



18 November 2022

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 29 September 2022 to the Ministry of Education requesting the following information:

- *I am requesting data on the 10 schools with the highest number of bullying or assault reports?*
- *Could I please get the total number of bullying or assaults have the Ministry of Education received over the past 5 years?*
- *Also could I be provided with a breakdown by school, on how many of those reports have resulted in a suspension, expulsion, or a permanent exclusion.*

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

In accordance with section 15(1) of the Act, this letter is to advise you that a decision has been made to grant your request in part, detail of this decision is provided below.

I am providing the following data and supporting information related to bullying, please see below Tables One and Two.

We have identified data for instances of assault that the Ministry is aware of through stand-down, suspension, expulsion and exclusion data (SSEE). We are finalising this information for release and will provide an update on our progress in the coming week.

More broadly, schools and kura in Aotearoa are self-governing and have autonomy over the approaches they take to address bullying. This allows them to implement approaches that best suit their school or kura, community and context.

The Ministry therefore does not require schools to collect or share data related to incidents of bullying or assault. As such, complaints made to the Ministry regarding are unlikely to accurately reflect the number of bullying incidents occurring in New Zealand schools.

With this in mind, we are withholding school names sought in question one and two, under section 9(2)(ba)(ii) of the Act. This is to protect information, which is subject to an obligation of confidence, and if released would likely damage the public interest.

The Ministry strongly condemns simplistic rankings of schools based on these sorts of metrics because they say very little about school performance without taking into account the broader school and environmental context.



The table below presents the number of complaints received by the Ministry across all NZ schools where the nature of the contact includes bullying, reported by calendar year between 2017 to May 2022.

**Table One.**

Nature of Contact	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Bullying	143	287	256	137	100	33

The table below presents the number of complaints received by the Ministry across all NZ schools where the Nature of the contact includes bullying, reported by calendar year (May each year from 2017 to 2022).

**Table Two.**

Nature of Contact	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Bullying	14	19	34	5	9	10

**Caveats:**

- Data was extracted on 8 June 2022 from the Schools database
- Data is live and subject to change
- Cancelled complaints are excluded from this report

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 (ETA) 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' (section 127(1)(b)(iii) of the ETA). Another primary objective for boards is that they provide a physically and emotionally safe place for all students and staff (section 127(1)(b)(i) of the ETA).

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. Boards of schools and kura must have particular regard to the NELP, including in their strategic planning.

To support schools to understand the extent to which bullying behaviours are occurring in their schools, the Ministry provides schools with free access to the Wellbeing@School survey toolkit, developed by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research. These surveys can be used by schools to undertake a self-review of the systems and practices they have in place to provide safe, inclusive environments that deter bullying. These tools explore both student and teacher perceptions and can be used to understand the level and type of bullying occurring.

The Education Review Office (ERO) also looks at the measure's schools have in place to address bullying as part of their regular review cycle.



Current work to support bullying prevention and response in New Zealand schools  
The Ministry facilitates the inter-agency Bullying Prevention Advisory Group (BPAG) to provide leadership on bullying prevention. There are 17 members with representatives from across Government and the education sector, including New Zealand Police, ACC, education sector unions, the Human Rights Commission and the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

Evidence shows that the best approaches to addressing bullying involve students, staff, whānau and communities working together, with a focus on a whole range of social and environmental factors that help to foster caring and inclusive cultures at places of learning

The Ministry has worked with the BPAG to develop the Bullying-Free NZ School Framework. This framework contains nine key elements that evidence indicates need to be addressed as part of an effective whole-school bullying prevention and response approach. This framework has been used to develop a wide range of resources and information to support schools and kura to develop approaches that work for them, and these are freely available on the Bullying-Free NZ website. This site also provides information for students, as well as parents and whānau.

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.

The Ministry also runs an annual nationwide Bullying-Free NZ Week and Competition to raise awareness. This is usually held in conjunction with the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand's Pink Shirt Day, in May each year.

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.

Nāku noa, nā



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