



23/02/2024



Tēnā koe

OIA: 1321574 – Suspensions related to drug use

Thank you for your email of 25 January 2024 to the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) requesting the following information:

- 1. How many school suspensions related to drug use occurred each year for the past five years, broken into type of school (secondary, primary) and type of drug?*
- 2. In 2023, who were the top 10 schools with the highest number of drug use suspensions?*

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

It is important to note that suspensions are not measures of student behaviour but measures of a school's reaction to such behaviours. What one school may choose to suspend for, another may not. The number of these events should not be used as a proxy measure for total student behaviour.

In response to **part one** of our request, please find attached as **Appendix A** the number of suspensions related to Drugs (including substance abuse), from 2019 to 2023. These have been broken down into primary students (years 1-8) and secondary students (years 9-13).

Where figures are lower than 5, I have withheld these under section 9(2)(a) of the Act, to protect the privacy of natural persons.

I note that schools choose where they place behaviour reasons for suspensions, and there may be variation in this. For example, 'Drugs (including substance abuse)' could also come under the category of 'Other harmful or other dangerous behaviour'.

In response to your request for the type of drug, this information is not recorded when suspensions are reported to the Ministry. I am therefore refusing this aspect of your request under section 18(g) of the Act, as the information requested is not held by the Ministry and I have no grounds for believing that the information is either held by or connected more closely with the functions of another department or organisation subject to the Act.

In response to **part two** of your request, I am withholding the top 10 schools with the highest number of drug use suspensions under section 9(2)(a) of the Act, to protect the privacy of suspended students if the school names were to be released.

As required under section 9(1) of the Act, I have considered the public interest in releasing the information withheld. I do not consider the public interest considerations favouring the release of this information are sufficient to outweigh the need to withhold it at this time.

Please note, we may publish this response on our website after five working days. Your name and contact details will be removed.

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.

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.

Nāku noa, nā

Julia Hardacre
General Manager, System Delivery
Te Mahau | Te Pae Aronui (Operations and Integration)