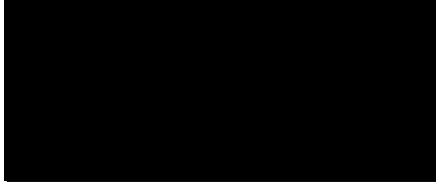




12 JUN 2018



Dear 

Thank you for your request for information about student assaults. Your request was transferred from the Ministry for Children Oranga Tamariki on 17 May 2018, and is for the following information:

*the number of complaints of sexual assaults allegedly perpetrated in school by students towards other students between 2012 and 2017 (inclusive)*

*Where possible, I would like this information broken down by:*

- year;
- geographic region;
- age of alleged victim and assailant
- complaints investigated
- complaints upheld

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

Schools are required to provide a safe physical and emotional environment for students. Responsibility for managing incidents of inappropriate sexual contact sits with Boards of Trustees in the first instance.

I am refusing your request in full under section 18(g)(i) of the Act, as the information is not held by the Ministry of Education, and we have no reason to believe it is held by another department or agency. There is no lawful purpose necessary to our functions which requires us to routinely collect such information about individual students.

Oranga Tamariki and the Police are the appropriate authorities to investigate allegations of abuse against children, including those which may have taken place in an education setting. When we are made aware of an allegation we ensure those agencies have been told and they will then make a judgement on what, if any, investigations or action they will take.

We have support mechanisms to assist schools and students to manage instances of challenging behaviour:

### **Stand downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions**

Principals have the authority to stand-down or suspend students in response to a wide range of concerning behaviours. Stand-downs offer a chance to reduce tension and give the student time to reflect on their actions. Used appropriately, a stand-down can be a mechanism for preventing escalation.

Schools decide how they categorise misbehaviour, and our data does not capture any incident's degree of severity. If a school does not stand down or suspend a student for assault, then we would not be informed.

There are fifteen behaviour categories that schools can choose from when they have stood-down, suspended, excluded or expelled a student. These categories are concerning behaviours including drug and alcohol abuse and violence that could disrupt the learning of the individuals concerned or the school environment. There is not a category for sexual assaults, but there are categories for sexual misconduct and sexual harassment which are listed below.

The number of students across New Zealand stood down, suspended, excluded or expelled for sexual misconduct in recent years is below:

	stand-downs	suspensions	exclusions	expulsions
2012	101	28	8	<5
2013	124	34	16	0
2014	123	40	15	<5
2015	124	28	9	5
2016	150	29	9	<5
2017	142	43	17	<5

The number of disciplinary incidents for sexual harassment across the same time period is as follows:

	stand-downs	suspensions	exclusions	expulsions
2012	80	31	<5	9
2013	84	16	<5	<5
2014	84	28	7	<5
2015	104	19	6	<5
2016	87	25	9	9
2017	95	19	<5	<5

### **Traumatic Incident Support**

Trained Ministry of Education staff based in our regional offices are available to provide advice and support to schools and ECE services affected in some way by a serious incident. Following a traumatic event, we can provide support to schools and ECE services so they can promote the well-being of staff and students, restore day-to-day routines and minimise any potential disruptions to learning.

You can find more information about traumatic incident management on our website, at <http://www.education.govt.nz/traumatic-incident-management-support>.

### **Managing challenging behaviour**

We offer a great deal of support to teachers and schools around students with behavioural difficulties. Our focus is on providing teachers and schools with effective training to manage challenging behaviour. We also work closely with other agencies, including the Ministry for Children Oranga Tamariki and the Ministry of Health, to support families and children to address some of the issues that contribute to behavioural difficulties.

We know schools face real challenges supporting children with complex learning and behavioural needs, which is why we have increased our support for students and schools over recent years. We are approving more applications through the Interim Response Fund, which is there to support schools to make a rapid response to a situation where challenging behaviour reaches crisis point. We are also supporting more students through our behaviour services. More information about the support we offer, can be found on our website at:

<https://education.govt.nz/behaviour-services-to-help-schools-and-students>.

Thank you again for your request. If you have any further questions about this issue, please feel free to contact our Media Team in the first instance, by emailing [Media@education.govt.nz](mailto:Media@education.govt.nz).

Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to refer this response to an Ombudsman. You can do this by writing to [info@ombudsman.parliament.govt.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.govt.nz).

Yours sincerely



Katrina Casey  
**Deputy Secretary**  
**Sector Enablement and Support**