

## Briefing Note: Student attendance: release of 2019 and 2020 regular attendance data by term

<b>To:</b>	Hon. Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
<b>Cc:</b>	Hon. Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education Hon. Kelvin Davis, Associate Minister of Education Hon. Aupito William Sio, Associate Minister of Education		
<b>Date:</b>	17 March 2021	<b>Priority:</b>	High
<b>Security Level:</b>	In Confidence	<b>METIS No:</b>	1252154
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<b>Messaging seen by Communications team:</b>	Yes	<b>Round Robin:</b>	No

### Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

- Note** that 2019 Terms 1, 3 and 4 and 2020 Terms 1 and 3 regular attendance data are now ready for release.
- Note** that we propose to release this regular attendance data on 30 March 2021 via Education Counts website.
- Note** that we will liaise with your office on the timing of this release and communications required.
- Agree** to proactively release this Briefing Note.

**Agreed** / Not Agreed

## Summary

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Key highlights of the regular attendance data for the period from Term 1, 2019 to Term 3, 2020 are:

- a. In Term 1, 2020, the proportion of students/ākonga regularly attending school/kura was at a low point for the series of 50.5%. This level was impacted by the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- b. Across all terms, Māori and Pacific students/ākonga had lower rates of regular attendance than their peers, with regular attendance rates of 47.8% and 49.2% respectively in Term 3, 2020. The proportion of European/Pākehā and Asian students/ākonga attending school/kura regularly were 67.8% and 74.9% respectively.
- c. The regular attendance rate for Māori students in Māori medium schools dropped by 3.2 percentage points (45.6% to 42.4%) between Term 2 and Term 3, 2020, whereas the regular attendance rate for Māori students in other schools increased slightly.
- d. There is a strong gradient in regular attendance across deciles, with regular attendance being consistently higher in high decile schools and lower in low decile schools.
- e. The Tai Tokerau Education Region consistently has the lowest regional regular attendance rate. Regular attendance in Tai Tokerau in Term 3, 2020 was 49.3%.



Alexander Brunt

**Acting Deputy Secretary**

**Evidence, Data and Knowledge**

17/3/2021



Hon Jan Tinetti

**Associate Minister of Education**

17/3/2021

## Background

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1. The Ministry currently reports on and publishes two measures of student/ākonga attendance data:

- i. Weekly attendance is a snapshot of students physically present on site at schools for each day across a week. This reporting was in response to the COVID-19 environment and has commenced again for 2021.

Weekly attendance reporting is short turnaround: schools/kura have until the end of the Monday following data collection week to complete their attendance records if they are to be available for the weekly reporting.

In the latter part of 2020, the Ministry worked with schools/kura and Student Management System (SMS) vendors to introduce automated data collection. This has improved the response rate from lows of below 50% in mid-2020, to consistently being above 80%.

Participation in the weekly data collection is voluntary and only covers schools/kura that use a digital SMS. Data quality checking is done on this data but, due to the short turnaround needed, if there are quality issues with a school's file it is rejected.

The reports and data are published via the Education Counts website. They are used within the Ministry, including regional offices, to support schools and inform policy.

- ii. Term 2 regular attendance (covering regular attendance and irregular, moderate and chronic absence) is the cardinal measure of attendance. Our reporting focus is on Term 2 regular attendance as it is more stable than other terms and has fewer public holidays. Term 2, 2020 school attendance results were provided to you in December 2020 [METIS 1244449 refers].

Term 2 regular attendance data is collected from schools/kura at the beginning of Term 3. If there are quality issues with the data schools are informed and given time to fix any issues before the collection is finalised. Term 2 regular attendance data now usually achieves a response rate of around 90%. Participation in this collection, like the weekly collection, is voluntary and only covers schools/kura that use a digital SMS.

This collection provides a time series back to 2011 and is updated on an annual basis. A regular report is produced that describes the main features of the data. The report and data are published via the Education Counts website. Measures from this collection are used as Budget performance measures and reported in the Ministry's Annual Report.

2. In 2020 the Ministry also began collecting regular attendance data for the other three school terms for 2019 and 2020. Term attendance data is currently collected from schools/kura near the beginning of the term following the one of interest (i.e. collection of Term 1 data begins in Term 2).
3. All regular attendance data by term is reported back to schools/kura and then made available to the Ministry. In particular, the data is used by the regional offices in their discussions with schools/kura.
4. For school regular attendance across all four terms we report on four categories:
  - iii. Regular attendance, students/ākonga attending school/kura for more than 90% of available half-days.



- iv. Irregular absence, students/ākonga attending more than 80% and up to 90% of available half-days.
  - v. Moderate absence, students/ākonga attending more than 70% and up to 80% of available half-days, and
  - vi. Chronic absence, students/ākonga attending school/kura 70%, or less, of available half-days.
5. COVID-19 has impacted all regular attendance data in 2020, and the impact was reported in the Term 2, 2020 attendance results [METIS 1244449].
  6. A robust response rate from schools/kura for 2020 Terms 1 and 3 school attendance data has now been achieved (around 90%), and this data by term is ready for release. The 2019 Terms 1, 3 and 4 regular attendance data has a lower response rate than for the 2020 terms (around 70%) but provides a base to start the all-terms data series. The data has already been reported back to participating schools/kura and is being used by regional offices.

### Key highlights from 2019 and 2020 school regular attendance data by term

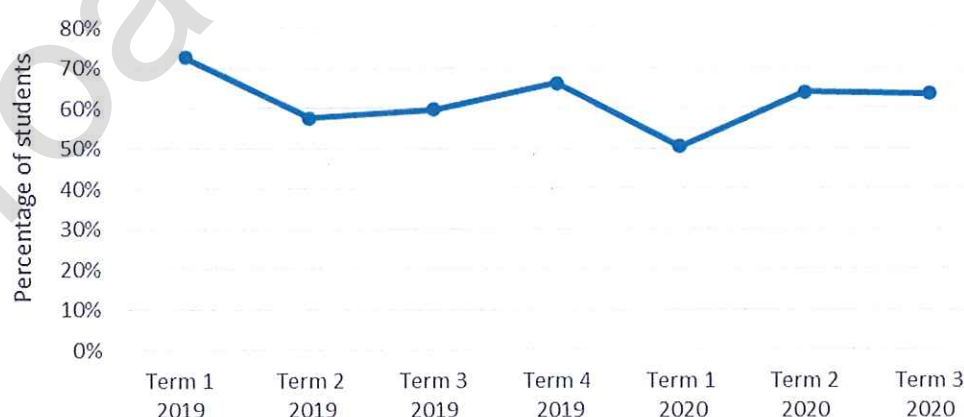
7. An in-depth analysis of 2019 and 2020 Terms 1 and 3 attendance data has been published in *He Whakaaro/Education Insights: How COVID-19 is affecting school attendance* ([He Whakaaro: How COVID-19 is affecting school attendance | Education Counts](#)).

8. The key points for regular attendance from Term 1 2019 through to Term 3 2020 are below.

#### *Nation-wide*

9. Regular attendance naturally varies from term to term. Because of this variation comparisons between the same term in different years are preferable to examine changes over time. As the time series accumulates the patterns will become more visible and statistical techniques will be able to be used to identify patterns in the data.

**Figure 1: Regular attendance rates recovered in Term 2 and Term 3, 2020 after a drop in Term 1, 2020 due to COVID-19**



10. During 2020 Term 1 there was a large decrease in attendance corresponding to the initial announcement of the national COVID-19 outbreak and the introduction of the Alert Level system. There were also some data recording issues as schools got used to the Ministry's

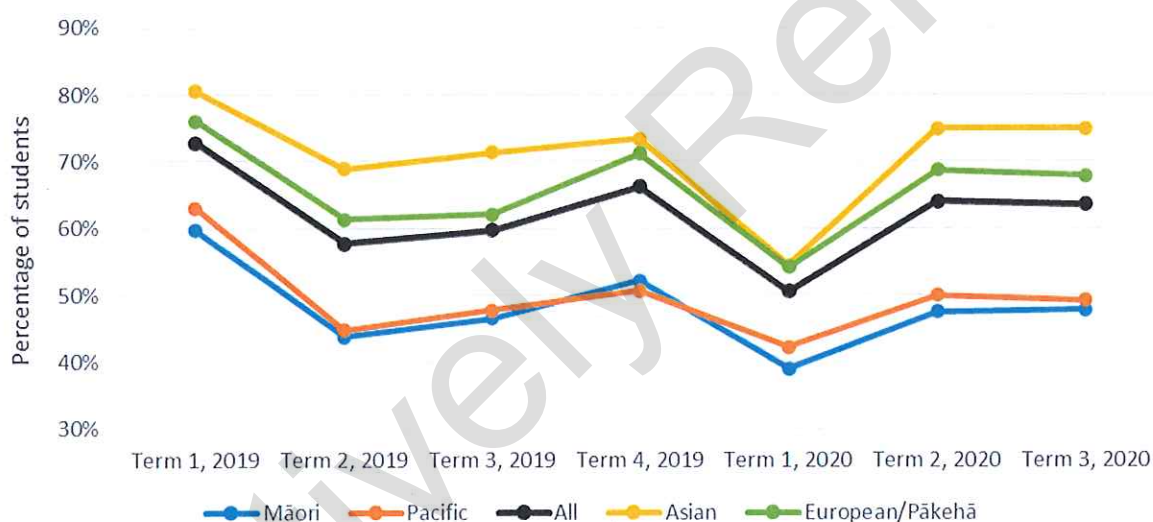
requests regarding how to record students who were not attending school on-site. The proportion of student/ākonga attending school/kura regularly was 50.5%.

11. Following the end of the national lockdown (14 May 2020, during Term 2), the percentage of students/ākonga regularly attending school/kura recovered, and even improved over 2019 levels. Attendance data over the last seven weeks of 2020 Term 2, when students were able to attend school in person, shows 64.0% of students/ākonga attended school/kura regularly. The regular attendance rate remained at a similar level (63.5%) in Term 3, 2020.

#### *Māori and Pacific students/ākonga*

12. The overall pattern of regular attendance was similar for all ethnicities, with a large drop in regular attendance in Term 1, 2020, followed by a recovery in Term 2, 2020 that was sustained into Term 3.

**Figure 2: Regular attendance rates recovered in Term 2 and Term 3, 2020 across all ethnicities**



13. There were slower recoveries in school/kura attendance after the national lockdown for Pacific and Māori students/ākonga, students/ākonga in decile 1 and 2 schools/kura, and students/ākonga participating in Māori medium.
14. Chronic absence is where students attend 70% or less of the half days in a term. In 2020 Term 3 Māori and Pacific students/ākonga experienced an increase in chronic absence to 14.7% and 14.5% respectively. In contrast, chronic absence rates for European/Pākehā and Asian students/ākonga were 4.9% and 3.3% respectively.

#### *Māori Medium*

15. Māori Medium schools/kura make up around 3.0% of total schools/kura who reported attendance data to the Ministry in 2020. The majority of Māori students/ākonga (81%) participate in English Medium Education (EME) followed by 15% in Mixed Medium Education (Mixed ME) and 4% in Māori Medium Education (MME).
16. Māori students/ākonga in MME had a much smaller drop in the level of regular attendance between Term 4, 2019 and Term 1, 2020 (47.2% to 43.8%), against the trend of a much larger drop in regular attendance for Māori students in other schools. However, Māori students/ākonga in MME experienced a 3.2 percentage point decrease in the regular attendance rate to 42.4% between Term 2 and Term 3, 2020, in comparison to Māori students/ākonga in Mixed medium schools who had a small increase of 1.9 percentage



points, or Māori students/ākonga in EME who maintained a similar level of regular attendance.

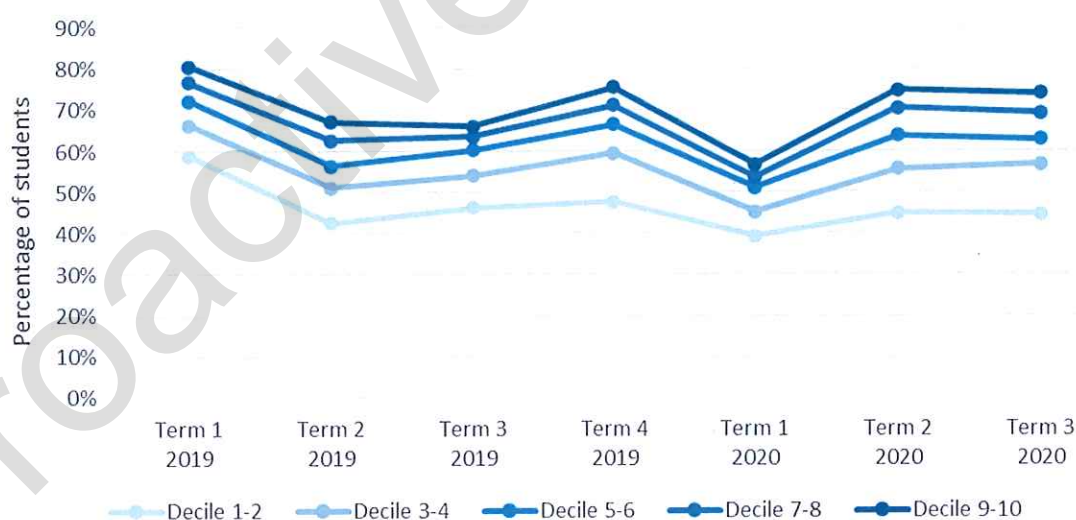
**Figure 3: Regular attendance rates recovered in Term 2 and Term 3, 2020 across all ethnicities**



#### By decile

17. As we see in the Term 2 regular attendance reporting and in the COVID-19 attendance analysis, there is a strong gradient in regular attendance across deciles, with regular attendance being consistently higher in high decile schools and lower in low decile schools. A similar pattern of increases and decreases is seen across terms for all decile groups, although the size of increases or decreases varies.

**Figure 4: Regular attendance is strongly associated with school decile**



#### By region

18. Most education regions remained at similar levels between Term 2 and Term 3, 2020. Nelson, Marlborough, West Coast region experienced a drop in regular attendance between Terms 2 and 3, 2020 of 9.5 percentage points (from 73.1% to 63.6%), with Otago, Southland having the next highest drop of 5.5 percentage points (from 72.0% to 66.5%). These two regions had the highest regular attendance rates in the country in Term 2, 2020.

We are seeking further explanation from our regional offices in relation to this change between the terms in the Nelson, Marlborough and West Coast region in particular.

19. The Canterbury and Chatham Islands region had the highest percentage of students attending school regularly in Term 3, 2020 (68.4%). The Tai Tokerau region had the lowest level of regular attendance at 49.3% in Term 3, 2020.

**Figure 5: Nelson, Marlborough, West Coast region experienced the biggest drop in regular attendance in Term 3, 2020**



## Communications and attendance data requests

20. The Ministry is experiencing increased interest in attendance data. In particular, we note that in providing an answer to a Written Parliamentary Question we advised that this termly attendance data would be available in March.
21. Questions and answers are attached to assist any communications required.

## Next Steps

22. We propose to release 2019 Terms 1, 3 and 4 and 2020 Terms 1 and 3 regular attendance data on 30 March 2021 via the Education Counts website.
23. Going forward each term's attendance data will be released as it becomes available and following our usual quality assurance and validation processes.
24. We will continue to provide a comprehensive briefing annually (in December) on Term 2 student regular attendance results prior to the release via Education Counts. This will include an indicator report and data tables.
25. An item will be included in the Education Weekly Update (EWU) on Term 1, 3 and 4 attendance results ahead of releasing each term's data tables on Education Counts, unless there are significant insights to bring to your attention.
26. In general, regular attendance data for each term will be released at the end of the following term. Table 1 shows the proposed schedule in 2021.

**Table 1: Schedule of releases of regular attendance data by term**

Month	Release	Advised by
April 2021	2020 Term 4 regular attendance data	EWU, unless there are particular insights to highlight
July 2021	2021 Term 1 regular attendance data	EWU, unless there are particular insights to highlight
December 2021	2021 Term 2 regular attendance report and data	Briefing Note, including a comprehensive report on attendance
December 2021	2021 Term 3 regular attendance data	EWU, unless there are particular insights to highlight
April 2022	2021 Term 4 data	EWU, unless there are particular insights to highlight

27. The weekly attendance reporting for schools and ECE in response to COVID-19 continues.

### Proactive Release

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28. We recommend that this Briefing is proactively released as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

### Annexes

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Annex 1: Communications Plan - Questions and answers



Proactively Released

Proactively Released