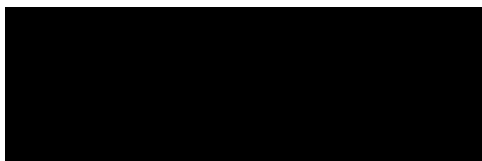




06 NOV 2018



Dear 

Thank you for writing to the Ministry of Education on 1 October 2018 to request the following information about bullying in New Zealand schools:

- *Does the MoE know what percentage of NZ children are bullied at school?*
- *Where does NZ sit in the world regarding school bullying?*
- *How many students were stood down, suspended, excluded and expelled for bullying each year in the five years between 2013-2017?*
- *How many incidents in the five years between 2013-17 involved Police intervention or were referred to Police?*
- *How many school bullying incidents resulted in hospitalisations?*
- *How many school bullying incidents resulted in the child's death?*
- *How many school staff each year in the five years between 2013-2017 were disciplined for bullying students?*
- *How many complaints were received by schools regarding bullying in the five years between 2013-17?*
- *Which 10 schools reported the most instances of bullying in the five years between 2013-2017?*
 - *What are their locations and deciles?*
- *Which 10 schools reported the most instances of bullying in NZ in the given years between 2013-2017 as a percentage of their student numbers?*
 - *What are their locations, deciles and roll numbers?*
- *What policies do schools have to follow to address bullying?*
- *What programmes has the MoE put in place to combat school bullying?*

On 15 October 2018, we transferred your request for information about school staff disciplined for bullying students under section 14(b)(i) of the Act, as the information is not held by the Ministry, but we have good reason to believe it is held by the Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand.

The remaining parts of your request have been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

The percentage of NZ children bullied at school, and bullying rates in New Zealand relative to the rest of the world

The responsibility for managing student behaviour sits with schools on a regular basis, and we don't collect this data on a regular basis.

As highlighted in the 2014/15 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the OECD's 2015 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) Wellbeing Report, rates of bullying in New Zealand schools are high compared with many other countries.

The 2015 PISA study reported that overall, 74% of New Zealand students stated they never or almost never experienced bullying at school, and 26% had experienced at least one bullying behaviour a few times a month or more.

The most common forms of bullying identified by New Zealand students in the PISA report were: "other students made fun of me" (17 percent), "other students left me out of things on purpose" (13 percent), and "other students spread nasty rumours about me" (13 percent). Seven percent of New Zealand students reported being physically bullied.

Several other countries reported similar levels to New Zealand students, for example Singapore (25 percent), Australia (24 percent), the United Kingdom (24 percent) and Canada (20 percent). For each of the bullying behaviours measured by PISA, New Zealand students reported higher prevalence than the OECD average.

The OECD developed an index measure of bullying using the PISA data, which reported 18% of New Zealand students were considered frequently bullied. On this index, New Zealand has the second highest reported bullying rate among the countries in the OECD.

Stand downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions for bullying between 2013 and 2017

I am refusing this part of your request under section 18(e) of the Act, as the information does not exist. We do not use bullying as a category to measure disciplinary events undertaken by schools.

Age standardised data on stand downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions is available from the Ministry's *Education Counts* website, by going to <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz> and searching for "stand downs" in the top box.

I recommend you do not use existing categories as a proxy for bullying behaviour. Not all verbal or physical aggression is bullying. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying. These behaviours may be as serious, but need different responses.

Bullying incidents between 2013 and 2017 involving Police

In the 12 months ending August 2018, Police responded to 39 incidents of bullying of children and young persons, however it is not recorded where these events occurred. Detailed information is available from <http://policedata.nz> using the table builder function under the "Demand and Activity" section.

Bullying incidents involving hospitalisation or the death of a child

In preparing our response, we consulted the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Justice, the two agencies most likely to hold this information. Both agencies advised that they do not collect this information.

I am therefore refusing these parts of your request under section 18(g)(i) of the Act, as the information is not held by the Ministry, and we have no reason to believe this is held by another agency.

Complaints received by schools, and instances of bullying among schools between 2013 and 2017

I am refusing these parts of your request under section 18(e) of the Act, as the information requested does not exist. Schools are not required to provide general information about complaints they have received.

Measures for schools to address bullying

State and state integrated schools are required by law to provide a physically and emotionally safe environment for students.

Boards of trustees, school leadership and staff, students, parents, whānau and communities all need to work together to successfully address bullying. The best way to prevent bullying is to adopt a whole-school approach that emphasises student wellbeing and inclusiveness, and values diversity.

Schools are responsible for setting and administering their own student behaviour management policies, including bullying, to help meet their obligation of providing a safe physical and emotional environment for their students. All schools should have a policy that defines bullying and sets out how the school community will address it, in order for them to ensure a safe physical and emotional school environment.

Schools boards have wider legal obligations relating to bullying. For example, the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015, which requires a proactive approach to keeping people safe from harm, and the Harmful Digital Communications Act 2015 to deter, prevent and mitigate harm caused to individuals by digital communications, including cyber-bullying.

The Education Review Office (ERO) evaluates how schools are complying with legal obligations, including inspecting the school's policies and procedures on the provision of a physically and emotionally safe environment for all students and staff. This includes a specific focus on bullying.

In a sample of school reviews from 2017, ERO found that 92% of school boards had anti-bullying policies, processes and programmes in place for students. All but one school had procedures, policies and guidelines on internet safety.

Ministry of Education support for schools

Bullying Prevention Advisory Group (BPAG)

We are committed to ensuring action is taken to reduce bullying.

BPAG is an interagency group chaired by the Secretary for Education, Iona Holsted, which provides joined-up cross-sector leadership to address bullying in schools. BPAG is a collaboration of 18 organisations with representatives from across the education, health, justice and social sectors, as well as internet safety and human rights advocacy groups. The Online Safety Advisory Group (chaired by Netsafe) is a sub-group of BPAG.

BPAG has looked at 'what works' in bullying prevention. It found that a combination of key elements, rather than a single programme, was most likely to prevent and reduce bullying. In response, the Bullying-Free NZ School Framework was developed with nine core components for an effective school-based bullying prevention approach.

We have used this framework to develop resources and guidance for schools, including the centralised www.bullyingfree.nz website. This website enables access to, and sharing of, a range of information, such as the Bullying-Free NZ School Toolkit. The toolkit promotes best practice approaches to bullying prevention, including a parents' pack, a guide for boards of trustees, and training modules for school staff.

We have also used the annual nationwide Bullying-Free NZ Week, held in conjunction with the Mental Health Foundation's Pink Shirt Day, to raise awareness of how to prevent and respond to bullying in schools. School and student engagement in the Week is encouraged through the Bullying-Free NZ Awards, which recognise student-led anti-bullying activities.

We are continuing to develop resources to support schools to effectively facilitate and sustain their individual anti-bullying approaches, with a particular emphasis on connecting and involving children and young people in bullying prevention solutions.

Wellbeing@School (W@S)

Collecting data is an important component of a successful bullying prevention approach. All schools have free access to the Wellbeing@School (W@S) survey tools, available from <https://www.wellbeingatschool.org.nz>.

These tools enable schools to explore student and teacher perceptions about the extent of aggressive and bullying behaviours in their school. They can then use this data to understand the level and type of bullying which may be occurring, and to assess whether their existing efforts to reduce bullying are effective.

Between 2013 and 2017, W@S milestone reports have shown a general decrease in the number of students reporting weekly experiences of bullying behaviour (from around 16% to 13%). The number of students reporting feelings of belonging and safety at school are generally increasing.

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.Team@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.

Yours sincerely,



Katrina Casey
Deputy Secretary
Sector Enablement and Support