



14 February 2020

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for writing to the Ministry of Education on 7 January 2020 to request the following information:

- *the number of pupils stood down, suspended, excluded and expelled in Otago and Southland schools for 2019; and what those disciplinary measures were for*

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

Schools are required to provide safe physical and emotional environments for students by developing comprehensive, local approaches to promoting positive behaviour and wellbeing.

Evidence shows positive behaviour can be learned. Our Learning Support teams work with schools to support individual students with challenging behaviour through working with young people and their whānau to assess individual needs and design tailored support. The support can draw on the expertise from psychologists, specialist teachers and speech and language therapists. Our Learning Support teams also work with schools to develop a long-term school-wide capability to promote positive behaviour for all students.

We have a number of additional support systems in place, including:

- **Teaching for Positive Behaviour**, which support teachers to understand and use effective practices that enhance students' behaviour, engagement, participation, and learning.
- **Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L)**, which helps New Zealand schools address problematic behaviour and improve well-being and learning.
- **Understanding Behaviour – Responding Safely**, a training programme developed for New Zealand schools focusing on preventative and de-escalation techniques
- The **Resource Teacher: Learning and Behaviour (RTLb)** service, which supports clusters of schools to develop whole school behaviour management strategies.
- **He Māpuna te Tamaiti: Supporting Social and Emotional Competence in Early Learning** which is a resource developed in 2019 to support kaiako to understand and draw on effective evidence-based practices that enhance behaviour, engagement, participation, and learning.
- The Ministry has also released a rewrite of the online **Behaviour and Learning Guide** on our website [www.inclusive.tki.org.nz](http://www.inclusive.tki.org.nz). The primary audience for the guide is school teachers.

## Stand downs and suspensions

Stand-downs and 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.

A **stand-down** is the removal of a student by a school Principal, for a period of up to five days in a school term, or a total of ten school days in a year. Stand-downs can offer an opportunity to reduce tension and reflect on the action which led to the stand-down.

Used appropriately, 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 student's learning which is inherent in the mechanism.

A **suspension** is the formal removal of a student from a state or state-integrated school on a temporary basis until the school's Board of Trustees decides the final outcome at a meeting.

A suspension has three possible outcomes. If a Board decides to terminate a student's enrolment, they can **exclude** a student aged under 16 or **expel** a student over 16. It can also allow the student to return to school, with or without conditions; in 2019, 67% of students in Otago, and 64% in Southland returned to school after their suspension concluded.

## Your request

The information you have requested is attached to this report. **Appendix A** contains data about stand downs and suspensions in the Otago region, and **Appendix B** contains data about stand downs and suspensions in the Southland region.

It's important to note the following:

- the numbers referred to in the tables in the appendices are the number of cases, not the number of students
- the exclusions and expulsions data in the tables in the appendices is a breakdown of suspension data. For example, a student who is expelled will be counted twice: once in the suspensions column, and again in the expulsions column
- our data does not record the seriousness of any case. Schools make their own decisions about the use of these actions, and set their own thresholds for acceptable behaviour.
- Values less than five have been concealed to protect the privacy of students involved.

Thank you again for your request. If you have any further questions about this issue, we recommend you contact the Ministry's Media Team in the first instance, at [media@education.govt.nz](mailto:media@education.govt.nz).

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

Nāku noa, nā



Katrina Casey

**Deputy Secretary**

**Sector Enablement and Support**

cc Julie Anderson **Director of Education for Otago and Southland**

# Appendix A

## Stand downs and suspensions from Otago schools in 2019

	stand-downs	suspensions	→ outcomes of suspension cases		
	total number of cases	total number of cases	student excluded	student expelled	Board agreed to the student's return to school
Behavioural reason:					
Alcohol	57	< 5	< 5	0	< 5
Arson	5	< 5	< 5	0	0
Continual Disobedience	162	25	7	0	18
Drugs (Including Substance Abuse)	20	32	5	< 5	25
Other Harmful or Dangerous Behaviour	125	22	< 5	< 5	18
Physical Assault on Other Students	369	36	16	< 5	19
Physical Assault on Staff	93	16	6	0	10
Sexual Harassment	< 5	0	0	0	0
Sexual Misconduct	< 5	< 5	< 5	0	< 5
Smoking	20	6	< 5	0	< 5
Theft	36	0	0	0	0
Vandalism	17	< 5	< 5	0	< 5
Verbal Assault on Other Students	33	< 5	0	0	< 5
Verbal Assault on Staff	122	12	< 5	0	9
Weapons	< 5	< 5	< 5	0	< 5
<b>Grand totals</b>	<b>1069</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>&lt; 5</b>	<b>109</b>



# Appendix B

## Stand downs and suspensions from Southland schools in 2019

	stand-downs	suspensions	outcomes of suspension cases		
	total number of cases	total number of cases	student excluded	student expelled	Board agreed to the student's return to school
Behavioural reason:					
Alcohol	35	8	< 5	0	7
Arson	5	< 5	0	0	< 5
Continual Disobedience	159	20	10	0	10
Drugs (Including Substance Abuse)	28	9	< 5	0	6
Other Harmful or Dangerous Behaviour	86	13	5	0	8
Physical Assault on Other Students	200	24	10	0	14
Physical Assault on Staff	42	5	0	0	5
Sexual Harassment	< 5	0	0	0	0
Sexual Misconduct	< 5	< 5	< 5	0	0
Smoking	22	0	0	0	0
Theft	12	< 5	0	0	< 5
Vandalism	13	< 5	0	0	< 5
Verbal Assault on Other Students	21	0	0	0	0
Verbal Assault on Staff	87	< 5	< 5	0	< 5
Weapons	8	0	0	0	0
<b>Grand totals</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>54</b>