



3/04/2023

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Tēnā koe

OIA: 1306093 – Further to OIA 1303331 – Bullying and Student Safety data

Thank you for your email of 6 March 2023 to the Ministry of Education requesting the following information further to your previous request for information on Orewa College since January 2021:

- 1. The number of individual bullying and student safety incidents that the ministry has had to be involved in over that period,*
- 2. As well as whether Orewa College is being treated as an outlier with regards to the number of these incidents.*
- 3. Finally can you please also provide information whether Orewa College is either being considered for or is under any kind of special measures (i.e. anything outside of BAU interactions) from the ministry to assist the board and leadership team in the running of the school in any way.*

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. This allows them to implement approaches that best suit their school or kura, community and context.

We have interpreted **part one** of your request, insofar as it relates to bullying, as the number of complaints that the Ministry has received relating to bullying, as the Ministry does not require schools to collect or share data related to bullying or safety incidents. Complaint information has been provided below as **Table One** below. Complaints made to the Ministry about bullying are unlikely to accurately reflect the number of bullying incidents occurring in New Zealand schools.

I am refusing **part one** of your request insofar as it relates to safety incidents, and **part two** of your request for how Orewa College compares to other schools' bullying and safety incident data, under section 18(g) of the Act, as the information is not held by the Ministry, and I have no grounds for believing that the information is either held by, or more closely connected to the functions of, another department or organisation subject to the Act.

Table One: number of complaints received by the Ministry across all NZ schools where the nature of the contact is bullying, reported by calendar year between 2021 – 2023*.

Nature of Contact	2021	2022	2023*
Bullying	101	103	13

Caveats:

- *2023 data is Year to Date.
- Data was extracted on 17 March 2023 from the Ministry's schooling database.
- Data is live and subject to change.

Regarding **part three** of your request, the Board of Orewa College demonstrates the governance and leadership capability to manage the school without additional support from the Ministry. School boards and leaders are, however, able to access further support when needed. You can find more information about the types of supports available on our website: <https://www.education.govt.nz/school/boards-information/boards-of-schools-and-kura/support-for-boards/>.

Additional information – Bullying in schools

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 measures that schools have in place to address bullying as part of their regular review cycle.

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 at <https://bullyingfree.nz/preventing-bullying/the-nine-elements-of-an-effective-whole-school-approach-to-preventing-and-responding-to-bullying/>. 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.

Other initiatives for safe, inclusive environments

Schools also have access to a range of other initiatives, resources and supports to help them provide safe, inclusive environments, including:

- **Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) School-Wide** – a whole of school approach to creating positive learning environments
- **Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) Restorative Practice** – a whole of school approach to build and maintain positive, respectful relationships across the school community.
- **PB4L Incredible Years programmes** - provide advice, strategies, and support for parents/whānau and teachers of 3–8-year-olds to help them address challenging behaviours and increase social and self-control skills.
- **Interim Response Fund** - a short-term response to schools to address a significantly challenging event. It provides funding for a short-term response while a more comprehensive intervention plan is devised.
- **Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTLb)** - the Ministry also funds the national school-based RTLb service to support the achievement and wellbeing of students in Years 1-10
- **Teaching for Positive Behaviour** – a resource to support teachers and kaiako to understand what works in supporting positive behaviour and increasing engagement.
- **Inclusive Education Guide to Behaviour and Learning** – practical approaches to strengthen behaviours that promote learning and minimise behaviours that disrupt and inhibit learning.

To help address online bullying, the Ministry supports Netsafe to provide online safety and digital citizenship education, advice, and support to schools. This includes information relating to online bullying, abuse, and harassment. Netsafe provides online resources, and has education advisers who work with schools.

Please note, 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 my decision on your request, in accordance with section 28 of the Act. You can do this by writing to info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or to Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Wales'.

David Wales
National Director Learning Support Delivery
Te Mahau | Te Pae Aronui