

School suspensions and stand-downs

- Maori and Pacific Islands students continue to be over-represented in suspensions and stand-downs across all eight cities.

WHAT THIS IS ABOUT

School suspension and stand-down rates tend to highlight serious behavioural problems experienced by students at school.²⁵ The cause of such behavioural problems at school is complex and, in many cases, is likely to be related to other problems within a student's personal life. These problems will have an impact on the student's capacity to learn.

This indicator illustrates the combined number of suspensions and stand-downs, by ethnicity for the school year to 31 December 2001 and applies to the student population aged 5 to 15 years.²⁶

WHAT DID WE FIND?

The lowest number and rate of suspensions/stand-downs in 2001 was in Wellington. The rate per 1,000 of student population shows Christchurch (33.3), Hamilton (31.8) and Waitakere (30.9) having the highest rates.

Across the eight cities Maori and Pacific Islands students were over-represented in suspensions/stand-downs.

Male students across the eight cities make up the greater proportion of students who have been stood-down or suspended (73% of all stand-downs/suspensions).

Nationally the most common reasons for suspensions/stand-downs were for drugs (including substance abuse), physical assault on other students and continual disobedience.

NUMBER OF SUSPENSIONS/STAND-DOWNS, BY ETHNICITY (2001)							
	European	Maori	Pacific Islands	Asian	Other	Total	Rate per 1,000 Students
North Shore	311	116	50	18	11	506	17.6
Waitakere	357	327	143	11	7	845	30.9
Auckland	417	358	556	28	26	1,385	26.0
Manukau	247	419	454	32	21	1,173	22.2
Hamilton	282	271	32	7	27	619	31.8
Wellington	161	89	38	7	13	308	14.9
Christchurch	950	385	96	23	15	1,469	33.3
Dunedin	306	48	7	6	3	370	23.2

Data source: Ministry of Education

The process of ensuring that a student is able to continue his/her education in a school only stops once the student is 16 years of age or over. Suspensions and stand-downs are part of a broad range of ways in which student behaviour is managed and may represent one of a number of interventions.

There is no apparent relationship between the socio-economic status of a city and rates of suspension and stand-downs. However, there maybe a connection between high suspension and stand-downs rates and juvenile offending rates. For example, Christchurch, which continues to have the highest level of suspensions/stand-downs of the eight cities, also has high levels of juvenile offending.

²⁵ It should be noted that there maybe substantial differences between the application of stand-down/suspension procedures between schools. Both are subject to guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education but are strongly influenced by the policies set by a school board of trustees e.g. "zero tolerance" to issues such as bullying or drugs.

²⁶ Stand-downs of a student can total no more than 5 school days in any one term, or ten days in a school year. 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 either lift the suspension with or without conditions, to extend the suspension, or in the most serious cases to either exclude or expel the student from the school. Students can be suspended or stood-down more than once. Nationally for 1999/2000, 16% of all stand-downs were stood-down more than once, and 9% of all suspensions were suspended more than once.