

# Attendance and Absenteeism: Data Collection 1998

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Ministry of Education Truancy Project Team Wellington

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**June 1999**

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**First published in 1999 by the:**

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PO Box 1666  
Wellington  
New Zealand**

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**ISBN 0-477-05089-1**

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# Acknowledgements

The Ministry of Education wishes to thank the principals and staff of schools who responded to this survey and provided attendance data for their schools. The time and effort that went into completing these survey forms is very much appreciated. The fact that 96% of schools voluntarily responded to this survey shows schools' awareness of the importance of good school attendance in enabling students to learn effectively.

I would like to thank Lynne Whitney and Ngaire Bennie of the Ministry's Research Division who allowed the Truancy Project Team to use the methodology developed for a similar survey in 1996. This enabled the collection of data and its analysis to be carried out most efficiently, and allows comparisons to be made with the results of the 1996 survey.

Thanks also to Education Services Central Ltd, Wanganui, who undertook the administrative tasks around collecting the data from schools. A special thanks to Christabel Dillon of the Ministry who produced the layout of this report.

I have appreciated the ongoing support of the Truancy Project Team, but in particular, many thanks to Jacquie Kerlake who provided excellent guidance and support in the preparation and production of this report.

Gorham Milbank



# Introduction

This publication reports on a survey of attendance, absences and truancy data carried out in all New Zealand schools in Term 2 1998. The survey and analysis follow the same procedures used for a similar survey in 1996, which was reported in Kerlake, J., and Lange, D., (1998) *Attendance, Absences and Truancy in New Zealand Schools*.

## PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY

The intention of this survey was to obtain information on attendance and truancy patterns in New Zealand schools, and to record this information as national averages for different school types.

The issue of attendance and non-attendance in schools has repeatedly come up over the years since the introduction of compulsory schooling in New Zealand. The Education Act (1989) places the onus on parents to enrol their children in school, and to ensure that they attend. The Act also requires school boards of trustees to ensure that children enrolled in their school do attend. The Act states:

*Every Board shall, by any means it thinks appropriate, take all reasonable steps to ensure the attendance of students enrolled at its school or schools (or institution or institutions) (1989, 31 (3)).*

School principals are responsible for keeping accurate records of students enrolled, and an accurate register of daily attendance.

The data from the survey published in this report enables schools to monitor their performance in terms of student attendance by comparing their attendance data with the national averages for similar school types.

## RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

Broadly the results are very similar to the 1996 study. For a detailed analysis refer to the earlier survey, and the data can be compared with that published in this report.

The 1996 study included all intermediate, secondary and composite schools but only primary schools involved in a Ministry of Education funded truancy initiative (N=197) were surveyed. For the 1998 survey all state and state-integrated primary schools were invited to participate. The overall response rate was 96% and the Ministry of Education was very appreciative of the time and effort schools took in participating in this survey.

#### **RECOMMENDED ACTION BY SCHOOLS**

- ◆ Schools can use the data in this report to make some comparisons of their own absenteeism and truancy rates with the mean rates for similar types of schools. From this comparison, they can see where it would be appropriate to improve their procedures or apply more resources with a view to improving attendance and reducing truancy.
- ◆ Schools should have an attendance policy setting out school procedures and information for parents. The policy should define what is meant by “justified absence”, and give examples of unjustified absences. Ideally, schools in a district would work together to develop this sort of policy in consultation with parents and community. It is preferable to use this distinction rather than “explained” and “unexplained” absences.
- ◆ For ideas on how to address truancy more effectively refer to Donn, M., Bennie, N. and Kerslake, J. (1991) *Who’s Not Here ...? Working towards keeping ‘absentee students’ at school* for ideas on school attendance. Copies were sent to all schools in 1991.
- ◆ Schools will find it helpful to build good links with their local District Truancy Service, ensuring that staff understand how to refer truant students to the service, and how to take best advantage of the work of the Attendance Officers. It is important to keep in mind that the school remains responsible for providing a balanced curriculum, and analysing and overcoming barriers to students’ learning (National Education Guidelines – NAG 1, ii & iii). The District Truancy Services can assist schools, but cannot take over their role. Schools and District Truancy Services may also need to work in partnership with health, social and other services.

## GOVERNMENT'S SUPPORT FOR TRUANCY ACTION

- ◆ The Government has funded an increasing number of community/school truancy programmes since 1994. The aim is to reduce and prevent truancy, which will improve educational opportunities for students who would otherwise be at risk of social and economic disadvantage.
- ◆ Truancy action is at three levels:
  1. Schools monitor student attendance and follow up absences. (*This is funded by schools.*)
  2. **District Truancy Services (DTSs)** are a backup to schools' work on absenteeism and truancy. (*Funded by Ministry of Education and schools, with some community input.*)
    - ◆ Each DTS has a local co-ordinating committee comprising representatives of the schools, Safer Community Council (and/or police), Iwi or urban Māori, and Pacific Islands groups. The DTS may choose to add other agencies or community groups such as CYPFA, health, service clubs or churches.
    - ◆ By the end of Term 1 1998, the Ministry of Education was providing funding support for a national network of about 120 DTSs. Every New Zealand school had access to a DTS.
    - ◆ DTSs mainly work through Attendance Officers appointed by schools under Section 31 of the Education Act. The DTSs provide these truancy services:
      - *Encourage schools to develop effective attendance systems;*
      - *Receive referrals of truanting students, and assist their return to full attendance;*
      - *Enhance communication between home and school;*
      - *Assist schools by patrolling for truanting students;*
      - *Endeavour to enrol any non-enrolled young people, or refer them to NETS;*
      - *Help schools to identify students' underlying problems or school-based problems (eg bullying) that may be contributing to truancy.*
    - ◆ DTSs may add other truancy services (eg assist schools to confirm rolls, or to carry out prosecutions of parents for their child's truancy; co-ordinate support agency referrals).
  3. The national **Non-Enrolment Truancy Service (NETS)**. (*Ministry of Education funded.*)

The Ministry of Education receives information about young people who may be non-enrolled, from schools, CYPFA, the police, other agencies and members of the public. The information is passed on to NETS, which finds them, and, if necessary, helps them enrol in a new school. For over-15 year olds, NETS may help them apply for an exemption for a course or a job. For information about NETS refer to Circulars 1996/35 and 1999/03. Included in these circulars is a form for sending NETS referrals to the Ministry of Education.

## THE DATA COLLECTION

Studies undertaken both in New Zealand and overseas, have differing definitions of attendance, absenteeism, justified absence, and unjustified absence, and whether intermittent absence is included. This all adds to the problem of investigating attendance and non-attendance. Another difficulty in comparing data is the timing of the collection and whether it was collected at the same time of the year. For example, research undertaken in the winter months will show higher rates of absenteeism than research done in the summer. As Kerslake and Lange (1998:37) concluded:

*Comparisons between studies are at best problematic.*

The data collection described in this report is the same as that used in the 1996 Ministry of Education study (published in Kerslake & Lange, 1998). These studies are an attempt to provide systematically gathered information which would give an overall picture of absenteeism in New Zealand state and state-integrated primary, intermediate, composite and secondary schools.<sup>1</sup> They also enable schools to make some comparisons of their rates with the mean rates for similar types of schools. Readers will find it helpful to refer to the 1996 study when reading this report.

For the purposes of this study, as in the 1996 study, the following definitions were used:

- ◆ **Attendance** is taken to be the difference between the school roll and all absences.
- ◆ **Justified Absences** are those recorded in the Register, and marked as having been satisfactorily explained.

*A school has to make a judgement as to which explanations they will accept. Such judgements should be recorded in the school's policy documents.*

- ◆ **Unjustified Absences** are those which are not explained, or are unsatisfactorily explained.
- ◆ **Intermittent Unjustified Absence** occurs when a student is absent for part of a morning (or afternoon), or even just part of a period, without justification. (A dental visit is a justified intermittent absence.)
- ◆ **Truancy** refers to **unjustified absences** and **intermittent unjustified absences**.

Each of these definitions formed the basis of the different types of attendance and absence rates (see Appendix 2: Calculation of Rates). Note that the rates referred throughout this study are the average (mean) rates.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> All state and state-integrated schools (excluding special schools and the Correspondence School) were surveyed.

<sup>2</sup> The rates used and the definitions are the ones used by Kerslake and Lange in their 1996 study.

### Collection Objectives

The objectives of the data collection were:

1. To obtain information on attendance and non-attendance patterns in New Zealand schools, and to record this information as national averages for different types of schools.
2. To enable schools to monitor their performance by comparing their attendance data with the national averages for similar types of schools in similar circumstances.

The data collection described in this report is very similar to the one undertaken in 1996. These studies are an attempt to provide systematically gathered information which would give an overall picture of absenteeism in New Zealand state primary, intermediate, composite and secondary schools. This data collection is part of an on-going exercise to monitor national trends on school absences.

### Methodology

Schools were asked to complete students' attendance and absence for the week 25-29 May 1998 using the definitions of absence given to them. School information was returned to Education Services Central Ltd, Wanganui (who were contracted by the Truancy Project Team) who also followed up schools that had not returned their forms to them by the returning date (that is 10 June 1998). The forms were forwarded by Education Services Central Ltd to the Truancy Project Team in Wellington who have analysed the data and produced this report. The response rate of 96%, was very similar to that obtained in 1996.



# Results

This section reports on the attendance and absenteeism data obtained from the Term 2 1998 survey. The overall primary, intermediate, composite and secondary school absence and attendance rates obtained for the week surveyed (ie 25-29 May) are presented first (special schools, The Correspondence School, and private schools are excluded). These are followed by comparisons in the absence rates over year levels for these school sectors. Comparisons in the absence rates (eg for different parts of the country) are then presented.

## A GUIDE TO THE RESULTS (Adapted from Kerlake & Lange, 1998)

It is important to interpret the following tables correctly. The arithmetic mean has been presented for each rate. Because different numbers of schools are used to obtain these means, the figures cannot simply be added together to obtain another rate. As roll size is used as the calculation for the rate, rolls for schools that did not supply this information were taken from the 1 March 1998 return.

In the tables following (pp16-22), the absence rate is shaded darker to indicate that it is the overall absence rate; the justified absence rate and the truancy rate are lightly shaded as justified absences and truancy are the components of overall absence. The unjustified absence rate and intermittent unjustified absence rate have not been shaded. Unjustified absences including intermittent unjustified absences, produce the truancy rate.

Table 1 (p16) shows that many schools, particularly the primary schools, reported their justified absences, but not their unjustified absences or intermittent unjustified absences. It was not clear from the response whether they did not have this information available, or whether they did not have any unjustified absences. For this report, the former interpretation was used. It is probable that taking this interpretation would have little effect on the reported rates. Taking the former interpretation would result in a higher reported truancy rate than if the latter interpretation was adopted.

Although comparisons with the 1996 study have been made throughout this report, it must be remembered that the 1996 survey was undertaken in Term 3 when one would expect higher absences due to winter illness. The week chosen in this study was in Term 2 prior to a long weekend.

## RATES FOR ATTENDANCE & ABSENTEEISM

The attendance rates are around 90 percent for each of the school sectors (ie 93.1% for primary schools, 93.7% for intermediate schools, 91% for composite schools, and 88.4% for secondary schools), similar to what was found in the 1996 study. These rates are very similar

to the rates obtained in the 1996 survey (ie 93.2% for intermediate schools, 91.6% for composite schools, and 87.3% for secondary schools). Primary schools are not able to be compared between the studies, because of different methodologies used in sampling primary schools.

Table 1 (p16) shows the average (mean) rates for absences overall in Term 2: 6.9 percent for primary schools, 6.3 percent for intermediate schools (6.8% in 1996), 9 percent for composite schools (8.4% in 1996), and 11.6 percent for secondary schools (12.7% in 1996). These figures include all absences recorded in the survey, regardless of whether they were considered justified, unjustified or intermittent unjustified. It is important to remember that the overall absence rate does not rule out the possibility of much higher rates or much lower rates in certain schools, or for specific sets of students.

Justified absences are those absences recorded in the register, and marked as having been satisfactorily explained. A school has to make a judgement as to which explanations they will accept. The criteria for making judgements should be recorded in the school's policy documents. Justified absences make up the largest proportion of absences for primary, intermediate secondary and composite schools, as shown in Table 1 (p16). These were 5.8 percent for primary schools, 4.9 percent for intermediate schools (5.1% in 1996), 6.6 percent for composite schools (6.2% in 1996), and 6.1 percent for secondary schools (6.4% in 1996).

For secondary schools, the justified absence rate appears to have increased from 5.4 percent in 1977 to 6.4 percent in 1996 and dropped slightly to 6.1 percent in 1998.

The truancy rates in this survey refer to situations in which students are unjustifiably absent, including on an intermittent basis during the day.

The truancy rates were 1.4 percent for primary schools, 1.4 percent for intermediate schools (1.7% in 1996), 2.5 percent for composite schools (2.5% in 1996), and 5.6 percent for secondary schools (6.5% in 1996). For secondary schools the truancy rate is very similar to the justified absence rate. This was also the case in the 1996 study.

Unjustified absences are those absences which are either not explained, or are unsatisfactorily explained. For this study, a student was required to be away for half a day or for the whole day to be recorded as being unjustifiably absent. The unjustified absence rates were 1.3 percent for primary schools, 1.3 percent for intermediates (1.5 in 1996), 2.3 percent for composite schools (2.4% in 1996), and 3.2 percent for secondary schools (3.7% in 1996). Not all schools, and in particular not all primary schools, reported their unjustified absences.

For secondary schools, the unjustified absence rate appears to have increased from 1.4 percent in 1977 to 3.6 percent in 1996 and decreased slightly to 3.2 percent in 1998.

Schools were asked to record their intermittent unjustified absence rate. Intermittent unjustified absence occurs when a student is absent for part of a morning (or afternoon), or even just part of a period, without justification. (A dental visit is a justified intermittent absence.) Being late for school in the morning with no justified excuse is an example of intermittent unjustified absence. The intermittent unjustified absence rates were 0.1 percent for primary schools, 0.2 percent for intermediate schools (0.2% in 1996), 0.3 percent for composite schools (0.2% in 1996), and 2.6 percent for secondary schools (3.2% in 1996).

As Table 1 (p16) shows, not all secondary schools were able to report their intermittent unjustified absences, and fewer primary, intermediate or composite schools were able to do so. However when compared to the 1996 study more schools of each type were able to provide us with this information. As stated in Kerslake and Lange (1998):

*This may be an important area for schools to address in their monitoring procedures in the future. (Kerslake & Lange 1998:12)*

#### RATES OVER YEAR LEVELS

The truancy rate is significantly higher in secondary schools than in composite schools, intermediate schools or primary schools. Table 2 (p16) presents the data on year level.

For primary schools, the highest level of absenteeism was in the first year of schooling. For intermediate schools, the absence rates were similar across Year 7 and Year 8, and this result was also reflected in the other rates for intermediate schools. In composite and secondary schools, absence rates rose steadily from 7 percent in Year 7 to 14 percent in Year 13, the last year of secondary schooling. The justified absence rates for these schools were very similar across all year levels. However, the truancy rate rose steadily from Year 8 with each year level, peaking in the final year of schooling. Contributing to this effect are the increasing numbers of intermittent unjustified absences. This was also the pattern in the 1996 study.

## VARIATIONS IN ATTENDANCE & ABSENCE RATES

This section looks at the factors that may be related to absence rates and were examined by Kerslake and Lange (1998). The first group of factors has to do with the characteristics of the schools themselves, and the second group consists of temporal factors (ie day of the week).

### SCHOOL CHARACTERISTICS

While no demographic information on students was supplied, the school profile<sup>3</sup> does have information on demographic school characteristics. Analysis on some school characteristics has been undertaken, as it was by Kerslake and Lange (1998) and is presented in this section.

#### School Socio-Economic Decile<sup>4</sup>

Kerslake and Lange (1998) noted that it is often claimed that truancy is a much larger problem in schools that cater for students from low socio-economic backgrounds. The Targeted Funding for Educational Achievement (TFEA) decile levels of schools has been merged with the data to investigate the relation between socio-economic factors and absence rates. Table 3 (p17) presents the rates by socio-economic decile. Just as in 1996, for intermediate, and composite and secondary schools, the absence rate tended to decrease as the school decile rose. This survey shows the same pattern existed for primary schools in 1998. The truancy rates followed the same general pattern. However, for composite and secondary schools there was a general trend of decreasing justified absence as the decile increased, while for primary and intermediate schools the justified absence rates showed little difference across the various deciles.

#### Urban/Rural Location

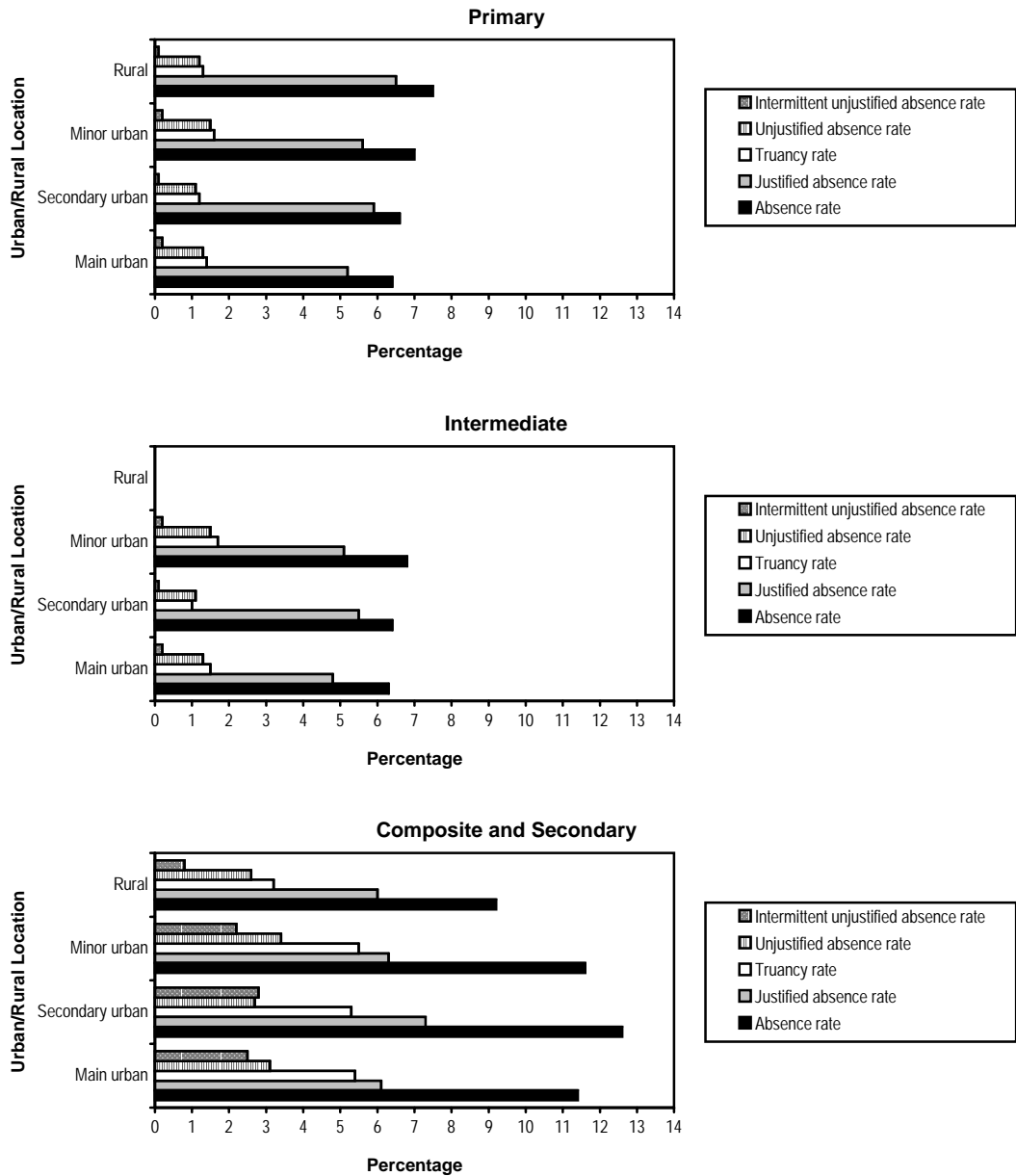
Media reports throughout the 1990's repeatedly referred to truancy being a problem in main cities. On the school profile is an urban/rural Department of Statistics 1991 classification for each school. This classification places schools into four groupings: main urban (population greater than 30,000), secondary urban (population 10,000 to 30,000), minor urban (population 1,000 to 9,999), and rural (population less than 1,000). Figure 1 presents the rates according to these groupings. (See Table 4 for the actual figures.)

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<sup>3</sup> The Educational Institutional Profile contains basic information on each institution within New Zealand. Data Management in the Ministry of Education maintains the master profile.

<sup>4</sup> TFEA was introduced in 1995 to address barriers to learning. To assist in the allocation, an index was devised to rank schools according to the relative socio-economic disadvantage of the communities from which their students are drawn. Decile 1 schools have students from the highest levels of socio-economic disadvantage, and decile 10 schools have students from the lowest levels of socio-economic disadvantage. Along with other variables, the socio-economic decile takes into consideration the proportion of students on the roll who are Māori or Pacific Islands. Hence there is a linkage between the decile, proportion of Māori and proportion of Pacific Islands students.

Figure 1: Rates for Term 2 1998 by school urban/rural location



As can be seen from this figure there are some differences according to the level of schooling. For primary schools, those in rural areas also had the largest rate of absence, largely brought about by the relatively higher justified absence rate; while those in main urban areas had the lowest, largely due to the relatively lower justified absence rate. For composite and secondary schools, those in rural areas also had the lowest rate of absence, truancy, or justified absence, while those in secondary urban areas had the highest rate of absence, largely due to the relatively high justified absence rate (see Table 4, p18 for further details). This pattern for composite and secondary schools is slightly different from what was found in 1996 when those in rural areas had the lowest rate of absence or truancy, while those in main urban areas had the highest rate.

### Regional Variation

Regional variations in absence rates, according to primary school Education Boards and geographic regions were respectively reported in the 1977 study and in the 1996 study. To ascertain if variations occur across the country in the current study, the Ministry of Education's property districts has been examined. The information is presented in Table 5 (p19). Variations in the rates do occur across districts, but not generally in a consistent way for each of the rates, or for levels of schooling. However, absences, largely due to lower unjustified absences, in composite and secondary schools tend to be lower in the South Island than in the North Island. This was also the case in the 1996 study.

### Proportion of Māori Students on School Roll

Schools often claim that Māori students have a higher rate of absence from school. As with the 1996 study no information on the specific absences of Māori students was obtained from schools. The school profile was used to obtain the proportion of Māori students for each school. This data was then merged with the absence data and the absence rates calculated. The results are presented in Table 6 (p20).

In general, the absence rate, justified absence rate, and truancy rate (the latter a result of the unjustified absence rate) rose as the proportion of Māori students rose for each of the school sectors. This is similar to what was found in 1996, except then the justified absence rates for each of the school sectors were similar regardless of the proportion of Māori students on the school roll.

The 1996 study found that for composite and secondary schools, the greatest change for absence rate and truancy rate came between the first two groupings (0 to 10% and greater than 10% to 20%). This was also the case in this study.

### Proportion of Pacific Islands Students on School Roll

Some schools have suggested that truancy is more common amongst Pacific Islands students. Once again no absence data for Pacific Islands students was obtained from schools; however as with the 1996 study, the proportion of Pacific Islands students was obtained from the school profile for each school. The results are presented in Table 7 (p21).

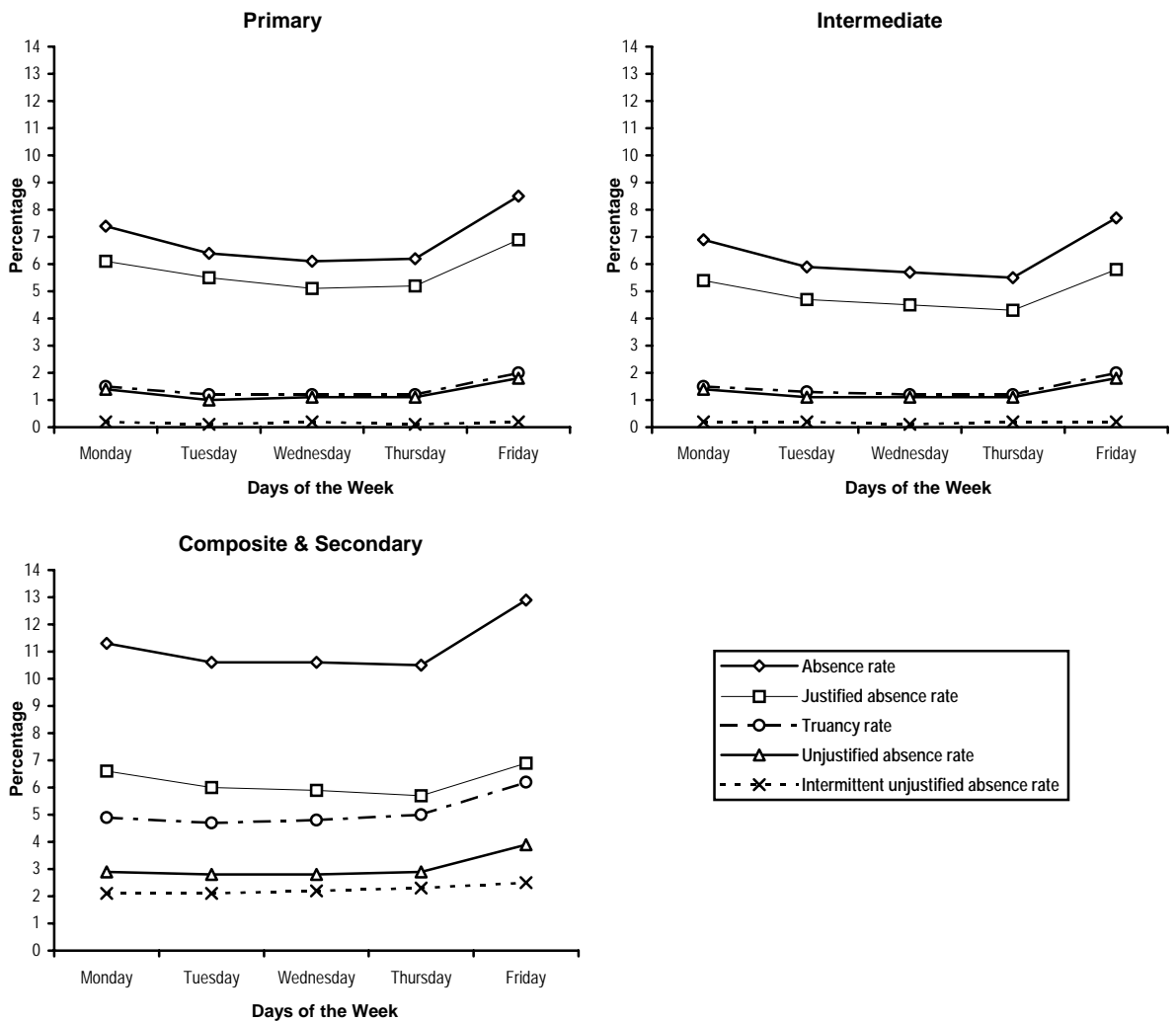
According to the proportion of Pacific Islands students, the pattern of absence varied between the different school sectors. The unjustified absence rate increased as the proportion of Pacific Islands students on their rolls increased. For primary schools there was no consistent pattern with regard to absence rates; however, the highest truancy rate was for schools with more than 20 percent Pacific Islands students on their roll. Intermediate and composite and secondary schools showed a consistent pattern in their absence rates, truancy rates, unjustified absence rates and intermittent unjustified absence rates with rates increasing as the proportion of Pacific Islands students in the school increased. There was little difference among schools with regard to the justified absence rates.

TEMPORAL FACTORS

Days of the Week

Both research (including the 1996 study) and feedback from schools tend to suggest that absences are not evenly spread across the week. The results in Figure 2 show that this was also the case in this study. For all school types the highest rates of absence of any kind were generally on Fridays (closely followed by Mondays), and the lowest were usually on Wednesdays or Thursdays. This was generally the pattern for all schools in the 1996 study (see Table 8 for further details).

Figure 2: Rates for Term 2 1998 by days of the week



## OTHER INFORMATION COLLECTED

In addition to data on absences collected in Term 2 1998, the survey form included additional questions on the school's policy on recording absences, and whether or not schools distinguished between justified and unjustified absences when recording absences. Schools were also asked if they had referred truants on to their District Truancy Service, and they were then asked about their awareness of the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service (NETS) and the number of students they had referred on to NETS. This section presents the results of this series of questions.

### SCHOOL POLICY ON RECORDING ABSENCES

Research, both in New Zealand and overseas (see Donn, Bennie & Kerslake 1991, Eastwold 1989, Miller 1986 and Reid 1986), has shown the benefits of schools having clearly stated policy guidelines and procedures. Reid (1986) recommends that a school should establish a structured attendance policy that is communicated widely to parents and students. It should describe the responsibilities of students, parents, teachers and administrators. The procedures that will be used if truancy continues should also be outlined. As Kerslake and Lange (1998) concluded:

*Schools who do not have a school policy may consider the positive benefits of having such a policy and develop one for their school in the near future. (Kerslake & Lange, 1998:28)*

In the 1996 survey, schools who were in a Ministry of Education funded Initiative for Improving School Attendance in 1996 were asked to include a copy of their school policy on recording absences and just under half of primary schools, 67 percent of intermediate schools and 63 percent of composite and secondary schools did so. A number of schools indicated that they did not have a policy statement on the recording of absences (32% of primary schools, 25% of intermediates and 20% of composite and secondary schools). For the 1998 survey, of all state and state-integrated schools, the question asked schools if they had a policy on recording absences; 80 percent did so.

From Table 9, it is clear that there has been an increase in the number of schools with a policy on recording absences, since the 1996 survey, with 94 percent of secondary schools, 91 percent of intermediate schools, 85 percent of composite schools and 77 percent of primary schools indicating that their school has such a policy. Schools with a lower SES decile ranking were more likely than schools with a higher SES decile ranking to have such a policy. Schools located in Nelson, Marlborough and West Coast and in Canterbury were less likely than schools in other districts to have a policy on recording absence as were schools in rural areas.

### DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN JUSTIFIED AND UNJUSTIFIED ABSENCES

Just as with the 1996 survey, schools were asked if they distinguished between justified and unjustified absences when recording absences; 63 percent indicated that their school did so. Table 10 shows that secondary schools (91%) were more likely than intermediate schools

(79%) or composite schools (76%) who were in turn more likely than primary schools (58%) to indicate that they make this distinction.

Schools with a lower SES decile ranking were more likely than schools with a higher SES decile ranking to distinguish between justified and unjustified absences. Schools located in Nelson, Marlborough and West Coast and in Canterbury were less likely than schools in other districts to distinguish between these absences. Similarly, schools in rural areas were less likely than schools in urban areas to do so.

#### SCHOOL REFERRALS TO THEIR DISTRICT TRUANCY SERVICE

Schools were asked to indicate if they had referred any truants on to their District Truancy Service in the first part of 1998. The results are presented in Table 11. Secondary schools (69%) and intermediate schools (61%) were more likely than composite schools (37%) to have sent truants on to their District Truancy Service in the first part of 1998. Few primary schools (16%) had done so.

Not surprisingly, as schools with a lower SES decile ranking were more likely to have truants, they were also more likely to have referred truants to their DTS than schools with a higher SES decile ranking. Fewer schools in Otago, Nelson/Marlborough/West Coast than in other districts had referred truants on to their DTS. Similarly, schools in rural areas were less likely than schools in urban areas to have done so.

#### SCHOOLS' AWARENESS OF THE NON-ENROLMENT TRUANCY SERVICE (NETS)<sup>5</sup>

Schools were then asked to indicate if they knew about the Ministry of Education funded Non-Enrolment Truancy Service (NETS); 79 percent indicated that they did so. The results are presented in Table 13. Secondary schools (90%) and intermediate schools (88%) were more likely than composite schools (80%) and primary schools (77%) to have some knowledge about NETS. Schools in Otago and Southland were less likely than schools in other districts to know about NETS. Rural schools were less likely than urban schools to know about NETS.

Schools were then asked to indicate the number of students they had referred on to NETS in 1997 and for Term 1 1998. Three hundred and fifty three schools indicated that in 1997 they had referred 1,374 students. However, according to the Non-Enrolment Truancy Service, 520 schools had referred students to them in 1997. In term one 1998, 223 schools reported they had referred 834 students to NETS.

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<sup>5</sup> For more information about NETS, please refer to Ministry of Education Circulars 1996/35 and 1999/03, and Education Gazette notice 17 November 1997.

**Table 1: Overall rates for Term 2 1998 by type of school**

	Primary		Intermediate		Composite		Secondary	
	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean
<b>Absence rate</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>6.9</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>11.6</b>
— Justified absence rate	2020	5.8	132	4.9	54	6.6	270	6.1
— Truancy rate	1650	1.4	127	1.4	50	2.5	264	5.6
— Unjustified absence rate	1650	1.3	127	1.3	50	2.3	264	3.2
— Intermittent unjustified absence rate	1443	0.1	100	0.2	43	0.3	246	2.6

**Table 2: Rates for Term 2 1998 by year level**

Year level	Absence rate		Justified absence rate		Truancy rate		Unjustified absence rate		Intermittent unjustified absence rate	
	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean
	<b>PRIMARY</b>									
Year 0/1	1994	9.4	1994	7.8	1627	2.0	1627	1.8	1425	0.2
Year 2	1996	7.5	1996	6.1	1631	1.7	1631	1.5	1430	0.2
Year 3	1993	6.9	1993	5.7	1629	1.4	1629	1.3	1426	0.1
Year 4	2004	6.3	2004	5.3	1637	1.3	1637	1.2	1434	0.1
Year 5	1997	6.3	1997	5.3	1634	1.3	1634	1.1	1431	0.2
Year 6	1982	6.2	1982	5.2	1624	1.2	1624	1.1	1424	0.1
Year 7	1171	6.2	1171	5.0	928	1.4	928	1.2	802	0.2
Year 8	1083	7.1	1083	5.9	849	1.5	849	1.4	734	0.2
OVERALL RATES	2020	6.9	2020	5.8	1650	1.4	1650	1.3	1443	0.1
	<b>INTERMEDIATE</b>									
Year 7	132	6.1	132	4.8	127	1.3	127	1.2	100	0.2
Year 8	132	6.6	132	5.1	127	1.6	127	1.4	100	0.2
OVERALL RATES	132	6.3	132	4.9	127	1.4	127	1.3	100	0.2
	<b>COMPOSITE AND SECONDARY</b>									
Year 0/1	49	12.5	49	10.8	44	1.9	44	1.6	38	0.4
Year 2	48	9.8	48	7.8	43	2.3	43	2.1	37	0.2
Year 3	49	7.4	49	5.9	44	1.6	44	1.3	39	0.3
Year 4	50	7.5	50	6.2	45	1.5	45	1.3	39	0.2
Year 5	50	9.6	50	7.7	45	2.1	45	1.9	39	0.3
Year 6	50	7.9	50	6.0	45	2.0	45	1.9	39	0.2
Year 7	125	7.0	125	5.3	116	1.7	116	1.4	102	0.4
Year 8	124	7.4	124	5.6	115	2.0	115	1.7	101	0.3
Year 9	321	9.5	321	6.1	311	3.5	311	2.3	287	1.3
Year 10	317	11.0	317	6.5	307	4.7	307	3.1	283	1.8
Year 11	314	12.0	314	6.1	304	6.1	304	3.8	280	2.5
Year 12	311	13.7	311	6.8	301	7.1	301	4.2	278	3.2
Year 13	306	13.9	306	6.5	296	7.7	296	3.8	273	4.3
OVERALL RATES	324	11.2	324	6.2	314	5.1	314	3.1	289	2.2

**Table 3: Rates for Term 2 1998 by school socio-economic decile**

School decile	Absence rate		Justified absence rate		Truancy rate		Unjustified absence rate		Intermittent unjustified absence rate	
	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean
	<b>PRIMARY</b>									
1	216	8.7	216	5.8	190	3.2	190	3.0	154	0.3
2	201	8.4	201	6.2	181	2.4	181	2.2	153	0.3
3	199	7.3	199	5.6	177	1.8	177	1.7	153	0.2
4	199	6.8	199	5.8	179	1.2	179	1.0	156	0.1
5	173	7.2	173	6.1	131	1.3	131	1.2	118	0.1
6	197	6.8	197	6.1	152	0.9	152	0.8	140	0.1
7	207	6.6	207	5.9	155	0.8	155	0.7	137	0.1
8	200	6.4	200	5.6	165	0.9	165	0.8	148	0.1
9	213	6.1	213	5.6	160	0.6	160	0.5	143	0.1
10	214	5.3	214	5.1	159	0.4	159	0.3	140	0.1
OVERALL RATES	2020	6.9	2020	5.8	1650	1.4	1650	1.3	1443	0.1
	<b>INTERMEDIATE</b>									
1	16	7.2	16	4.6	15	2.8	15	2.5	11	0.4
2	11	6.5	11	5.0	11	1.5	11	1.5	6	0.1
3	13	6.7	13	5.0	12	1.8	12	1.4	11	0.4
4	25	7.1	25	5.5	25	1.6	25	1.5	20	0.1
5	19	6.7	19	5.4	19	1.3	19	1.1	16	0.2
6	13	5.7	13	4.8	13	0.9	13	0.8	10	0.1
7	9	6.2	9	5.5	7	1.0	7	0.8	5	0.2
8	8	4.7	8	4.0	7	0.8	7	0.7	7	0.1
9	9	5.6	9	4.4	9	1.2	9	1.2	8	0.1
10	9	4.4	9	4.0	9	0.4	9	0.4	6	0.1
OVERALL RATES	132	6.3	132	4.9	127	1.4	127	1.3	100	0.2
	<b>COMPOSITE AND SECONDARY</b>									
1	28	14.9	28	7.2	28	7.7	28	5.2	24	2.9
2	32	15.5	32	7.2	32	8.3	32	5.3	32	3.0
3	33	12.2	33	6.0	32	6.5	32	4.0	29	2.7
4	32	12.3	32	6.2	32	6.2	32	3.2	30	3.1
5	50	11.5	50	6.2	48	5.6	48	3.3	44	2.5
6	40	10.3	40	6.1	40	4.2	40	2.4	38	1.9
7	33	9.0	33	6.2	33	2.8	33	1.8	28	1.2
8	36	9.1	36	5.9	34	3.5	34	1.5	33	2.0
9	18	8.9	18	6.2	15	3.2	15	1.9	13	1.5
10	22	6.3	22	5.0	20	1.4	20	1.0	18	0.5
OVERALL RATES	324	11.2	324	6.2	314	5.1	314	3.1	289	2.2

**Table 4: Rates for Term 2 1998 by school's urban/rural location**

Rural-urban location	Absence rate		Justified absence rate		Truancy rate		Unjustified absence rate		Intermittent unjustified absence rate	
	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean
	<b>PRIMARY</b>									
Main urban > 30,000	887	6.4	887	5.2	762	1.4	762	1.3	661	0.2
Secondary urban 10,000 to 30,000	125	6.6	125	5.9	99	1.2	99	1.1	88	0.1
Minor urban 1,000 to 9,999	197	7.0	197	5.6	174	1.6	174	1.5	156	0.2
Rural < 1,000	811	7.5	811	6.5	615	1.3	615	1.2	538	0.1
OVERALL RATES	2020	6.9	2020	5.8	1650	1.4	1650	1.3	1443	0.1
	<b>INTERMEDIATE</b>									
Main urban > 30,000	106	6.3	106	4.8	102	1.5	102	1.3	81	0.2
Secondary urban 10,000 to 30,000	16	6.4	16	5.5	15	1.0	15	0.9	12	0.1
Minor urban 1,000 to 9,999	10	6.8	10	5.1	10	1.7	10	1.5	7	0.2
Rural < 1,000										
OVERALL RATES	132	6.3	132	4.9	127	1.4	127	1.3	100	0.2
	<b>COMPOSITE AND SECONDARY</b>									
Main urban > 30,000	184	11.4	180	6.1	178	5.4	178	3.1	166	2.5
Secondary urban 10,000 to 30,000	28	12.6	28	7.3	28	5.3	28	2.7	26	2.8
Minor urban 1,000 to 9,999	68	11.6	68	6.3	65	5.5	65	3.4	61	2.2
Rural < 1,000	44	9.2	44	6.0	43	3.2	43	2.6	36	0.8
OVERALL RATES	324	11.2	324	6.2	314	5.1	314	3.1	289	2.2

**Table 5: Rates for Term 2 1998 by Ministry of Education property district**

Ministry of Education property district	Absence rate		Justified absence rate		Truancy rate		Unjustified absence rate		Intermittent unjustified absence rate	
	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean
	<b>PRIMARY</b>									
Northland	119	8.5	119	6.2	107	2.5	107	2.3	80	0.2
Auckland	334	6.7	334	5.1	306	1.8	306	1.7	256	0.1
Waikato	230	7.3	230	5.9	198	1.7	198	1.5	175	0.2
Bay of Plenty	133	8.1	133	6.5	117	1.8	117	1.7	97	0.1
Central West	247	7.1	247	6.1	189	1.3	189	1.2	170	0.2
Central East	191	6.8	191	5.7	145	1.5	145	1.4	128	0.2
Central South	189	6.4	189	5.5	151	1.1	151	1.0	138	0.2
Marlborough/Nelson/ West Coast	107	7.7	107	6.9	78	1.1	78	0.9	71	0.2
Canterbury	237	6.1	237	5.5	191	0.8	191	0.6	172	0.1
Otago	134	6.5	134	6.0	93	0.6	93	0.5	87	0.1
Southland	99	6.0	99	5.4	75	0.8	75	0.7	69	0.1
OVERALL RATES	2020	6.9	2020	5.8	1650	1.4	1650	1.3	1443	0.1
	<b>INTERMEDIATE</b>									
Northland	5	8.0	5	5.2	5	2.8	5	1.9	5	0.8
Auckland	44	6.2	44	4.4	44	1.7	44	1.6	31	0.1
Waikato	10	7.7	10	5.6	10	2.2	10	2.1	9	0.0
Bay of Plenty	10	6.2	10	5.2	10	1.0	10	1.0	7	0.0
Central West	12	6.9	12	5.6	12	1.3	12	1.1	9	0.2
Central East	9	6.1	9	4.6	8	1.7	8	1.6	5	0.1
Central South	16	6.0	16	4.8	14	1.3	14	1.0	12	0.4
Marlborough/Nelson/ West Coast	3	6.5	3	5.8	3	0.7	3	0.6	3	0.2
Canterbury	13	5.6	13	5.0	13	0.6	13	0.5	11	0.1
Otago	6	5.5	6	4.9	5	0.7	5	0.6	5	0.1
Southland	4	7.0	4	6.9	3	0.1	3	0.1	3	0
OVERALL RATES	132	6.3	132	4.9	127	1.4	127	1.3	100	0.2
	<b>COMPOSITE AND SECONDARY</b>									
Northland	24	11.5	24	5.7	24	5.8	24	4.6	18	1.6
Auckland	66	10.4	66	6.0	64	4.6	64	2.8	59	1.9
Waikato	33	11.3	33	5.4	33	5.8	33	3.4	28	2.9
Bay of Plenty	19	13.4	19	7.8	19	5.6	19	3.7	19	2.0
Central West	35	11.2	35	6.2	35	5.1	35	3.0	32	2.3
Central East	29	12.7	29	6.3	28	6.6	28	4.5	27	2.2
Central South	28	12.4	28	6.5	25	6.6	25	3.0	25	3.6
Marlborough/Nelson/ West Coast	13	10.1	13	5.9	13	4.2	13	1.7	12	2.7
Canterbury	36	11.0	36	6.5	34	4.8	34	2.5	32	2.4
Otago	27	9.5	27	6.4	25	3.4	25	1.7	24	1.8
Southland	14	9.9	14	6.5	14	3.4	14	2.4	13	1.1
OVERALL RATES	324	11.2	324	6.2	314	5.1	314	3.1	289	2.2

**Table 6: Rates for Term 2 1998 by percentage of Māori students on the school roll**

Percentage Māori	Absence rate		Justified absence rate		Truancy rate		Unjustified absence rate		Intermittent unjustified absence rate	
	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean
	<b>PRIMARY</b>									
0 to 10%	769	6.0	769	5.5	585	0.6	585	0.6	519	0.1
Greater than 10% to 20%	417	6.6	417	5.7	336	1.1	336	1.0	300	0.1
Greater than 20% to 35%	344	7.0	344	5.6	310	1.6	310	1.4	273	0.2
Greater than 35%	490	8.6	490	6.4	419	2.6	419	2.4	351	0.2
OVERALL RATES	2020	6.9	2020	5.8	1650	1.4	1650	1.3	1443	0.1
	<b>INTERMEDIATE</b>									
0 to 10%	36	5.5	36	4.8	34	0.7	34	0.7	28	0.1
Greater than 10% to 20%	34	6.0	34	4.7	33	1.3	33	1.1	26	0.2
Greater than 20% to 35%	38	7.0	38	5.2	38	1.8	38	1.7	30	0.2
Greater than 35%	24	7.0	24	5.0	22	2.2	22	1.8	16	0.4
OVERALL RATES	132	6.3	132	4.9	127	1.4	127	1.3	100	0.2
	<b>COMPOSITE AND SECONDARY</b>									
0 to 10%	110	8.7	110	5.9	104	2.9	104	1.7	92	1.4
Greater than 10% to 20%	91	11.2	91	6.0	88	5.4	88	2.8	81	2.9
Greater than 20% to 35%	58	12.6	58	6.6	58	6.0	58	3.8	56	2.3
Greater than 35%	65	14.2	65	6.7	64	7.5	64	5.1	60	2.6
OVERALL RATES	324	11.2	324	6.2	314	5.1	314	3.1	289	2.2

**Table 7: Rates for Term 2 1998 by percentage of Pacific Islands students on the school roll**

Percentage Pacific Islands	Absence rate		Justified absence rate		Truancy rate		Unjustified absence rate		Intermittent unjustified absence rate	
	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean
	<b>PRIMARY</b>									
Zero	938	7.3	938	6.3	712	1.3	712	1.1	624	0.1
Greater than 0 to 10%	834	6.4	834	5.4	708	1.2	708	1.1	621	0.1
Greater than 10 to 20%	107	7.3	107	5.6	99	1.9	99	1.7	88	0.2
Greater than 20%	141	7.4	141	4.8	131	2.8	131	2.6	110	0.2
OVERALL RATES	2020	6.9	2020	5.8	1650	1.4	1650	1.3	1443	0.1
	<b>INTERMEDIATE</b>									
Zero	3	5.0	3	4.2	3	0.8	3	0.7	2	0.2
Greater than 0 to 10%	96	6.3	96	5.1	92	1.3	92	1.1	75	0.2
Greater than 10 to 20%	12	6.2	12	4.9	12	1.7	12	1.4	10	0.3
Greater than 20%	21	6.7	21	4.7	20	2.2	20	2.0	13	0.3
OVERALL RATES	132	6.3	132	4.9	127	1.4	127	1.3	100	0.2
	<b>COMPOSITE AND SECONDARY</b>									
Zero	53	9.8	53	6.2	50	3.8	50	2.6	46	1.3
Greater than 0 to 10%	220	10.9	220	6.2	213	4.8	213	2.9	196	2.0
Greater than 10 to 20%	23	12.4	23	5.5	23	6.9	23	3.7	23	3.2
Greater than 20%	28	15.2	28	6.6	28	8.6	28	4.4	24	4.9
OVERALL RATES	324	11.2	324	6.2	314	5.1	314	3.1	289	2.2

**Table 8: Rates for Term 2 1998 by day of the week**

Days of the week	Absence rate		Justified absence rate		Truancy rate		Unjustified absence rate		Intermittent unjustified absence rate	
	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean	Number of schools	Mean
	<b>PRIMARY</b>									
Monday	2019	7.4	2019	6.1	1647	1.5	1647	1.4	1441	0.2
Tuesday	2017	6.4	2017	5.5	1645	1.2	1645	1.0	1441	0.1
Wednesday	2018	6.1	2018	5.1	1645	1.2	1645	1.1	1440	0.2
Thursday	2014	6.2	2014	5.2	1641	1.2	1641	1.1	1437	0.1
Friday	2002	8.5	2002	6.9	1632	2.0	1632	1.8	1428	0.2
OVERALL RATES	2020	6.9	2020	5.8	1650	1.4	1650	1.3	1443	0.1
	<b>INTERMEDIATE</b>									
Monday	130	6.9	130	5.4	125	1.5	125	1.4	100	0.2
Tuesday	132	5.9	132	4.7	127	1.3	127	1.1	100	0.2
Wednesday	132	5.7	132	4.5	127	1.2	127	1.1	100	0.1
Thursday	132	5.5	132	4.3	127	1.2	127	1.1	99	0.2
Friday	132	7.7	132	5.8	127	2.0	127	1.8	99	0.2
OVERALL RATES	132	6.3	132	4.9	127	1.4	127	1.3	100	0.2
	<b>COMPOSITE AND SECONDARY</b>									
Monday	324	11.3	324	6.6	314	4.9	314	2.9	288	2.1
Tuesday	324	10.6	324	6.0	314	4.7	314	2.8	289	2.1
Wednesday	324	10.6	324	5.9	314	4.8	314	2.8	289	2.2
Thursday	323	10.5	323	5.7	313	5.0	313	2.9	288	2.3
Friday	319	12.9	319	6.9	310	6.2	310	3.9	285	2.5
OVERALL RATES	324	11.2	324	6.2	314	5.1	314	3.1	289	2.2

**Table 9: School has a policy on recording absences**

School Policy	Primary		Intermediate		Composite		Secondary		Overall	
	Number of schools	%	Number of schools	%	Number of schools	%	Number of schools	%	Number of schools	%
Yes	1561	76.8	124	91.2	46	85.2	262	94.2	1994	79.7
No	406	20.0	8	5.9	5	9.3	4	1.4	423	16.9
Missing	66	3.2	4	2.9	3	5.6	12	4.3	86	3.4
TOTALS	2033	100.0	136	100.0	54	100.0	278	100.0	2503	100.0

**Table 10: Schools distinguish between justified and unjustified absences when recording absences**

Distinguish between justified and unjustified absences	Primary		Intermediate		Composite		Secondary		Overall	
	Number of schools	%	Number of schools	%	Number of schools	%	Number of schools	%	Number of schools	%
Yes	1182	58.1	107	78.7	41	75.9	252	90.7	1583	63.2
No	785	38.6	25	18.4	10	18.5	16	5.8	836	33.4
Missing	66	3.2	4	2.9	3	5.6	10	3.6	84	3.4
TOTALS	2033	100.0	136	100.0	54	100.0	278	100.0	2503	100.0

**Table 11: Schools referred truants on to their District Truancy Service this year**

Schools referred truants on to their DTS	Primary		Intermediate		Composite		Secondary		Overall	
	Number of schools	%	Number of schools	%	Number of schools	%	Number of schools	%	Number of schools	%
Yes	323	15.9	83	61.0	20	37.0	191	68.7	618	24.7
No	1652	81.3	49	36.0	30	55.6	78	28.0	1809	72.3
Missing	58	2.9	4	2.9	4	7.4	9	3.2	76	3.0
TOTALS	2033	100.0	136	100.0	54	100.0	278	100.0	2503	100.0

**Table 12: Schools' awareness of NETS**

Schools knowledge of NETS	Primary		Intermediate		Composite		Secondary		Overall	
	Number of schools	%	Number of schools	%	Number of schools	%	Number of schools	%	Number of schools	%
Yes	1559	76.7	120	88.2	43	79.6	250	89.9	1973	78.8
No	412	20.3	13	9.6	7	13.0	16	5.8	448	17.9
Missing	62	3.1	3	2.2	4	7.4	12	4.3	82	3.3
TOTALS	2033	100.0	136	100.0	54	100.0	278	100.0	2455	100.0



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# Appendix 1

## RECORDING INFORMATION ABOUT ABSENCES — 1998

### GENERAL COMMENTS ON SCHOOL REGISTERS

1. Registers are required to be marked twice a day.

If a student attends for part of the morning (or afternoon), they are marked present in the Register. (*If your school does this differently, please note this in Q8 on the questionnaire.*)

2. A school may well be recording attendance more than twice a day. Absence for part of a morning (or afternoon) is dealt with as ***Intermittent Absence*** (IA) below.

### DEFINITIONS

3. ***Justified Absences*** (JA) are those recorded in the Register, and marked as having been satisfactorily explained. A school has to make a judgement as to which explanations they will accept. Such judgements should be recorded in the school's policy documents.
4. ***Unjustified Absences*** (UA) are those which are either not explained, or are unsatisfactorily explained.
5. ***Intermittent Unjustified Absence*** (IUA) occurs when a student is absent for part of a morning (or afternoon), or even just part of a period without justification. (A dental visit is a justified intermittent absence.)
6. **TRUANCY** refers to students who have ***Unjustified Absences*** and ***Intermittent Unjustified Absences***. *A more thorough definition of Truancy would also include young people who should be enrolled, but are not. They may have just drifted, parents may keep them home, they may never have enrolled. They are part of the over all Truancy concern, but are not part of this school-based data.*

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE DATA TABLE

7. The number of ***Justified Absences*** (JA) is found by counting the number of students with **either** a half-day **or** whole day of absence (marked absent in Register) which has been satisfactorily explained.

Note that the focus is on **number of students absent**, not absences.

8. The number of ***Unjustified Absences (UA)*** is found by counting the number of students with either a half-day or whole day of absence which has not been satisfactorily explained.
9. The number of ***Intermittent Unjustified Absences (IUA)*** is found by counting the number of students with part of a morning or afternoon (even part of a period) absent, and with no justified explanation. These students will have been marked present in the Register.
10. *Any given student should only be counted once. Unjustified absences have priority over other absences.*
  - This means that if a student has Intermittent Unjustified Absences (IUA) for part of the day and is unjustifiably absent for half of the day they are recorded as an Unjustified Absence (UA).
  - If their absence is justified for half the day and unjustified for the other half they are recorded as an Unjustified Absence (UA).
  - If a student has Intermittent Unjustified Absence (IUA) and is justifiably absent for the other half they are recorded as an Intermittent Unjustified Absence (IUA).
11. Please include your current year level roll.
12. Please ensure you enter **0** if there are **NO** Intermittent Unjustified Absences, Unjustified Absences or Justified Absences for each Year Level your school has. Do not leave it blank for any year level your school has.

# Appendix 2

## CALCULATION OF RATES

The arithmetic mean was used to produce the rates that are reported in this study. For the study, each school's rates were calculated, then the overall mean rate was calculated. Schools can obtain their rates by following the instructions given below.

### **Attendance Rate**

All rolls for each day and level minus all justified, unjustified and intermittent absences for each day and level divided by **all** rolls for each day and level and the result multiplied by 100.

### **Absence Rate**

All justified absences, unjustified absences and intermittent unjustified absences for each day and level, divided by **all** rolls for each day and level, and the result multiplied by 100.

### **Justified Absence Rate**

All justified absences for each day and level, divided by **all** rolls for each day and level, and the result multiplied by 100.

### **Truancy Rate**

All unjustified absences and intermittent unjustified absences for each day and level, divided by **all** rolls for each day and level, and the result multiplied by 100.

### **Unjustified Absence Rate**

All unjustified absences for each day and level, divided by **all** rolls for each day and level, and the result multiplied by 100.

### **Intermittent Unjustified Absence Rate**

All intermittent unjustified absences for each day and level, divided by **all** rolls for each day and level, and the result multiplied by 100.

