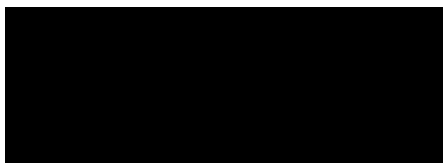





21 July 2021



Tēnā koe 

Thank you for your email of 24 June 2021 to the Ministry of Education requesting the following information over the last five years:

1. *The names of primary and secondary schools where bullying is alleged to have occurred*
2. *What bullying is alleged to have happened*
3. *The number of complaints at each school*
4. *What steps were taken by the board, and/or the Ministry*
5. *The outcome of each complaint*

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

Schools and kura in Aotearoa are self-governing and have autonomy over the approaches they take to address bullying, which means they can implement approaches that best suit their school or kura, community and context.

Schools are not required to collect or notify us about complaints of or suspected cases of bullying. Therefore, we do not collate the information you have requested. As such, I am refusing your request under section 18(g) of the Act, as the information requested is not held by the Ministry of Education and it cannot be transferred.

We have recently published a response to a previous Official Information request in which we included a table categorising complaints that the Ministry of Education National Office has received since 2016. One of the categories captured in that table was bullying. We have included this information for you, however, it is not a complete representation of all bullying complaints.

A copy of this response has been uploaded to our website and can be found here, with the aforementioned table on page 3:

<https://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/our-work/information-releases/responses-to-Official-Information-Act-requests/1260063-response.pdf>

More information on the Ministry of Education's work to support bullying prevention is provided below.

Bullying as an issue in Aotearoa and School Board objectives

We know that bullying in Aotearoa is a significant issue for children and young people and negatively impacts on student wellbeing and learning.

Bullying is defined as harmful behaviour that is deliberate, involves a power imbalance and has an element of repetition. It is a societal problem, influenced by our wider values and norms, and is not limited to schools and kura.

The Education and Training Act 2020 states that one of a board's primary objectives in governing a school or kura is to ensure that the school or kura 'takes all reasonable steps to eliminate racism, stigma, bullying, and any other forms of discrimination within the school.' Another primary objective for boards is that they provide a physically and emotionally safe place for all students and staff.

Ensuring that places of learning are safe, inclusive, and free from racism, discrimination and bullying is also a priority in the Statement of National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP) and the Tertiary Education Strategy (TES).

The Wellbeing@School survey

To support schools or kura to understand the extent to which bullying behaviours are occurring, the Ministry provides schools and kura free access to the Wellbeing@School survey toolkit, developed by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER). Schools can use the surveys to undertake a self-review of the systems and practices they have in place to provide safe, inclusive environments that deter bullying. This toolkit explores student and teacher perceptions and can be used to understand if bullying is occurring, what type and to what level this may be happening.

Bullying Prevention Advisory Group and the Bullying-Free NZ School Framework

The Ministry facilitates the inter-agency Bullying Prevention Advisory Group (BPAG). There are 17 members with representatives from across government and the education sector, including NZ Police, ACC, education sector unions, the Human Rights' Commission and Office of the Children's Commissioner.

Evidence shows that the best approaches to address bullying involve students, staff, whānau and communities working together, with a focus on fostering caring and inclusive cultures at places of learning.

The Ministry has worked with BPAG to develop the Bullying-Free NZ School Framework. This framework contains nine evidence-based elements that form part of an effective whole-school bullying prevention and response approach. This framework has been used to develop resources and information to support schools and kura to develop approaches that work for them. These resources are freely available on the Bullying-Free NZ website at <https://www.bullyingfree.nz/>. This site provides information for teachers, students, parents and whānau.

The Education Review Office (ERO) reviews the measures schools have in place to address bullying as part of their regular review cycle. In 2019, ERO found that schools with the most effective bullying prevention and response approaches were effective across all nine domains of the Bullying-Free NZ School Framework.

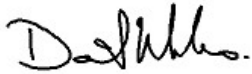
Bullying-Free NZ Week

The Ministry runs an annual nationwide Bullying-Free NZ Week and competition to raise awareness of bullying and how to create a safe, inclusive environment for students. This is usually held in May in conjunction with the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand's Pink Shirt Day.

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.

Nāku noa, nā



Dr David Wales
Poutohu Matua | Te Hāpai Ō Rāngai
National Director, Learning Support Delivery
Sector Enablement and Support