

Report on Stand-downs, Suspensions, Exclusions & Expulsions for 2003

Kia ora koutou katoa.

This is the sixth report on the system of suspensions and stand-downs in New Zealand schools that was put in place in July 1999 and is the fourth report for a full school year, the first being for 2000.

Although statistics for stand-downs and suspensions are important as indicators of a form of behaviour management, they do not reflect the wide range of interventions that are used in schools in an endeavour to ensure that students are focussed on their learning in a positive, safe and secure environment. The use of stand-downs and suspensions is seen as a last resort when other options have not proved to be successful. Schools should continue to use this form of discipline as infrequently as possible.

A key finding of this report is that during this period, while stand-downs continue to rise, the number of suspension cases has reduced. Nine regions had an increase in the rate of stand-downs per 1,000 students, two remained the same and six regions showed a reduction. More significantly, eight regions had a reduction in suspensions per 1,000 students, two remained the same, and only two showed an increase. The use of stand-downs is the preferred method of dealing with student behaviour rather than suspensions. This is a short-term measure, controlled solely by the school, allowing a problem to be dealt with quickly. This enables a student to return to the classroom as soon as possible.

The Suspension Reduction Initiative (SRI), described later in this report, continues to be successful with the number of suspensions of Maori students in the SRI schools continuing to fall

In areas of New Zealand where the Ministry of Education is providing support for specific programmes, there is a levelling-off or reduction in the number of suspension cases. Schools in the West Coast region recorded an increase in the rate of stand-downs from 2002 (from 37 per 1,000 students to 45 per 1,000 students) but a decrease in suspensions (from 13 per 1,000 students to 10 per 1,000 students). Northland schools continue their positive approach to managing student behaviour with stand-down cases decreasing from 13 per 1,000 students in 2002 to 10 per 1,000 in 2003. Suspension cases remained at 12 per 1,000 students for 2003.

There is an increase in the work in schools attempting to address the needs of individual students so as to maximise student engagement in their learning programmes. Early intervention when dealing with behaviour problems has meant many schools are finding successful alternatives to suspensions. The Suspension Reduction Initiative and the Innovations Funding Pool are examples of how this can be achieved. An examination of successful school case studies may assist those schools having difficulty when investigating alternatives to their present discipline procedures.

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Report Coverage

This report is based on the Ministry's Stand-down and Suspension database, which was developed in July 1999, after the introduction of the Education (Suspension) Rules 1999. Since those regulations introduced stand-downs for the first time, statistics prior to mid-1999 are not comparable. The first report under the current system was released in September 2000, covering the July 1999 to June 2000 period. The second report covered the period 1 January to 31 December 2000, the third report covered the 1 January 2001 to 30 June 2001 period and the fourth report covered the period 1 January 2001 to 31 December 2001. This latest report covers the 1 January 2003 to 31 December 2003 period, and is based on data as at 20 February 2004.

Definitions

Stand-down is the formal removal of a student from school for a specified period. Stand-

downs of a student can total no more than 5 school days in any term, or 10 days in a school year. Following stand-downs, students return automatically to school.

Suspension is the formal removal of a student from school until the board of trustees decides the outcome at a suspension meeting. Following a suspension the board may decide to lift the suspension with or without conditions, to extend the suspension, or in the most serious cases, to either exclude or expel the student.

Exclusion means the formal removal of a student aged under 16 from the school, and the requirement that the student enrol elsewhere.

Expulsion means the formal removal of a student aged 16 or over from school. He or she may enrol in another school.

Understanding stand-downs and suspensions.

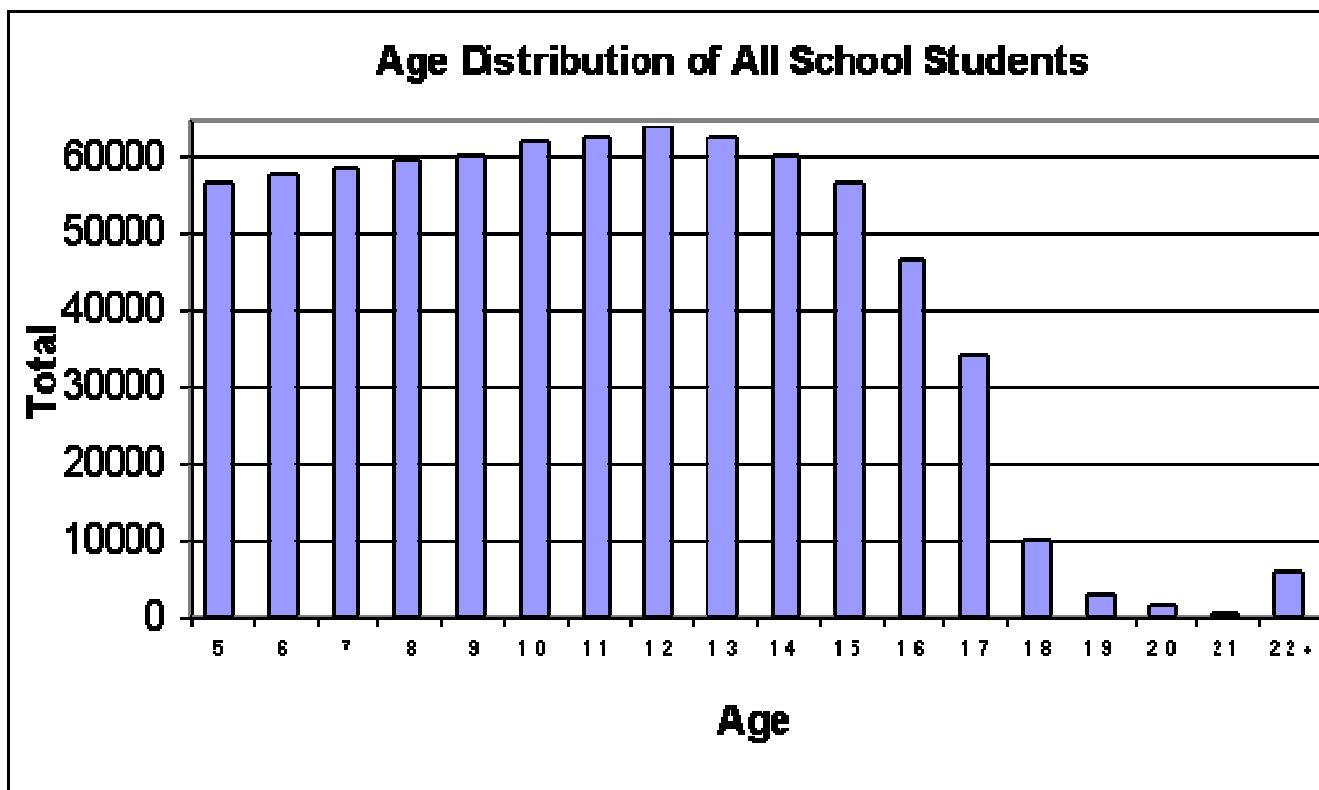
Stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions are some ways to deal with student behaviour that disrupts teaching and learning and threatens the well-being of other students. These approaches are not used lightly by schools, but are part of a process to help students return to productive learning and relationships with the school community.

Teachers manage their classrooms in ways that promote learning and most problems are solved there. When teachers need assistance they may involve principals, deputy principals, deans, counsellors and family/whanau. In addition, education support services such as those offered by the Ministry of Education Group Special Education and Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour are available, as well as other community support agencies. It is in a minority of cases that principals and boards of trustees use stand-downs or suspensions. For 2003, 2.7% of the national school roll was involved in stand-down cases and 0.6% in suspension cases; these being on a par with 2002 figures.

Quick Facts

- At 1 July 2003 there were 761,755 students attending New Zealand's 2,700 schools being an increase of 2% (13,671 students) since 1 July 2002. Primary level (Years 1-8) rolls increased by 4482 from 488,424 to 492,906 while secondary rolls (Years 9-15) increased by 20,200 (8%) from 259,660 to 279,860. Stand-down and suspension figures must be read in the context of the total school roll.
- Students in the 13 to 15 age group, comprising 24% of the school population, made up for 63% of stand-downs and 71% of suspensions.
- There were no suspensions in 37% of secondary and area schools and fewer than five suspensions in a further 16% of secondary and area schools. Seventy-five per cent of all schools had no suspensions the same as in 2002. Thirty five percent of intermediate schools had no suspensions with 88% of primary schools having no suspensions.
- There were 19,858 stand-down cases during 2003, a rate of 27 per 1,000. This was an increase of over 9% from 2002. As some students were stood-down on more than one occasion, the number of students stood-down is less than the number of cases. This report records only the number of cases not the number of students.
- The West Coast had a reduction of 3 suspensions per 1,000 pupils while stand-down cases in Northland continued to decline for the third year with a drop of 6 per 1,000 pupils.
- The most common reasons for students to be stood down were continual disobedience (25%) and physical assault on other students (24%).
- The most common reasons for students to be suspended were for drugs, including substance abuse (27%), a decrease of 162 from 1,471 in 2002, and continual disobedience (24%), a decrease of 76 between 2002 and 2003.
- Male, Māori and 14 year old students continue to be over-represented in stand-down and suspension statistics compared to the school population in general.
- Māori males were stood-down at a rate of 71 per 1,000 students and suspended at a rate of 21 per 1,000 students in 2003. Pasifika students, both male and female, showed comparative high rates of stand-downs with the highest rate being for Niuean males students with a rate of 74 per 1,000.

- The peak age for stand-downs and suspensions, for both genders, remains 14 years at 88 per 1,000 and 26 per 1,000 respectively.
- Students in the 13 to 15 year age group made up 63% of stand-downs (74 per 1,000). This age group was represented in 71% of suspension cases (21 per 1,000).
- Indications are that, where specific interventions are in place, both stand-downs and suspensions have reduced or remain steady. Secondary schools participating in the Suspension Reduction Initiative, for example, have succeeded in reducing the suspension rate for Māori students from 76 per 1,000 in 2000, when the initiative began, to 43 per 1,000 in 2003.
- Approximately 0.7% of the total New Zealand school population was suspended from school. The majority of these students returned to a school with 61% returning to the school they were suspended from. Just 0.2% was expelled or excluded during the period 1 January 2003 to 31 December 2003.



STAND DOWNS

A stand-down is the formal removal of a student from school for a specified period. Stand-downs of a student can total no more than 5 school days in any term, or 10 days in a school year. Following stand-downs, students return automatically to school.

Reasons for stand-downs

Behaviour	Stand-downs		
	2001	2002	2003
Alcohol	833	799	707
Arson	131	86	101
Continual Disobedience	4341	4633	4932
Drugs (including	944	1077	935

substance abuse)			
Other harmful or dangerous behaviour	1057	1227	1429
Physical assault on staff	344	395	450
Physical assault on other students	4058	3998	4687
Sexual harassment	109	114	110
Sexual misconduct	85	96	109
Smoking	841	867	799
Theft	785	815	945
Vandalism	378	386	529
Verbal assault on other students	396	394	492
Verbal assault on staff	2699	2877	3438
Weapons	140	148	195
Total	17,141	17,912	19,858

Most students are stood-down for the following behaviours:

- continual disobedience = 4,932 (25%)
- physical assault on other students = 4687 (24%)
- verbal assault on staff = 3,438 (18%)

There were significantly fewer stand-down cases for drugs (935) and smoking (799) than there were for 2002 (1077 and 867 respectively).

Number of Days Stood-down

Days Stood Down	Number of cases
1	3929
2	7345
3	6159
4	768
5	1657
Total	19,858

Schools that stand-down the most students

Over 54% of all schools had no stand-down cases while a further 49% had fewer than five stand-downs cases. About 4% of all schools were responsible for 50% of all stand-down cases (9,929).

School types

- Most stand-downs occurred in secondary schools, including area/composite this being 71% of the total for 2003. This is about the same percentage of stand-down cases in secondary schools as for 2002.
- Contributing and full primary school stand-downs were at a rate of 11 per 1,000 students.
- Intermediate schools stand-downs were at a rate of 29 per 1,000 students.

Stand-downs by School Decile

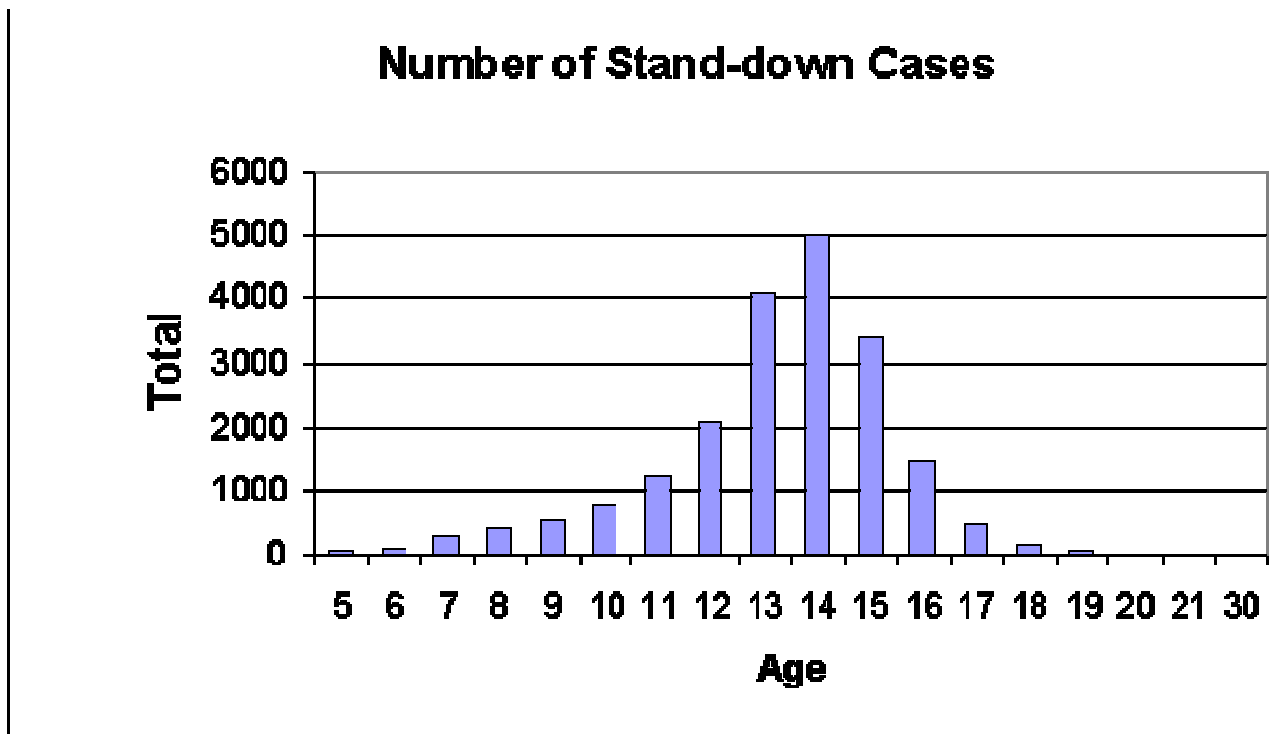
	2002	2002	2003	2003
Decile	Stand-downs	Rate per 1000	Stand-downs	Rate per 1000
Decile 1	1834	32	1765	30
Decile 2	2396	39	2737	44
Decile 3	2108	31	2481	36
Decile 4	2652	38	2385	34
Decile 5	2390	32	2563	34
Decile 6	1913	27	2228	31
Decile 7	1687	24	1935	26
Decile 8	1551	22	1779	25
Decile 9	711	9	1229	15
Decile 10	670	7	754	8
Unclassified			2	
Total	17,912	25	19,858	27

Gender

Male students made up 71% of all stand-downs. There were 38 stand-down cases per 1,000 male students and 16 per 1,000 female students.

Age Groups

The peak age for stand-downs continues to remain at 14 years, at a rate of 88 per 1,000 students. This is higher than the 2002 rate of 80 per 1,000 students. Stand-down cases for the 10 to 12 year age group remained static at a rate of 22 per 1,000 students of all stand-down cases in 2003.



Ethnicity

Māori were over-represented in stand-downs compared with the Māori proportion of the school population. Asian students had a very low stand-down rate, while Pākehā also had a low stand-down rate, compared with their proportion of the population.

Ethnicity	% of all stand-downs	% of school population
NZ European/Pākehā	44	57
NZ Māori	41	21
Pasifika	11	8
Asian	2	5
Other	2	9

Regions

Local Body	2002 Total	2002 rate per 1,000	2003 Total	2003 rate per 1,000
Auckland	4918	22	5445	23
Bay of Plenty	1169	24	1194	24
Canterbury	1696	21	2519	30
Gisborne	324	33	344	35
Hawke's Bay	901	30	918	30
Manawatu-Wanganui	1538	36	1787	42
Marlborough	174	26	169	25
Nelson	127	15	168	19
Northland	1396	48	1238	42
Otago	598	19	621	20
Southland	562	32	537	30
Taranaki	601	29	568	27
Tasman	160	22	143	19
Waikato	2081	30	2164	31
Wellington	1469	20	1803	24
West Coast	198	37	240	45
Total	17,912	25	19,858	27

The rate of stand-down cases dropped in 6 regions, rose in 9, and was static in 2. The rate for Canterbury rose from 21 per 1,000 students in 2002 to 30 per 1,000 students, which was a reversal from the downward trend in that region from 2001 to 2002. Similarly, the rate for the West Coast saw an increase from 37 per 1,000 students to 45 per 1,000 students. The Northland region had the most significant decrease from 48 per 1,000 students in 2002 to 42 per 1,000 students

SUSPENSIONS

***Suspension** is the formal removal of a student from school by the principal until the board of trustees decides the outcome at a suspension meeting. Following a suspension the board may decide to lift the suspension with or without conditions, to extend the suspension, or in the most serious cases, to either exclude or expel the student. Suspension, and the possible related actions of expulsion or exclusion, are the last steps in the disciplinary process for a school.*

Number of suspensions

There were 4,887 suspension cases during 2003 compared with 4,937 for the same period during 2002. The suspension rate was 6.75 per 1,000 students for 2003, a reduction from 7 per 1,000 students in 2002.

Reasons for suspensions

Behaviour	Suspensions		
	2001	2002	2003
Alcohol	208	165	185
Arson	56	34	38
Continual Disobedience	1126	1230	1154
Drugs (including substance abuse)	1555	1471	1309
Other harmful or dangerous behaviour	226	265	298
Physical assault on staff	149	142	187
Physical assault on other students	685	761	717
Sexual harassment	36	30	32
Sexual misconduct	27	43	37
Smoking	37	47	36
Theft	216	233	294
Vandalism	122	100	123
Verbal assault on other students	57	56	40
Verbal assault on staff	247	282	331
Weapons	55	78	106
Total	4802	4937	4887

66% of suspensions were for the following three behaviours:

- drugs, including substance abuse = 1,309 (27%, down from 30% in 2002)
- continual disobedience = 1,154 (24%, down from 25% in 2002)
- physical assault on other students = 717 (15%, the same as in 2002)

Schools that suspend the most students

As in 2002, seventy-five per cent of all schools suspended no students in 2003. Of schools that suspended students, about 10% were responsible for 43% of all suspensions (2,111). The highest rate of suspensions occurred in Year 9-15 secondary schools (15 per 1,000 students) with the lowest rate from schools with a secondary school age component, being in Area/Composite schools (9 per 1,000 students).

School types

- There were no suspensions in 39% of secondary and composite schools, an increase of 2% from 2003. Seventy-five per cent of all schools had no suspensions.
- Most suspension cases occurred in secondary schools (77%); the same as 2002.
- Full primary schools suspended at a rate of 2 per 1,000 students.
- Intermediate schools suspended at a rate of 6 per 1,000 students compared to 7 per 1,000 for the same period in 2002.

Suspensions by School Deciles

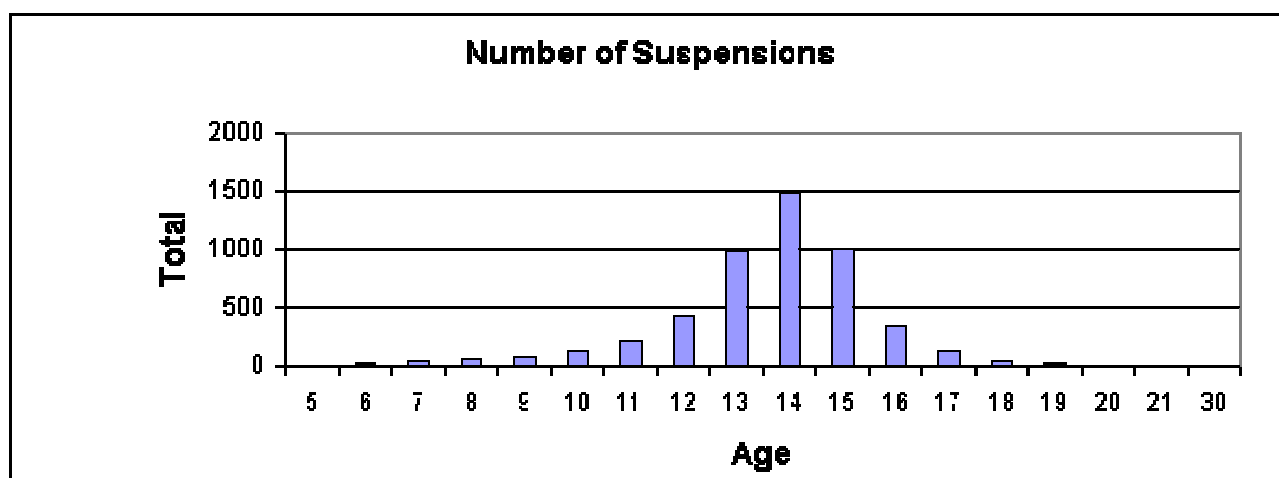
	2002	2002	2003	2003
Decile	Suspensions	Rate per 1000	Suspensions	Rate per 1000
Decile 1	497	9	454	8
Decile 2	720	12	641	10
Decile 3	585	9	576	8
Decile 4	660	10	694	10
Decile 5	797	11	651	9
Decile 6	513	7	520	7
Decile 7	497	7	516	7
Decile 8	379	5	441	6
Decile 9	134	2	258	3
Decile 10	155	2	136	1
Total	4937	7	4887	7

Gender

Male students made up 72% of all suspension cases. Male students were suspended at a rate of 10 per 1,000 students and female students at a rate of 4 per 1,000 students.

Age groups

As for stand-down cases, the peak age for suspensions was 14 years, with the total suspension cases for this group being about the same for 2003 as they were for 2002 (from 1,440 in 2002 to 1,487 in 2003).



The 13 to 15 year age group made up 71% of suspension cases (3,478) being about the same as 2002 (3,498). The 10 to 12 year age group made up 15% of suspension cases (749) compared to 16% (790) in 2002.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity	% of all suspensions	% of school population
NZ European/Pākehā	38	57
NZ Māori	47	21
Pasifika	10	8

Asian	2	5
Other	3	9

There has been a reduction in the number and rate per 1,000 students of Pākehā suspension cases.

Māori continue to be over-represented in suspension cases compared with the Māori proportion of the total school population with suspensions at a rate of 15 per 1,000 students. Māori suspensions in the 10 to 14 year age group remained at 26 per 1,000 students. Māori students aged 10 to 14 years make up 9% of the total school population aged 10 to 14 years.

The proportion of suspension cases in 2003 involving Asian students increased slightly, but is still below their percentage of the student population, compared with 2002. Manawatu-Wanganui showed a reduction in suspensions of Maori students from 19 per 1,000 to 14 per 1,000 students in 2003. Similarly, Gisborne showed a reduction in suspensions of Maori students from 12 per 1,000 students in 2002 to 8 per 1,000 students and Waikato decreased from 18 per 1,000 students to 15 per 1,000 students in 2003.

The total number of suspension cases involving Pasifika students decreased from 516 (9 per 1,000 students) in 2002, to 485 (8 per 1,000 students) in 2003.

Regions

Local Body	2002 Total	2002 Rate per 1,000	2003 Total	2003 Rate per 1,000
Auckland	1274	6	1402	6
Bay of Plenty	535	11	434	9
Canterbury	456	6	531	6
Gisborne	76	8	57	6
Hawke's Bay	164	5	223	7
Manawatu-Wanganui	395	9	340	8
Marlborough	71	10	84	12
Nelson	37	4	36	4
Northland	351	12	346	12
Otago	156	5	133	4
Southland	130	7	100	6
Taranaki	122	6	114	5
Tasman	52	7	50	7
Waikato	613	9	532	8
Wellington	433	6	450	6
West Coast	72	13	55	10
Total	4937	7	4887	7

During 2003 regional suspension rates showed significant decreases. The biggest reductions were in the West Coast, Gisborne and the Bay of Plenty regions. For the Hawke's Bay region, the rate has risen back to the 2001 level with the Marlborough region continuing to rise by 1 per 1,000 students each year since 1999.

The West Coast region continued to show a decrease from 53 (12 per 1,000 students) in 2002 down to 34 (8 per 1,000 students) in 2003

Bay of Plenty, Hawke's Bay, Northland and West Coast regions had the most suspensions per thousand for drugs (including substance abuse) at 3 per 1,000 students, although the Bay of Plenty, West Coast and Northland schools lowered their rates from 2002.

Suspension cases related to verbal assault on staff have increased from 283 in 2002 to 331 in 2003. This remains at 6 per 1,000 students equating to an increase in roll numbers.

The number of suspension cases for drugs (including substance abuse) ranged from 266 (4 per 1,000 students) in decile 2 schools to 44 (1 per 1,000 students) in decile 9 schools. Suspension rates for continual disobedience by decile were similar in 2003 to those of 2002 (between 1 and 4 per 1,000 students in each region). Decile 1 to 8 schools had a rate of 2 per 1,000 students with decile 1, 9 and 10 having lower numbers.

The number of students returning to their school following suspensions was similar across all deciles, the highest being 67% in decile 8, the lowest 56% in decile 3.

The highest rates of exclusion were recorded by decile 3 (35%), 6 (33%), 9 (32%) and 5 (32%). Schools with the highest rates of expulsion being by schools in deciles 5 (11%), and 10 (7%).

ACTIONS FOLLOWING A SUSPENSION

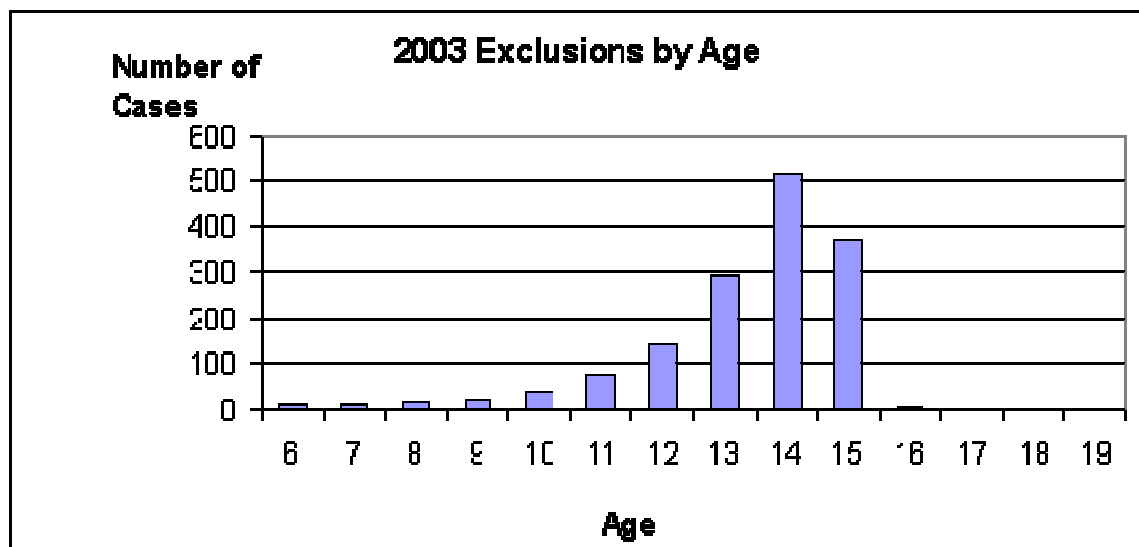
At a suspension meeting, a board of trustees will receive a report from the principal about the suspension and will hear comment from the student, the student's family and support people. The board, excluding the principal, then makes a decision about the suspended student's continued attendance at the school.

Outcomes for suspended students

Following a suspension, and an appropriate response by the board, the majority of cases (84%) resulted in students resuming schooling during the period 1 January 2003 to 31 December 2003, 61% of that total at the suspending school. For the comparable period 2002, 82% resumed schooling

Enrolment at The Correspondence School, following suspension in the period 1 January 2003 to 31 December 2003, remained static at 5%, about the same as for 2001 and 2002.

- Of the 4,887 suspensions for the period 1 January 2003 to 31 December 2003, 2,978 (61%) returned to their suspending school either with or without special conditions being imposed. and over 84% had resumed schooling during 2003.
- In 1,206 cases (25%) the suspensions were extended before the board determined a final outcome. This is the same as in 2002.



- Exclusions numbered 1,490 (30%) also the same as in 2002.
- Expulsions numbered 160 (3%) compared to 154 in 2002 (3%).

The Ministry of Education follows up on all cases leading to exclusion (either immediately or following a suspension extension) to ensure that an appropriate alternative is found for every student concerned.

- 50% of excluded students enrolled at a new school.
- 7% of excluded students re-enrolled at the suspending school.
- 13% of excluded students enrolled at The Correspondence School.
- Remaining cases were awaiting action, or students had elected to apply for an early leaving exemption, a home schooling exemption, left New Zealand or had turned 16 years and may have chosen to leave school.

KEY ISSUES AND INTERVENTIONS

The data on suspensions and stand-downs continue to reveal several areas of concern:

- males and Māori remain over-represented in the statistics.
- young people aged 13 to 15 years are over-represented in both stand-downs and suspensions.
- a relatively small number of secondary schools still have stand-down and suspension rates that are significantly higher than most schools.
- drugs, including substance abuse, remains the most frequent reason for suspension although the number of cases has reduced between 2002 and 2003.

In 2003, a new Student Engagement Initiative (SEI) was launched. The government is spending an extra \$8.6 million over the next five years on existing and new initiatives to make sure students stay engaged in learning. The new initiatives are designed to support schools and encourage disengaged students back into learning. The new work will also build on the successful suspension reduction initiative targets.

Suspension Reduction Initiative

The Ministry established the Suspension Reduction Initiative (SRI) in 2001 specifically to address the high proportion of Māori suspensions in some secondary schools. The SRI involved working with 86 schools that have a history of high suspensions of Māori students. The implementation strategy involves schools sharing best practice in managing student behaviour and assisting schools and communities to work better to meet the needs of students at risk.

Statistics below show that national suspension rate for Māori in secondary schools has reduced. In secondary schools that have chosen to become part of the SRI, suspensions of Māori students have reduced markedly while rates for other groups are also reducing. This indicates that while programmes may have been put in place by schools with the aim of reducing Māori suspensions in particular, changes have had an effect on schools' overall suspension rates.

Secondary schools that have chosen to be part of the SRI recorded a rate of 76 per 1,000 students for Māori suspensions in 2000 dropping to 56 in 2001, 48 in 2002 and 43 in 2003. Indications also continue to show that all students in these schools are benefiting with an overall drop in the suspension rate from 36 per 1,000 in 2000 to 28 in 2001, 25 in 2002 and 23 in 2003.

SUSPENSION REDUCTION INITIATIVE 2003 STATISTICS

1 January 2001 to 31 December 2001		1 January 2002 to 31 December 2002		1 January 2003 to 31 December 2003	
Group	Per 1,000	Group	Per 1,000	Group	Per 1,000
All (total population)	7	All (total population)	7	All (total population)	7

Māori (total population)	15	Māori (total population)	15	Māori (total population)	15
Secondary schools		Secondary schools		Secondary schools	
Māori	43	Māori	41	Māori	40
NZ European/Pākehā	11	NZ European/Pākehā	11	NZ European/Pākehā	10
SRI schools		SRI schools		SRI schools	
All (total cluster population)	28	All (total cluster population)	25	All (total cluster population)	23
Māori	56	Māori	48	Māori	43
NZ European/Pākehā	17	NZ European/Pākehā	15	NZ European/Pākehā	13

Other interventions

In addition to these specific initiatives the Ministry of Education has undertaken several other steps, in consultation with schools and communities, aimed at keeping students engaged in schooling. These include:

- Group Special Education assistance
- Funding for initiatives for enhanced learning
- Special Education Grants to all schools
- Targetted Funding for Educational Achievement to all schools
- Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour
- assisting Study Support Centres in 84 schools and 67 communities
- provision of an Innovations Funding Pool for school programmes designed to improve the educational outcomes of students at risk
- funding for Alternative Education programmes for students under 16 who are alienated from regular schooling
- a Parents' Advocacy Phone Service through the Office of the Commissioner of Children and Wellington Community Law.

Inter-sector activities helping resolve issues that may otherwise be barriers to student engagement include:

- Social Workers in schools
- Strengthening Families, helping schools and communities support students
- therapeutic interventions for groups of students with high care an protection or mental health needs.

Further information

More specific regional or city information may be available from the Ministry's regional offices. The Ministry spokesperson on this is Jim Matheson, Operational Policy Manager, National Operations, ph 04-463-8231.

Schools with queries should contact their local office of the Ministry of Education.