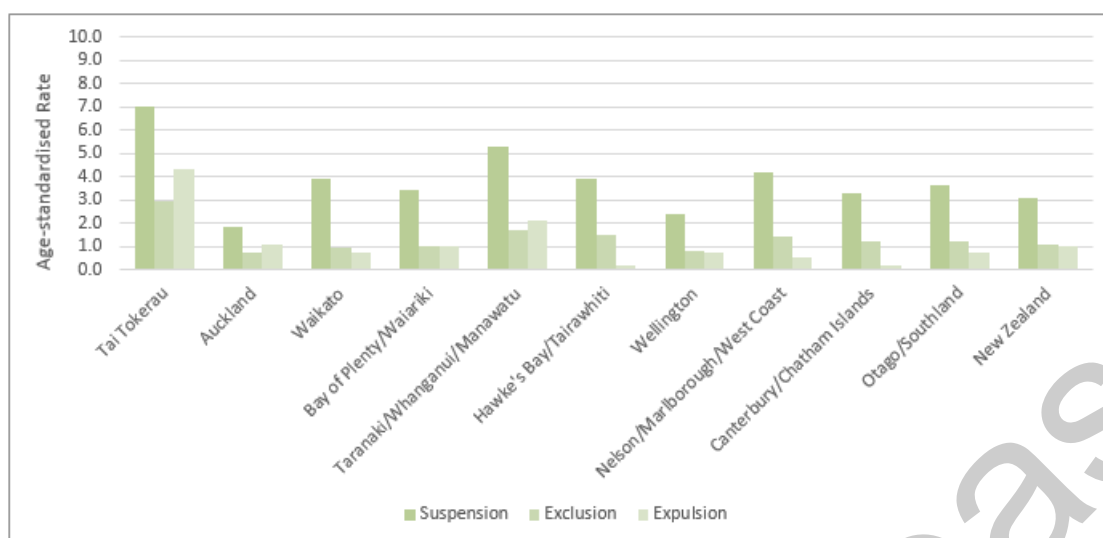
42. In 2021, the Tai Tokerau education region had the highest age-standardised stand-down rate, at 39.5 per 1,000 students, while the Auckland education region had the lowest age-standardised stand-down rate, at 16.7 per 1,000 students.

Figure 10: Auckland had the lowest stand-down rate in 2021



43. In 2021, the Tai Tokerau education region had the highest age-standardised rates of suspension (7.0 per 1,000 students), exclusion (2.9 per 1,000 students) and expulsion (4.3 per 1,000 students).
44. The Auckland education region had the lowest age-standardised suspension rate (1.8 per 1,000 students) and exclusion rate (0.7 per 1,000 students).
45. The Canterbury, Chatham Islands and the Hawke's Bay, Tairāwhiti education regions had the lowest age-standardised expulsion rates, at 0.2 per 1,000 students.

Figure 11: Auckland had the lowest suspension and exclusion rates in 2021



Supports for schools for preventing and responding to SSEE provided by the Ministry

46. Research demonstrates that primarily focusing on managing individual challenging behaviour is only effective in the short term. Sustainable change in schools also requires a shift in focus to prevention, restoration of relationships and student wellbeing.
47. To support this shift, the Ministry's Learning Support practice framework, He Pikorua, provides a model to reflect how schools can embed and integrate support for ākonga into school systems and everyday teaching and learning routines (Te Tūāpapa o He Pikorua). A new system is being designed to better support children and young people with the highest learning support needs. The High Needs change programme is under way to design and implement this.
48. Ministry of Education Learning Support teams and contracted providers support schools through specialist support to co-design and deliver responses to need. Supports are available at universal, targeted, and tailored levels of need.
49. Universal system level supports become the foundation for more targeted and tailored responses to meet more specific or intensive needs of learners.
50. The focus of support at all levels is using evidence-informed initiatives and guidance to empower teachers with skills and resources to effect relational and social change for sustainable outcomes.
51. The Ministry also works with schools if they are unable to find an education placement for ākonga who have been excluded. The Ministry consults with ākonga, whānau, schools and other relevant parties to find an appropriate option to ensure ākonga are reengaged in education.
52. Supports for schools include:
 - Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) School-Wide - a whole of school approach to creating positive learning environments, currently being implemented in 889 schools across the country.

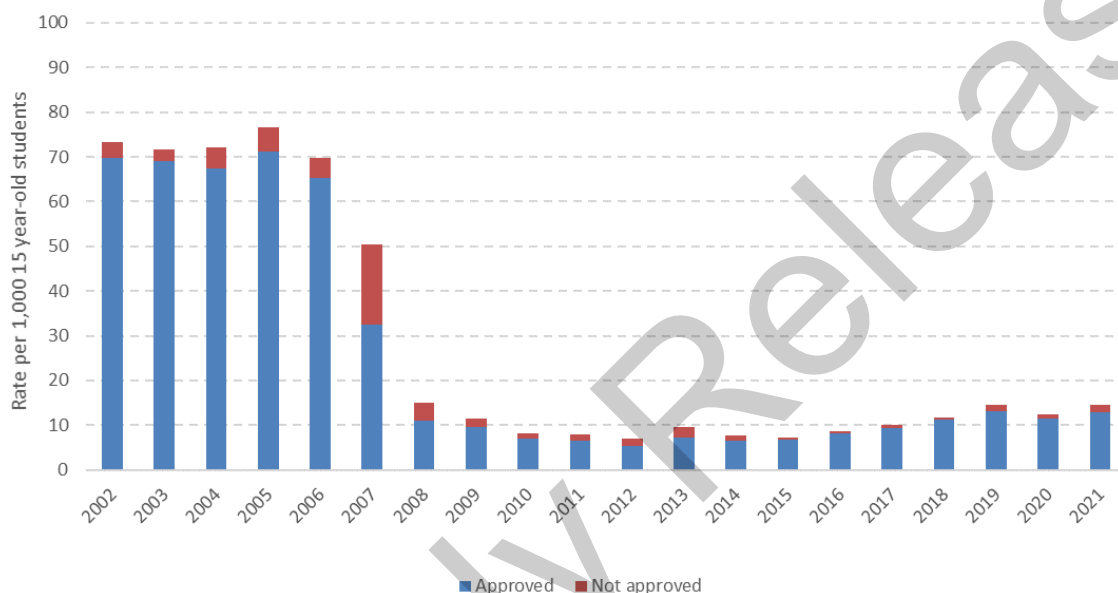
- Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) Restorative Practice - school approach to building and maintaining positive, respectful relationships across the school community.
 - Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) Incredible Years - providing advice, strategies, and support for parents/whānau and teachers.
 - Understanding Behaviour Responding Safely (UBRS) - training for schools.
 - Teaching for Positive Behaviour - a new resource which supports primary and secondary teachers and those among kura to understand what works in improving behaviour and increasing engagement.
 - Bullying prevention guidance - a guide for schools providing practical advice on how to prevent bullying and respond effectively when it does occur.
 - Interim Response Fund (IRF) - a short-term response for schools to address a significantly challenging behavioural event. It provides funding for a short-term response while a more comprehensive intervention plan is being devised.
 - Resource Teacher Learning and Behaviour (RTLb) - the Ministry also funds the national school-based RTLb service to support the achievement of students in Years 1-10 who have learning and/or behaviour difficulties.
 - Ministry of Education Learning Support specialist workforce, provide specialist support and guidance to whānau and educators to understand, plan and respond to learning and behaviour needs.
 - Te Kahu Tōi, Intensive Wraparound Service (IWS) - provides support to students for whom existing learning support interventions and services have been fully utilised and were unable to meet the child's needs.
53. There is however always a demand for more and different support. Considering this the Government has invested an additional \$1.1 Billion into learning support since 2018. This includes employing 180 more Ministry specialists. In addition, the Ministry now has 623 Learning Support Coordinator positions across Aotearoa.
54. The Ministry also distributed \$50 million in 2020/21 in Urgent Response Funding (URF) to support children and young people's attendance, re-engagement in learning and wellbeing after the COVID-19 lockdowns. Of the \$50 million, \$43.1 million of URF funding was distributed to support over 450,000 learners across 1,861 schools and kura.
55. While expanding Te Kahu Toi, Intensive Wraparound Service will alleviate some of the immediate pressures that schools are facing, we continue to work on our broader system of school-wide (universal), targeted, and tailored supports to promote positive behaviour in school.
56. The way we provide our behaviour services and supports is also changing. We are shifting away from exclusively focusing on individual students, and towards more locally led, flexible and preventative approaches. We are also reviewing our interventions for students who have high and complex learning support needs to make them more flexible.
57. We will continue to work with schools so that the resources available can be delivered in a way that has the greatest impact.

Early Leaving Exemption

58. The table of the early leaving exemption rates (per 1,000 15-year-olds), by ethnic group (2011 to 2021) is provided in Annex One.

59. In 2021, 781 early leaving applications were approved, with a rate of 13.0 per 1,000 15-year-old students. This was an increase from 2020 (11.4 per 1,000 15-year-old students) and the rate was similar to 2019 (13.1 per 1,000 15-year-old students) (See Figure 12 below).
60. Of these, 401 early leaving exemptions were approved for **ākongā Māori**.
61. **Ākongā Māori** continued to have the highest rate of early leaving exemption at 26.7 per 1,000 15-year-old students in 2021, an increase from 25.8 per 1,000 15-year-old students in 2020.
62. There were 43 approved early leaving exemptions for **Pacific students** in 2021.

Figure 12: Early leaving exemptions increased in 2021³

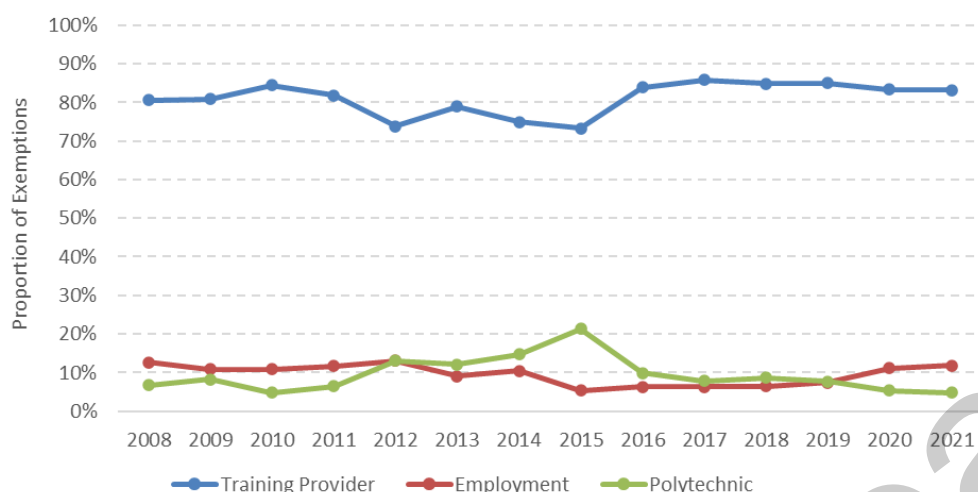


63. Approved applications are granted on the basis that students are moving into full-time employment, further education or training.
64. In 2021, the proportion of students who moved onto further education or training was similar to 2020. A training provider course continued to be the most common destination for a 15-year-old student who received an early leaving exemption, with the majority (83%) of early leavers choosing this pathway in 2021. A further 5% of students who received exemptions enrolled in polytechnics, and 12% went into full time employment.
65. The proportion of students who went on to full-time employment increased by 1.0 percentage point from 2020 (see Figure 13). This is in addition to the 4.0 percentage point increase between 2019 and 2020. COVID-19 may have played a part in some students with early leaving exemption opting for employment instead of continuing their education, to provide financial support their family⁴.

³ In May 2007, the Ministry of Education strengthened early leaving application and approval process in order to reduce the number of early leaving exemptions, and the associated social and economic disadvantages that face those students who leave school or kura early. Therefore, there was a significant decrease in approvals from 2008.

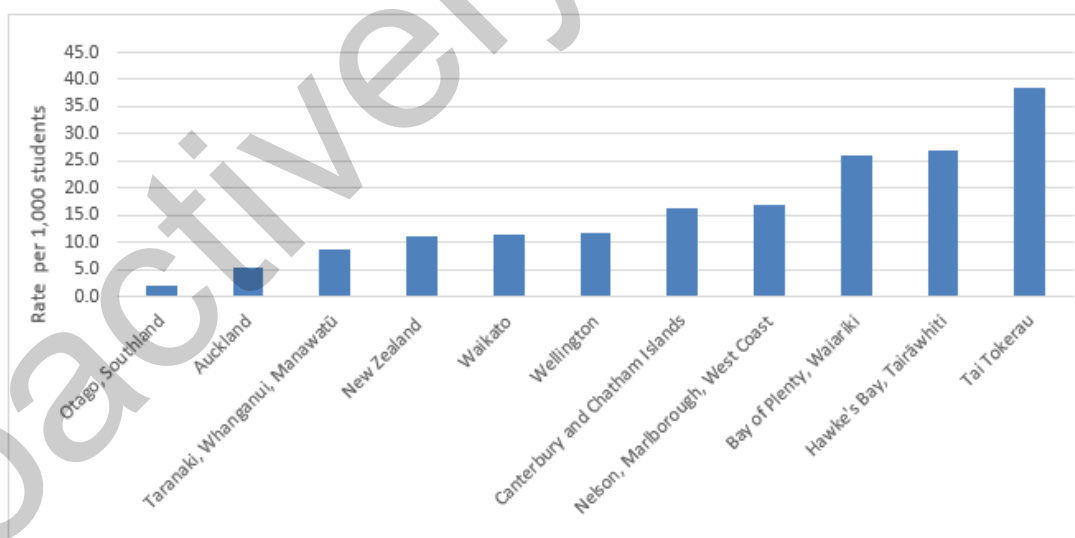
⁴ A research study 'Impact of COVID-19 on financial wellbeing' was done by Commission for Financial Capability (CFFC) surveyed 4,009 people on how their personal and household finances were affected by COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the survey data, 12% of households were in serious financial difficulty, 24% of households were in some financial difficulty. 25% of Māori and Pacific in this survey said their or their household's financial situation was bad or very bad. More information is available here: <https://cfc-assets-prod.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/public/Uploads/Research-2020%2B/COVID-19/CFFC-Impact-of-COVID-19-on-Financial-Wellbeing-Oct-2020.pdf>

Figure 13: The proportion of students who were granted an early leaving exemption and went onto full-time employment increased in 2021



66. In 2021, schools and kura in decile 1-2 and decile 3-4 experienced the highest early leaving exemption rate, at 21.6 per 1,000 15-year-old students, followed by schools and kura in decile 5-6, at 14.5 per 1,000 15-year-old students. Schools and kura in decile 9-10 continued to experience the lowest early leaving exemption rate, at 4.1 per 1,000 15-year-old students.
67. Tai Tokerau education region experienced the largest early leaving exemption rate (38.6 per 1,000 students) in 2021 and Otago, Southland education region the lowest (2.1 per 1,000 students) (see Figure 14).

Figure 14: Tai Tokerau had the highest early leaving exemption rate in 2021



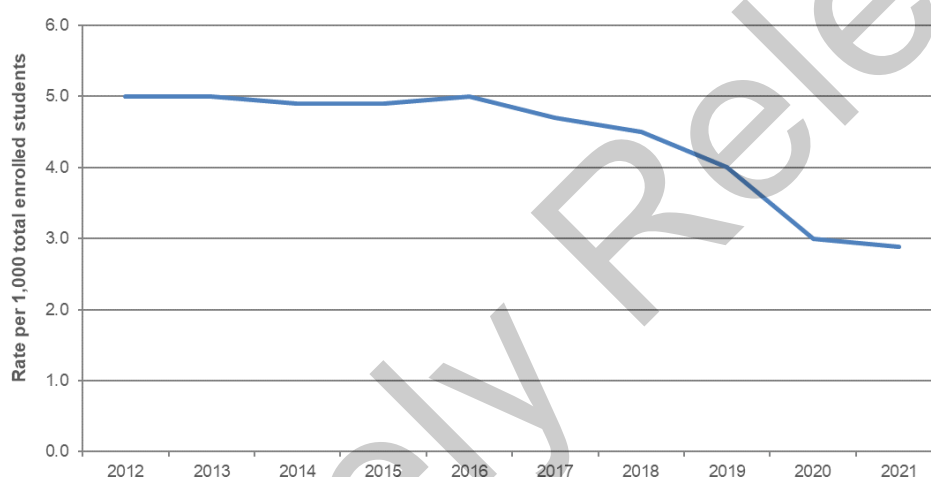
Transience

68. The table of the transience rates (per 1,000 students), by ethnic group (2011 to 2021) is provided in Annex One.
69. In 2021, 2,378 students changed schools or kura two or more times between 1 March and 1 November. Of the 2,378 transient students, 93% (2,202) changed schools or kura twice,

6% (154) changed schools or kura three times, and 1% (22) had four or more changes during this period.

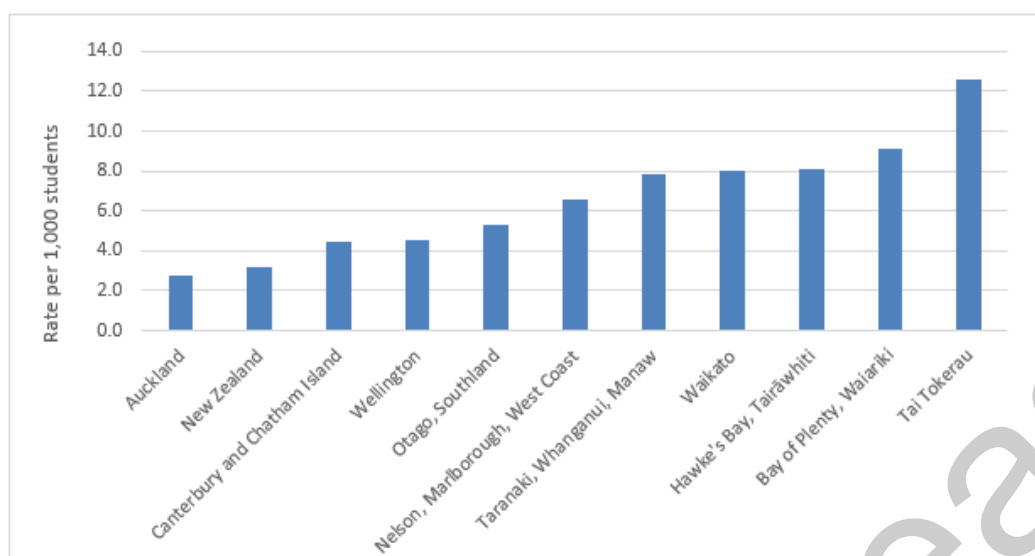
70. Nationally the rate of transient students in 2021 was 2.9 per 1,000 students. This is similar to 2020 (2.9 per 1,000 students) and a decrease from 2019 (4.0 per 1,000 students).
71. The transience rate for **ākongā Māori** was 6.3 per 1,000 students. This is a decrease from 2020 (6.9 per 1,000 students) and 2019 (9.3 per 1,000 students). Ākongā Māori continued to be more likely to change schools or kura than students of other ethnic groupings.
72. The transience rate for **Pacific students** was 2.9 per 1,000 students. This is a decrease from 2020 (3.6 per 1,000 students) and 2019 (4.9 per 1,000 students).
73. Since 2016, the rate of student transience has been steadily declining, from a high of 5.0 per 1,000 students in 2016 to 2.9 per 1,000 students in 2021 (see Figure 15).

Figure 15: Transience rate has been declining since 2016



74. In 2021, the transience rate for decile 1-2 schools and kura (12.0 per 1,000 students) was more than four times the rate for decile 9-10 schools and kura (2.8 per 1,000 students).
75. Across deciles, the transience rates declined consistently in 2021 with decile 1-2 schools and kura having the largest decrease of 1.8 per 1,000 students when compared to 2020.
76. The Tai Tokerau education region experienced the largest transience rate in 2021 (12.6 per 1,000 students) and the Auckland education region experienced the lowest transience rate (2.7 per 1,000 students) (see Figure 16).

Figure 16: Tai Tokerau had the highest transience rate in 2021



Next Steps

77. We plan to publish the student engagement data and indicator reports on the Education Counts website on 8 December.
78. A Frequently Asked Questions sheet is attached (Annex 3) and we will liaise with your office on the communications.

Annexes

- Annex 1: 2021 Student Engagement Data Summary
- Annex 2: Education Sector Indicator Definitions
- Annex 3: Student engagement data 2021: Communications Approach
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Annex One: 2021 Student Engagement Data Summary

Table 1: Number of stand-downs, by ethnic group (2011 to 2021)

Ethnic Group	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
European/Pākehā	6,958	6,783	6,274	5,707	5,483	6,075	7,119	7,971	9,204	7,728	8,906
Māori	7,626	7,154	6,660	6,340	6,362	6,863	7,718	8,532	9,496	7,751	9,133
Pacific	2,187	2,014	1,935	1,816	1,825	1,887	2,232	2,187	2,659	1,918	2,088
Asian	442	413	378	344	333	355	438	482	572	487	501
Other	385	348	274	265	205	187	226	278	351	303	352
Total	17,598	16,712	15,521	14,472	14,208	15,367	17,733	19,450	22,282	18,187	20,980

Table 2: Age-standardised stand-down rates (per 1,000 students), by ethnic group (2011 to 2021)

Ethnic Group	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
European/Pākehā	17.9	17.7	16.5	15.1	14.6	16.3	19.2	21.5	24.9	20.8	24.1
Māori	45.5	42.5	39.4	37.0	36.6	38.8	42.6	46.0	49.8	39.2	44.7
Pacific	30.1	27.7	26.9	25.2	25.2	25.8	30.2	29.3	35.1	24.6	26.2
Asian	6.6	6.1	5.5	4.9	4.6	4.6	5.4	5.6	6.2	5.0	4.9
Other	23.5	21.3	16.6	16.2	12.4	10.7	12.1	13.8	15.4	11.7	13.3
Total	24.7	23.6	22.0	20.5	20.0	21.4	24.4	26.4	29.7	23.6	26.8

Table 3: Number of suspensions, by ethnic group (2011 to 2021)

Ethnic Group	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
European/Pākehā	1,325	1,168	1,138	987	901	903	1,154	1,144	1,222	893	927
Māori	1,885	1,757	1,530	1,352	1,297	1,393	1,527	1,497	1,613	1,095	1,229
Pacific	389	320	308	282	317	325	359	338	351	217	202
Asian	56	50	53	31	65	39	53	48	49	33	48
Other	90	62	50	44	38	39	37	38	46	41	36
Total	3,745	3,357	3,079	2,696	2,618	2,699	3,130	3,065	3,281	2,279	2,442

Table 4: Age-standardised suspension rates (per 1,000 students), by ethnic group (2011 to 2021)

Ethnic Group	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
European/Pākehā	3.3	3.0	2.9	2.6	2.4	2.4	3.1	3.1	3.3	2.4	2.5
Māori	11.2	10.4	9.0	7.9	7.5	7.9	8.5	8.2	8.6	5.6	6.1
Pacific	5.3	4.4	4.3	3.9	4.3	4.4	4.8	4.5	4.7	2.8	2.5
Asian	0.8	0.7	0.8	0.4	0.9	0.5	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.5
Other	5.5	3.8	3.1	2.7	2.3	2.3	2.1	2.0	2.1	1.7	1.4
Total	5.2	4.7	4.3	3.8	3.7	3.8	4.3	4.2	4.4	3.0	3.1

Table 5: Number of exclusions, by ethnic group (2011 to 2021)

Ethnic Group	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
European/Pākehā	465	364	391	313	299	299	383	383	371	264	253
Māori	669	598	536	467	445	485	514	499	550	373	396
Pacific	137	120	104	105	106	107	127	125	122	56	63
Asian	7	12	20	7	20	8	12	10	14	8	10
Other	34	22	14	23	15	13	11	11	14	12	11
Total	1,312	1,116	1,065	915	885	912	1,047	1,028	1,071	713	733

Table 6: Age-standardised exclusion rates (per 1,000 students), by ethnic group (2011 to 2021)

Ethnic Group	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
European/Pākehā	1.4	1.1	1.2	1.0	0.9	0.9	1.2	1.2	1.2	0.8	0.8
Māori	4.5	4.0	3.6	3.1	2.9	3.1	3.3	3.1	3.3	2.2	2.2
Pacific	2.2	1.9	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	2.0	2.0	1.9	0.8	0.9
Asian	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1
Other	2.4	1.6	1.0	1.7	1.1	0.9	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.5
Total	2.1	1.8	1.7	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.7	1.6	1.6	1.1	1.1

Table 7: Number of expulsions, by ethnic group (2011 to 2021)

Ethnic Group	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
European/Pākehā	52	50	53	34	46	28	50	46	53	31	24
Māori	51	54	46	49	57	39	46	35	39	33	49
Pacific	34	23	26	18	32	38	30	28	35	32	15
Asian	16	4	3	7	15	6	7	8	7	6	10
Other	10	5	9	9	6	3	6	1	4	6	2
Total	163	136	137	117	156	114	139	118	138	108	100

Table 8: Age-standardised expulsion rates (per 1,000 students), by ethnic group (2011 to 2021)

Ethnic Group	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
European/Pākehā	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.6	0.9	0.5	0.9	0.9	1.0	0.6	0.5
Māori	2.7	2.8	2.4	2.5	2.8	1.8	2.1	1.7	1.9	1.5	2.3
Pacific	3.4	2.3	2.5	1.8	3.1	3.6	2.8	2.6	3.4	2.9	1.4
Asian	1.5	0.4	0.3	0.6	1.3	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.7
Other	3.8	1.9	3.6	3.7	2.4	1.1	2.2	0.4	1.4	1.9	0.6
Total	1.6	1.4	1.4	1.2	1.6	1.1	1.4	1.2	1.4	1.1	1.0

Table 9: Early leaving exemption rates (per 1,000 15-year-olds), by ethnic group (2011 to 2021)

Ethnic Group	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
European/Pākehā	4.8	3.8	5.9	5.3	5.3	6.9	7.1	8.8	10.6	8.6	10.8
Māori	15.5	13	15.6	13.9	14.7	16.7	19.9	24.4	27.5	25.8	26.7
Pacific	3.6	3.2	4.4	3	3.2	4.5	6.3	6.1	9.4	7.2	7.4
Asian	0.4	0.2	0	0.3	0.2	1	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.4
Other	1.6	2.3	1.6	2.5	1.6	3.1	5.6	5.2	2.8	2.6	5.7
Total	6.6	5.4	7.3	6.5	6.7	8.2	9.2	11.2	13.1	11.4	13.0

Table 10: Transience rates (per 1,000 students), by ethnic group (2011 to 2021)

Ethnic Group	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
European/Pākehā	5.0	3.4	3.4	3.1	3.2	3.3	3.2	3	2.8	2.1	2.3
Māori	13.6	11.6	11.7	11.8	11.4	11.7	10.9	10.2	9.3	6.9	6.3
Pacific	7.0	6.4	6.1	6.3	6.1	6.2	6	5.8	4.9	3.6	2.9
Asian	2.0	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.7	1.5	1.5	1.8	1.3	1	1.2
Other	4.3	3.7	4	2.9	3.7	2.9	3.1	2.4	2.3	2.2	1.2
Total	6.5	5.0	5.0	4.9	4.9	5.0	4.7	4.5	4.0	3.0	2.9

Annex Two: Education Sector Indicator Definitions

Stand-down

1. A stand-down results when a principal formally decides to remove a learner from school or kura for a period of up to five school days. A stand-down for any learner can total no more than five school days in any term, or ten school days in a year. Learners return automatically to school or kura following a stand-down.

Suspension

2. A suspension is the formal removal of a learner from a state or integrated school or kura until the Board decides the outcome at a suspension meeting. Following a suspension, the Board must meet within seven school days and make one of the following possible decisions:
 - a. Lift the suspension without conditions;
 - b. Lift the suspension with conditions;
 - c. Extend the suspension with conditions;
 - d. Exclude (if the learner is under 16);
 - e. Expel (if the learner is 16 or over).

Exclusion and Expulsion

3. Following a suspension meeting, the Board may decide to permanently remove a learner from attending its school or kura. If the learner is:
 - f. Under the age of 16, it is called exclusion;
 - g. Age 16 or over, it is called expulsion.

Age-Standardisation

4. Stand-downs, suspensions, and exclusions peak for ages 13 to 15, and expulsions are highest at age 16. We standardise for age so that fairer comparisons can be made between different groups. That is, age-standardisation removes any differences due to one group having a younger or older population than other groups, or if the overall age distribution has changed from year to year.

An age-standardised rate is one where all subgroups, for all years compared, are artificially given the same age distribution, so that different years and different areas can be more accurately compared.

The age distributions of learners in each subgroup and year have been standardised to (or weighted by) the set of 2021 age-specific rates for all New Zealand.

Expulsions occur only for students 16 years old and above, so the expulsion rate refers to the number of expulsions per 1,000 standardised for students aged 16 or over. Likewise, exclusions only occur for students aged 15 or under, so the exclusion rate refers to the number of exclusions per 1,000 standardised for students aged 15 or under.

Early Leaving Exemptions

5. Enrolment in school or kura is compulsory for all students aged between 6 and 16 years old. However, parents of 15-year-old students may apply to the Ministry of Education for an exemption from schooling based on educational problems, conduct, or the unlikelihood of the student benefiting from attending available schools or kura. Parents are required to give details about training programmes or employment that the student would move on to in the event of an early leaving exemption being granted.

Transient Students

6. A student is considered transient if they move school or kura twice or more over the period from the 1st of March to the 1st of November in the same year.

Has the rate of stand-downs been rising?

There was an increase in the age-standardised rates of stand-downs compared to 2020, however the rate is still lower than 2019. The age-standardised rates of suspensions, exclusions and expulsions were similar to 2020 and all lower than 2019. Two percent of student population were stood down in 2021. Of these 78% were stood down only once.

While stand-downs have increased overall between 2020 and 2021, from August to December 2021, the number of stand-downs was lower compared to the same period in 2020. This coincides with Auckland being at COVID-19 Alert Levels 3 and 4.

What are schools saying about the use of stand-downs?

Schools have confirmed there has been an increase in the small percentage of behaviour incidents that are very challenging. This relates to the increasing complexity in children and young people's lives, including the challenges of re-engaging with on-site learning post-COVID-19.

Stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions are a measure of a school's reaction to challenging behaviour. While one school may opt to stand-down a student over a particular incident, another school may not.

Stand-downs are never used lightly but can be used as a means to de-escalate a situation and support a student's return to the classroom. While schools may have found stand downs to be an effective method of managing student behaviour, it should be part of a wider proactive approach to address behaviour issues.

What reasons for students receiving a stand-down have increased?

The three behaviour types: smoking and alcohol, other harmful or dangerous behaviour and continual disobedience, account for 91% of the increase in stand-down cases between 2020 and 2021.

The largest increase in age-standardised rate was observed for stand-downs resulting from smoking or alcohol. The age-standardised rate for this behaviour category increased from 2.2 per 1,000 students in 2020 to 4.2 per 1,000 students in 2021. Stand-down cases due to smoking or alcohol make up 15.8% of all stand-down cases in 2021.

Further breakdown of this category indicates that the number of stand-downs due to smoking have more than doubled in 2021 compared to 2020, from 1,210 in 2020 to 2,865 in 2021. This increase accounts for 59% of the increase in stand-down cases between 2020 and 2021.

The other behaviour types that have seen a significant increase in stand-downs are *other harmful or dangerous behaviour* (an increase of 560 stand-down cases between 2020 and 2021) and *continual disobedience* (an increase of 331 stand-down cases between 2020 and 2021).

There has also been an increase in the frequency of vaping being mentioned in the *other harmful or dangerous behaviour* and *continual disobedience* categories, with about half of the increase in these categories linked to vaping behaviour.

We're hearing that vaping is becoming a more common problem. Is there any evidence of this in the data?

The data shows that for 75 percent of increase in stand-downs from 2020 to 2021 smoking or vaping was cited as part or all of the reason. We know that students who vape is a concern for our principals.

From May 2021 all schools, kura, kōhanga reo and ECEs were required to display 'no vaping' notices, in addition to the existing requirement to display 'no smoking' notices, under the Smokefree Environments and Regulated Products (Vaping) Amendment Act 2020.

Schools, kura, kōhanga reo, and ECEs were sent (free of charge) no vaping/smokefree stickers from the Health Promotion Agency Smokefree between 30 April and 3 May 2021 in order to meet this legislative requirement.

Work is continuing to educate our young people about the benefits of a smokefree and vape-free lifestyle. The [health and physical education](#) learning area of *The New Zealand Curriculum* contributes to the wellbeing of students beyond the classroom, particularly when it is supported by a whole of school or kura approach and the school or kura community. The health and physical education curriculum learning area includes opportunities for drug education, including the importance of being smokefree.

Classroom education is also supported by agencies such as [Ministry of Health](#), the [Health Promotion Agency](#) and [Smokefree NZ](#) who have a wide range of resources available to help raise the awareness and understanding of young people and their community about the risks of vaping. The ['Don't Get Sucked In'](#) website includes information and resources on vaping to encourage teens not to try vaping (or smoking) in the first place.

Why does the number of excluded students continue to decrease?

Schools and kura understand it is in the best interests of students to continue with their learning. School and kura leaders and teachers work closely with students and whānau to keep students attending and engaged in learning.

Our regional teams work with schools and kura on attendance plans and the available support (including early intervention and restorative practices) to help keep students engaged.

How over-represented are Māori and Pacific students?

Ākonga Māori continue to be stood down by schools at a significantly greater rate than any other ethnic group: 44.7 per 1000 students compared to 26.8 per 1000 nationally. Students of Pacific ethnicities were stood down at a rate of 26.2 per 1000 Pacific students.

Students of Pacific ethnicities are less likely to be suspended (2.5 per 1,000 Pacific students compared with 3.1 per 1,000 students nationally). Ākonga Māori are significantly more likely to be suspended at a rate of 6.1 per 1,000 ākonga.

These trends however are not universal. Māori students are less likely to be stood down or suspended than their European/Pakeha peers if they attend a decile 1 or 2 school.

A more positive trend is that the greatest reduction in suspensions by ethnicity since 2000 has been for Māori students (18.7 per 1000 Māori students in 2000 compared to 6.1 per 1000 Māori students in 2021).

Children and whānau, particularly whānau Māori, tell us that racism continues to impact their experiences and achievement in education. Every child in New Zealand has the right to learn and flourish free from racism and discrimination, this includes within our education system.

Does the data show an increase in physical assault on other students or staff?

Physical assault on students increased (1.3 percentage points) in 2021 (25.8%) compared to 2020 (24.5%) as the behavioural reason for exclusions.

Physical assault on staff increased (0.4 percentage points) in 2021 (7.6%) compared to 2020 (7.2%) as the behavioural reason for exclusions

Why do schools and kura keep using stand-downs, suspensions, expulsions and exclusions?

Under the Education and Training Act 2020, boards are required to ensure school and kura environments are physically and emotionally safe, and inclusive for everyone. Under the Act, a student can only be sent home if they are stood down or suspended for one of the specific reasons in the Act or if sent home for health reasons. It is illegal to send a student home on any other grounds.

A principal must follow a fair and legal process when considering if a stand-down or suspension is warranted. They must consider the personal circumstances of the student and the context in which the incident or behaviour happened.

Serious behaviour incidents in schools and kura are complex issues and have multiple causes. These issues require flexible, multi-faceted, and locally responsive approaches. If help is needed, the Ministry works alongside schools, kura and other agencies.

What is the Ministry doing to reduce the numbers of stand-downs, suspensions, expulsions and exclusions?

The Ministry has a number of initiatives to address these issues. These include the Attendance and Engagement Strategy, the High Needs Review and the review of Alternative Education.

It is important to note that stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions (SSEE) are not measures of student behaviour but measures of a school's or kura's reaction to such behaviours. Where one school may choose to suspend a student, another may not. Stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions, and expulsions should only be used by schools and kura as a last resort.

We want to encourage and support schools and kura to use reflective and restorative practices – asking what went wrong and why, how to repair any harm caused, and how to prevent it from happening again. The Ministry is also strengthening the role of parents and whānau in the rules and guidelines on physical restraint and extending the Community Learning Hubs.

One of our key focusses in updating the guidelines on SSEEs is to support ākonga and whānau participation in the SSEE process. Schools and kura are encouraged to consider a range of responses to fit the seriousness of the situation. They must work to reduce disruption to the student's education. This includes planning and support for their learning while they are away and return to school or kura. This also includes facilitating access to appropriate supports and services to help address the wellbeing needs of the young person.

What should parents do if they have concerns?

If parents, caregivers or whānau have concerns, they should talk to the principal or board of the school or kura. Te Mahau (the Ministry's regional offices) can also help.