

## A Report on Stand-downs, Suspensions, Exclusions and Expulsions.

April 2002

This report provides statistics and analysis on stand-downs and suspensions for the 2001 school year to 31 December 2001.

### ***Kia ora koutou katoa.***

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

*Suspensions and stand-downs are part of a broad range of ways in which student behaviour is managed. A stand-down or suspension may represent one of a number of interventions for an individual student. These statistics, therefore, tell only part of the story of how schools successfully manage student behaviour for the vast majority of students.*

*Since reporting under the current rules began, several initiatives to address disparities have been introduced. Several of these are described later in this report. The impact these initiatives are having on stand-down and suspension statistics is now becoming evident.*

*A key finding of this report is that while stand-down cases have increased by 220, suspension cases have decreased by 306 compared to 2000. This is a notable reversal of the trend to date. Clearly, changes in how schools manage student behaviour have an impact.*

*Indications are that 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 Gisborne region have, for example, reduced the number of suspension cases from 10 per 1,000 in 2000 to 5 per 1,000 in 2001. Similarly Gisborne schools have reduced stand-down cases from 31 per 1,000 to 24 per 1,000. Northland, Canterbury and Nelson schools also reduced suspensions significantly.*

*While this is a positive trend, the challenge is for it to be maintained over time.*

**Kathy Phillips**  
**Senior Manager, National Operations.**

### **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 while the third report covered the 1 January 2001 to 30 June 2001 period. **This latest report covers the 1 January 2001 to 31 December 2001 period, and is based on data as at 1 March 2002.**

### **Roll Trends**

At 1 July 2001 there were 733,924 full-time equivalent (FTE) students attending New Zealand's 2,718 schools - an increase of 0.6% (4,235 students) since 1 July 2000. Primary level (Years 1-8) rolls remained relatively stable at 484,058, while secondary rolls (Years 9-15) increased by 4,338 to 249,866. Increases were highest in the years 7 to 10.

Stand-down and suspension figures must be read in the context of the total school roll.

### **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 wellbeing 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 2001, 2.3% of the school roll faced a stand-down and 0.6% a suspension.

The reasons for stand-downs and suspensions are summarised below. Different approaches are used for different behaviours. In most cases schools manage similar

behaviours internally without requiring a formal intervention such as stand-down or suspension.

### **Quick Facts**

- At 1 July 2001 there were 733,924 full-time equivalent (FTE) students attending New Zealand's 2,718 schools - an increase of 0.6% (4,235 students) since 1 July 2000.
- Stand-downs and suspensions are two of the many ways in which schools manage student behaviour.
- While the number of stand-downs rose slightly, the number of suspensions dropped.
- Students in the 13 to 15 year age group made up 62.5% of stand-downs (down from 10,786 for 2000 to 10,718 for 2001). This age group was represented in 72% of suspensions (down from 3,696 in 2000 to 3,452 in 2001). At the same time enrolments in this age group increased by about 4,000.
- Stand-downs and suspensions dropped significantly in the Gisborne region.
- There were 17,141 stand-down cases during 2001. This is 220 more than for 2000. As some students were stood-down on more than one occasion the number of students stood-down is less than the number of cases.
- The most common reasons for students to be stood down were continual disobedience (25%) and physical assault on other students (24%).
- There were 4,802 suspension cases in 2001 compared with 5,108 in 2000.
- The most common reasons for students to be suspended were for drugs, including substance abuse (32%) and continual disobedience (23%).
- Boys and Maori students continue to be over-represented in stand-down and suspension statistics, compared to the population in general.
- Indications are that, where specific interventions are in place, both stand-downs and suspensions have reduced.
- While about 0.6% of the total New Zealand school population was suspended from school, just 0.2% was expelled or excluded during the period 1 January 2001 to 31 December 2001. The majority of these students returned to a school.
- There were no suspensions in 14% of secondary schools and fewer than five suspensions in a further 22% of secondary schools.

### Reasons for Stand-downs and Suspensions

Behaviour	Stand-downs		Suspensions	
	2001	2000	2001	2000
Alcohol	833	1033	208	181
Arson	131	163	56	84
Continual Disobedience	4341	4196	1126	1216
Drugs (including substance abuse)	944	642	1555	1553
Other harmful or dangerous behaviour	1057	1059	226	253
Physical assault on staff	344	360	149	128
Physical assault on other students	4058	3891	685	803
Sexual harassment	109	118	36	33
Sexual misconduct	85	98	27	24
Smoking	841	690	37	57
Theft	785	861	216	251
Vandalism	378	367	122	89
Verbal assault on other students	396	395	57	67
Verbal assault on staff	2699	2723	247	294
Weapons	140	135	55	75
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>17141</b>	<b>16921</b>	<b>4802</b>	<b>5108</b>

### **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.*

#### **Number of Stand-downs**

There were 17,141 stand-downs in 2001 (16,921 for the same period in 2000). The stand-down rate per 1000 students was 24.5 (24.3 per 1,000 in 2000). Most stand-downs were for 2 (36.5%) or 3 (32%) days. These figures are very similar to those for 2000. (The rate per 1,000 students is rounded when used elsewhere.)

Days Stood Down	Number of cases
1	3048
2	6268
3	5516
4	733

5	1540
<b>Total</b>	<b>17141</b>

### Schools that stand-down the most students

About 1% of all schools were responsible for 13% of all stand-down cases (2,293). These schools tended to be mid-decile schools.

Seven per cent of secondary schools did not stand down any students while an additional 8% were responsible for fewer than five cases.

### Gender

Male students made up 73% of all stand-downs. There were 35 stand-down cases per 1,000 male students and 13 per 1,000 female students. Figures for 2000 were the same.

### School types

- Most stand-downs occur in secondary schools, 69% for 2001. This is 3% fewer stand-down cases in secondary schools than for 2000.
- Full primary schools stand-down students at a rate of 9 per 1,000.
- Intermediate school stand-downs were at a rate of 28 per 1,000 for 2001. This is up on the rate of 25 per 1,000 for 2000.

### Ethnicity

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

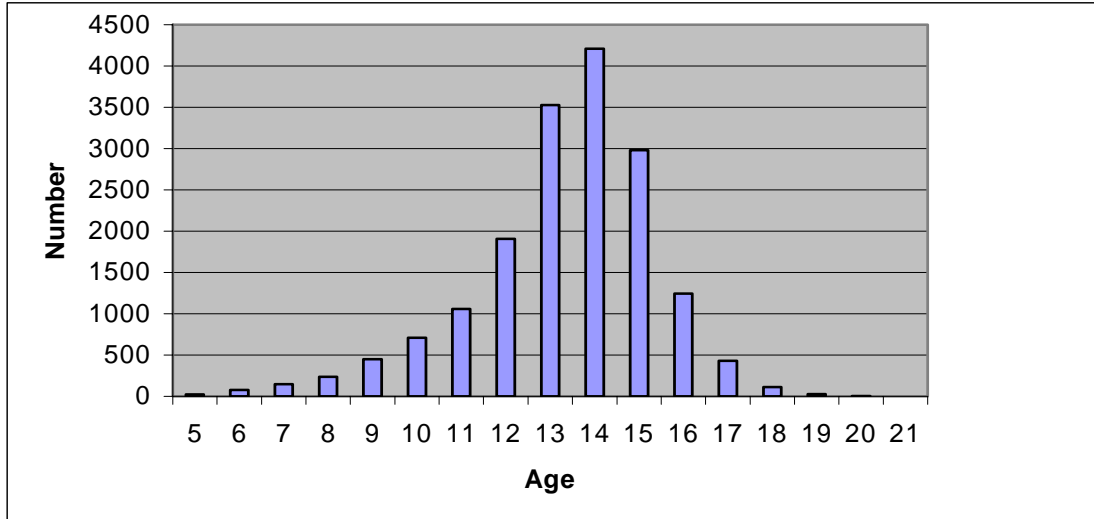
<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>% of all stand-downs</b>	<b>% of school population</b>
Asian	2	6
NZ Maori	40	21
Pasifika	10	8
NZ European/Pakeha	46	62
Other	2	3

### Reasons for stand-downs

Most students are stood-down for the following behaviours:

- Continual disobedience = 4,341 (25%)
- Physical assault on other students = 4,058 (24%)
- Verbal assault on staff = 2,699 (16%)

### Age Groups



The peak age for stand-downs remains 14 years, at a rate of 81 per 1,000. This is slightly lower than the 2000 rate of 83 per 1,000. The 10 to 12 year age group is up from 19% in 2000 to 21% of all stand-down cases in 2001. At the same time the school roll for this age group increased from 170,889 to 175,214 representing 25% of the total school roll. The 13 to 15 year age group represents 62.5% of all stand-down cases while representing 22% of the school roll.

### School Deciles

	2001	2001	2000	2000
Decile	Stand-downs	Rate per 1000	Stand-downs	Rate per 1000
Decile 1	1655	27	1381	23
Decile 2	2155	35	2416	39
Decile 3	1938	29	1917	28
Decile 4	2611	33	2371	30
Decile 5	2344	33	2256	31
Decile 6	1953	28	1962	28
Decile 7	1445	21	1434	21
Decile 8	1489	20	1665	23
Decile 9	757	13	700	12
Decile 10	793	9	819	9
Unclassified	1			
<b>Total</b>	<b>17141</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>16921</b>	<b>24</b>

The number and rate per 1,000 stand-down cases by school decile varied very little between 2000 and 2001.

### Regions

<b>Local Body</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Per 1000</b>
Auckland	4360	20
Bay of Plenty	1126	23
Canterbury	2149	27
Gisborne	235	24
Hawke's Bay	824	27
Manawatu- Wanganui	1397	33
Marlborough	152	22
Nelson	148	18
Northland	1310	44
Otago	598	19
Southland	441	25
Taranaki	499	24
Tasman	159	22
Waikato	1855	27
Wellington	1608	22
West Coast	280	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>17141</b>	<b>25</b>

The rate of stand-down cases in the Gisborne region has dropped substantially from 31 per 1,000 in 2000 to 24 per 1,000 in 2001. Other regions remain about the same as last year with rates in the West Coast and Northland regions remaining highest and those in the Nelson and Otago regions remaining lowest.

### **SUSPENSIONS**

*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 4,802 suspensions during 2001 compared with 5,108 for the same period during 2000. The suspension rate was 6.8 per 1,000 students for 2001 (7.3 per 1,000 for 2000). (The rate per 1,000 students is rounded when used elsewhere.)

Of those students suspended during the period 1 January 2001 to 31 December 2001, 86% resumed schooling, 65% at the suspending school.

## Gender

Male students made up 73% of all suspension cases. Male students were suspended at a rate of 10 per 1,000 students; female students at a rate of 4 per 1,000. These rates are about the same as those for 2000.

## Schools that suspend the most students

Of schools that suspended students in 2001, about 1% were responsible for 19% of all suspensions (920). About 0.2% of schools accounted for 6% of all students suspended (306). High-suspending schools were spread over all decile bands although a disproportionate number were mid-decile schools.

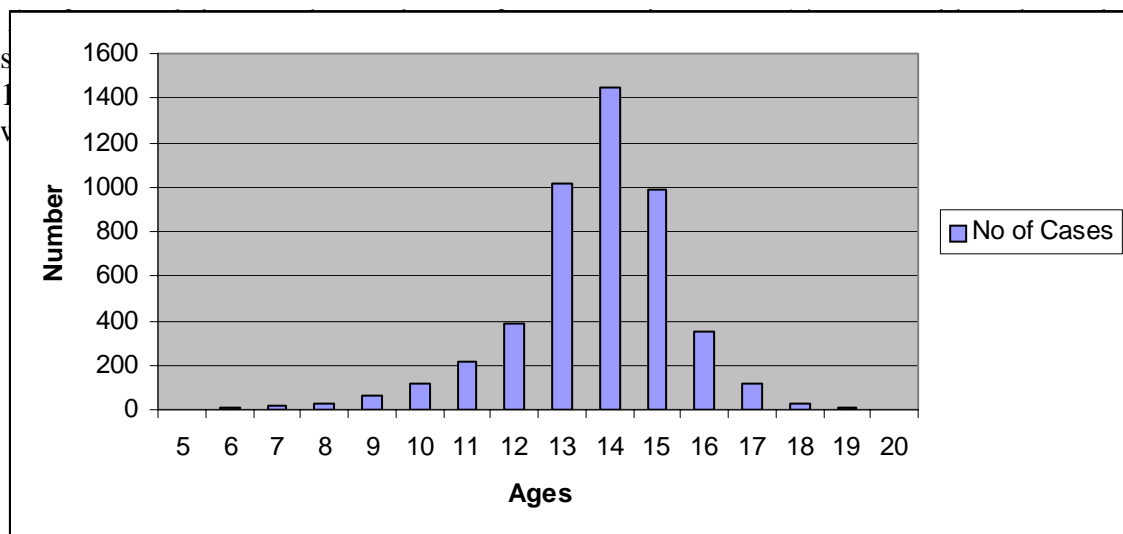
Some schools that suspended proportionately high numbers of pupils in 2000 reduced suspensions considerably in 2001. Of secondary schools, 14% had no suspensions and a further 22% suspended fewer than five pupils.

## Reasons for suspensions

Most suspensions (70%) are for the following three behaviours:

- Drugs, including substance abuse = 1,555 (32%)
- Continual disobedience = 1,126 (23%)
- Physical assault on other students = 685 (14%)

## Age groups



### **Ethnicity**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>% of all suspensions</b>	<b>% of school population</b>
Asian	1	6
NZ Maori	47	21
Pasifika	10	8
NZ European/Pakeha	41	62
Other	0.5	3

Maori continue to be over-represented in suspensions compared with the Maori proportion of the school population. While the proportion of suspensions of Asian and Maori students remained stable compared with 2000, suspensions of Pasifika students rose slightly and suspensions of Pakeha students dropped.

In the Gisborne region, Maori suspensions dropped from 85 in 2000 (86% of all suspensions for the region) to 36 (78% of all suspensions for the region) in 2001.

In Northland there was a drop in total Maori suspensions in the region from 332 in 2000 to 299 in 2001.

By contrast, in the Taranaki region where there are no special programmes aimed at reducing suspensions, there has been little change for any ethnic group. Maori suspensions numbered 44 in 2000 (45%) and 45 in 2001 (52%).

### **School types**

- Most suspensions occur in secondary schools (80%). During the same period in 2000, secondary schools were responsible for 80% of suspensions. The proportion remains the same for 2001 although the school roll has grown.
- 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. The rate was 7 per 1,000 for the same period in 2000. While the intermediate roll has increased the rate of suspension has decreased.

## Regions

	<b>2001</b>	<b>2001</b>
<b>Local Body</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Per 1000</b>
Auckland	1197	6
Bay of Plenty	517	11
Canterbury	445	5
Gisborne	46	5
Hawke's Bay	212	7
Manawatu- Wanganui	396	9
Marlborough	60	9
Nelson	18	2
Northland	408	14
Otago	138	4
Southland	97	5
Taranaki	86	4
Tasman	49	7
Waikato	593	9
Wellington	449	6
West Coast	91	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>4802</b>	<b>7</b>

During 2001 no region increased its suspension rate compared with 2000 while about half the regions reduced their rates. Biggest reductions were in the Northland, Canterbury, Nelson and Gisborne regions. Gisborne and Nelson regions halved their suspension rates; Gisborne from 10 to 5 per 1,000 and Nelson from 4 to 2 per 1,000.

Bay of Plenty and Northland regions had the most suspensions per thousand for drugs (including substance abuse). Bay of Plenty schools suspended 5 per 1,000 students and Northland schools 6 per 1,000 in this category. The national rate was 2 per 1,000.

### School Deciles

	<b>2001</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>Decile</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Rate per 1000</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Rate per 1000</b>
Decile 1	521	8	482	8
Decile 2	617	10	627	10
Decile 3	682	10	718	11
Decile 4	667	8	645	8
Decile 5	732	10	870	12
Decile 6	495	7	586	8
Decile 7	432	6	430	6
Decile 8	310	4	434	6
Decile 9	162	3	158	3
Decile 10	184	2	158	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>4802</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5108</b>	<b>7</b>

The **rate** of suspension cases in 2001 is equal to or less than rates for 2000 in all deciles. The greatest reduction has been decile 5 and decile 8 schools, each at a rate 2 per 1,000 lower than for 2000.

Suspensions for **drugs (including substance abuse)** occurred most often in decile 2 to 5 schools. However, these suspensions tend to vary according to geographic region rather than by school decile.

Decile 3 to 6 schools suspended most students for **continual disobedience** (57%). While suspension rates for continual disobedience by decile were similar throughout the country (between 1 and 3 per 1,000 in each region), suspensions in this category were highest in decile 5 schools.

Decile 1, 2 and 4 schools made up 56% of students suspended for **physical assault on other students**.

## **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.

- Of the 4,802 suspensions for the period 1 January 2001 to 31 December 2001, 3,127 (65%) returned to their suspending school, either with or without special conditions.
- In 1,270 cases (26%) the suspensions were extended before the board determined a final outcome.
- Exclusions numbered 1,305 (27%).
- Expulsions numbered 144 (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.

- 48.5% of excluded students enrolled at a new school.
- 11% of excluded students re-enrolled at the suspending school.
- 14% 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.

### **Outcomes for suspended students**

Following a suspension, and an appropriate response by the board, the majority of cases (86%) resulted in students resuming schooling during the period 1 January 2001 to 31 December 2001, 65% of the total at the suspending school. For the comparable period 2000, 85% resumed schooling.

Enrolment at the Correspondence School, following suspension in the period 1 January 2001 to 31 December 2001 was 4%.

## **KEY ISSUES AND INTERVENTIONS**

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

- boys and Maori remain over-represented in the statistics;
- young people aged 13 to 15 years are over-represented in both stand-downs and suspensions;
- most stand-downs and suspensions occur in secondary schools; and
- drugs, including substance abuse, is the most frequent reason for suspension.

### **Addressing the concerns**

In order to address and reduce suspensions, particularly for Maori, the Ministry of Education has initiated two specific initiatives that target Maori secondary students; the Suspension Reduction Initiative and He Ara Tika which is a Maori Youth Mentoring programme.

#### *Suspensions Reduction Initiative*

The Ministry established the Suspension Reduction Initiative specifically to address the high proportion of Maori suspensions in secondary schools. The Suspension Reduction Initiative involves working with 86 schools that have a history of high suspensions of Maori 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.

#### *He Ara Tika - Maori Youth Mentoring*

The Government has set aside funds to initiate a youth mentoring programme to provide extra support to Maori secondary students. Better engagement of students in learning will reduce the need for behavioural intervention. Currently there are 17 community providers managing mentoring services in schools across the country. The providers are training mentors and matching up these mentors with students in 2002.

#### *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:

- Strengthening Families, helping schools and communities support students;
- increased numbers of Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour;
- Social Workers in Schools established at 182 low decile primary schools;
- assisting Study Support Centres;
- 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; and
- a Parents' Advocacy Phone Service through the Office of the Commissioner of Children and Wellington Community Law.

### **Further information**

Regional stand-down and suspension information will be provided on the Ministry's website [www.minedu.govt.nz](http://www.minedu.govt.nz). More specific regional or city information may be available from the Ministry's regional offices.

The media spokesperson on this issue 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.*

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