



24 AUG 2018

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request of 27 July 2018 to the Ministry of Education's Media Team for the following information:

- *The number of threats of violence from a pupil/student to a staff member reported to the Ministry for the year 2016, for the year 2017 and for the 2018 year to July 25. In Rotorua schools*
- *The number of reports of actual physical violence from a pupil/student to a staff member reported to the Ministry for the year 2016, for the year 2017 and for the 2018 year to July 25. In Rotorua Schools*
 - *For the above please include what the violent acts or threats included or are classified as. And what staff member what threatened eg principal, deputy, teacher, support staff.*
 - *Including gender.*
 - *As well as what school this was at.*
 - *Please include all school levels.*

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

A state or state integrated school may consider the formal removal of a student through a **stand-down** for a period of up to five school days. A stand-down can total no more than five school days in a term, or ten days in a school year.

While stand-downs impact on actual opportunity to learn, they are also a response to a wide range of concerning behaviours that could disrupt the learning of the individuals concerned, and could be disruptive and unsafe for peers and adults in the school community. Stand-downs can offer an opportunity to reduce tension and reflect on the action which led to the stand-down. When used in appropriate circumstances, a stand-down can be a positive mechanism for preventing escalation. However, its use should be part of a proactive approach and should be kept to a minimum due to the disruption to a student's learning which is inherent in the mechanism.

A **suspension** is the formal removal of a student from a school until a school Board of Trustees decides the outcome at a suspension meeting. Following a suspension, the Board decides how to address the student's misbehaviour. The Board can either lift the suspension (with or without conditions), extend the suspension (with conditions), or terminate the student's enrolment at the school.

Exclusions and **expulsions** are subsets of suspension where an enrolment is terminated. If the student is aged under 16, the Board may decide to exclude the student from the school, with the requirement that the student enrolls elsewhere. This decision should be arrived at in only the most serious cases. If the student is aged 16 or over, the Board may decide to expel him or her from the school, and the student may or may not enrol at another school.

Again, this decision should be arrived at only in the most serious cases. Excluded or expelled students may face difficulties in enrolling in other schools.

Stand-downs and suspensions are measures of schools' reactions to behaviours, as much as they are a measure of the behaviours themselves. What one school may suspend for, another may not, and the data does not capture the severity of an individual action. As such, it would be inaccurate to use the data as a proxy measure for types of student behaviour.

A comprehensive view of age standardised data per 1,000 students is available by going to our website *Education Counts* at <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/indicators>, and choosing "stand downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions" from the drop down list.

Positive Behaviour for Learning

Our investment in tools allowing schools to manage behaviour, such as Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L), increased learning support and bullying prevention schemes increases the number of options schools have to respond to challenging behaviour.

PB4L gives students, teachers, families and whānau the tools they need to address problem behaviour, improve children's wellbeing and increase educational achievement. The New Zealand Council for Educational Research evaluated PB4L School-Wide between 2010 and 2013 and reported overall improvements in behaviour, including decreases in stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions, and decreases in class disruption. You can find more about PB4L at <http://pb4l.tki.org.nz/>. There are approximately 800 schools participating in school-wide PB4L.

You can find more information about behavioural services to help schools and students on our website, at the following address:

www.education.govt.nz/behaviour-services-to-help-schools-and-students.

Your request

I am refusing your request under section 18(e) of the Act, as the information does not exist. The Ministry does not routinely collect information specifically on assaults or threats of assault on staff by students. There is no lawful purpose connected to the functions of the Ministry which requires us to collect this information.

However, schools are required to tell us when a student is suspended or stood down for a number of reasons, including a physical or verbal assault on a staff member. This does not necessarily reflect the actual number of physical or verbal assaults, as schools may have chosen to respond to such incidents in other ways. Tables showing the number of disciplinary events for these reasons is attached to this letter as **Appendix A**.

A table showing the aggregate number of disciplinary actions between 1 January 2016 and 31 July 2018, broken down by school is attached to this letter as **Appendix B**. Some information has been withheld from this table under section 9(2)(a) of the Act, to protect the privacy of natural persons.

Thank you again for your request. If you have any further questions about this issue, please feel free to contact the Ministry's Media Team at Media@education.govt.nz.

Section 28(3) of the Act gives you the right to refer my response to an Ombudsman. You can do this by emailing info@ombudsman.parliament.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Katrina', written over the printed name.

Katrina Casey
Deputy Secretary
Sector Enablement and Support

cc: Ezra Schuster, Director of Education Bay of Plenty/Wairariki

Appendix A

The number of students in Rotorua District **stood down** or **suspended** due to violence to a staff member between 1 January 2016 – 25 July 2018

Disciplinary actions for **verbal assaults on staff**

	Stand downs	Suspensions
2016	21	9
2017	30	3
2018 (to 25 July)	13	2

Disciplinary actions for **physical assaults on staff**

	Stand downs	Suspensions
2016	7	2
2017	16	4
2018 (to 25 July)	4	0

Notes

- Data for 2018 was extracted on 31 July 2018, and as such is live and subject to change. We do not recommend using it for comparative purposes with other years, or to predict the number of actions for the full year.
- This data does not include international fee paying students, student aged 19 or over, and private students.
- The data refers to the number of events, not the number of students involved.

Appendix B

Aggregate number by school of stand downs or suspensions for verbally or physically assaulting a staff member, between 1 January 2016 and 31 July 2018

	Verbal assault on staff		Physical assault on staff	
	Suspensions	Standdowns	Suspensions	Standdowns
Aorangi School		x		x
Glenholme School		x		x
Horohoro School		x		x
John Paul College		x		
Kaitao Intermediate	x	x		x
Kawaha Point School		9		x
Kea Street Specialist School				x
Lynmore Primary School			x	x
Mokoia Intermediate	x	6		x
Ngakuru School				x
Otonga Road School				x
Reporoa College	x	x		
Reporoa School			x	
Rotokawa School		x		
Rotorua Boys' High School		9		
Rotorua Girls' High School	x	20	x	x
Rotorua Intermediate	x	x	x	
Rotorua S D A School		x		
Selwyn School		x		5
Sunset Primary School			x	
Westbrook School	x			
Western Heights High School		x		x
Western Heights Primary School		x		x

Notes

- Cells with 'x' denote a number under five which has been withheld under section 9(2)(a) of the Act to protect the privacy of the staff and students involved.
- Data for 2018 was extracted on 31 July 2018, and as such is live and subject to change. We do not recommend using it for comparative purposes with other years, or to predict the number of actions for the full year.
- This data does not include international fee paying students, student aged 19 or over, and private students.
- The data refers to the number of incidents, not the number of students.