

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INSTRUCTIONS, RESPONSE FORM AND QUESTIONNAIRE

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Survey on Attendance, Absences and Truancy - 2002

Definitions and Instructions

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.
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

1. 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.
2. Unjustified Absences (**UA**) are those which are either not explained, or are unsatisfactorily explained.
3. 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.)
4. **Truancy** refers to students who have Unjustified Absences or 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, or they may never have enrolled. They are part of the overall truancy concern, but are not part of this school-based data.

Instructions for completing the data collection section

1. *Any given student should only be included on the form once on any given day. Unjustified absences have priority over other absences.* This means that if a student has an Intermittent Unjustified Absence (IUA) during one half of the day and is unjustifiably absent for the other half 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**).
2. It is acknowledged that the time frame allowed for reporting to us will not allow for all absences to be followed up to establish whether or not they are justified. These should be recorded as unjustified (as at 11 September).
3. To distinguish between different students, please ensure that you use different initials for different students. As we do not need to know who is absent, you are free to select the initials you want. What we need to do is to distinguish between different students so that we can establish whether, for instance, given five absences, this involves one student absent five times or five students each absent once.
4. For Year Level use Y0/Y1,Y2,Y3,Y4,Y5,Y6,Y7,Y8,Y9,Y10,Y11,Y12,Y13.
5. For absence record JA=Justified Absence, UA=Unjustified Absence, IUA=Intermittent Unjustified Absence (see definitions above).

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

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Instructions

When you have completed the questionnaire we would be grateful if you would post it back with the data form recording your absences for the *week beginning 2 September 2002*, in the envelope provided (no stamp required) to: Freepost 702, Research Division, Ministry of Education, PO Box 761, WELLINGTON *by 11 September*.
Thank you.

1. What is your position in the school?

- Principal
 DP/AP
 Other (please specify)

2a. When recording absences, does your school distinguish between *justified* and *unjustified* absences?

- Yes
 No

2b. Does your school record *intermittent unjustified* absences?

- Yes
 No

3a. Does your school use the District Truancy Service (DTS)?

- Yes
 No

3b. How many students have you referred to your DTS during the week Monday 2 September - Friday 6 September 2002?

Please indicate the numbers of students in the table below.

	Maori	Pasifika	Asian	NZ European	Other
Boys					
Girls					

3c. How many students (including the above) have you referred to your DTS so far this year (as at 6 September)?

Please indicate the numbers of students in the table below.

	Maori	Pasifika	Asian	NZ European	Other
Boys					
Girls					

4a. Have you referred any students to the Non-Enrolment Truancy Services (NETS)¹ in the last 2 years? Tick all that apply.

- Yes
 No, because haven't had any student records unclaimed after 20 days
 No, because wasn't aware of NETS
 No, have had unclaimed student records but have not used NETS for these students

4b. If you do use NETS, how many students have you referred to them so far this year (as at 6 September)?

Please indicate the numbers of students in the table below.

	Maori	Pasifika	Asian	NZ European	Other
Boys					
Girls					

5. How often do you use the School Enrolment Records?

- Always or almost always
 Mostly
 Sometimes
 Never or almost never

Please comment.

6. Is there anything else you would like to say about school attendance, absences or truancy?

Thank you very much for your time and effort in completing the questionnaire. It is much appreciated. A report on the results of this survey will be provided to all participating schools as soon as possible.

¹ Refer Circular 1996/35 or Gazette notice 17 November 1997.

APPENDIX B: CONSIDERATIONS OF THE DATA

While issues with the data are noted at various points within the report, it was considered that these should be documented centrally for future reference.

Time of carrying out the research

The survey was carried out early September, that is towards the end of the third school term. A number of schools commented on their high level of absence due to winter illnesses and suggested that it should be conducted at a different time of the year when such illnesses were not as prevalent. In addition a number of secondary schools were involved in senior exams at the end of the week. This may have had an impact on some of the results and may have been one of the reasons why the response rate for secondary schools was lower than for other types of schools.

Timeframe for responding to the survey

Schools were asked to return their completed forms the week following the data collection. It is acknowledged that, as a result of this tight timeframe, a number of absences will have been recorded as unjustified which in the course of time would have transpired to be justified. This may have resulted in an unjustified absence rate being reported that is higher than the actual rate.

A matter of definition

Justified absences were defined as 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 and these may vary from one school to another. While it will not alter the absence rate overall, it may alter the justified absence rate vis-à-vis the unjustified absence rate and hence the truancy rate.

The reliability of information on ethnicity

This survey requested that schools report the student's ethnicity. Requesting such information from schools raises the question of its reliability. It is noted that the truancy rate for students, whose ethnicity was indicated as 'other' or was missing, was anomalously high. This points to the conclusion that schools may have been more inclined to classify absent students as 'other' or not included the information when, on the school roll, they may appear in one of the other larger ethnic groups.

Comparisons with previous surveys

While the current survey used the same definitions as previous surveys, there are some differences in the way the data was collected and the rates calculated that must be taken into account when making comparisons. These differences include:

- the time of carrying out the survey;
- the timeframe for responding to the survey;
- the different response rates for the surveys; and,
- how the absence and truancy rates were calculated.

The 1998 survey was carried out late May, while the 2002 and 1996 surveys were carried out early September when one might expect higher absences due to winter illnesses. As noted above, senior exams were being held in a number of secondary schools and this may have impacted on the results for 2002.

The earlier surveys allowed a slightly longer period of time for schools to respond. While this would not be expected to impact on the overall absence rate, it could impact on the type of absence recorded, that is, with the shorter time frame increased the likelihood of the absence being recorded as unjustified.

The response rate for the 2002 and the 1996 surveys stood at 86%, while the response rate for the 1998 survey was 96%. It is not clear how much of any differences in the absence rates, if any, can be attributed to the difference in response rates and student attendance in the non-responding schools.

Finally, due to individual student data being provided for the current survey, absence rates were calculated differently. Previous surveys took an arithmetic mean, whereby each school's rates were calculated, then the overall mean was calculated. The 2002 survey used, as a basis, the number of students in the schools participating in the survey, this providing a more accurate representation of student absence.

APPENDIX TABLES

APPENDIX TABLE 1: Comparison of single and co-educational schools (all schools in the survey)

Type of school	Boys schools		Girls schools		Co-educational schools		Total schools	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
State	13	48.2	22	44.9	1,879	88.7	1,914	87.2
State integrated	14	51.8	27	55.1	240	11.3	281	12.8
Total schools	27	100.0	49	100.0	2,119	100.0	2,195	100.0
Average (mean) decile	6.15		6.82		5.36		5.39	
Total roll	19,326		34,006		544,451		597,783	