### Briefing Note: Release of 2018 Student Engagement Data

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<th>To:</th>
<th>Hon. Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education</th>
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<td>Hon. Tracey Martin, Associate Minister of Education</td>
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<td>Messaging seen by Communications team:</td>
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**Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

**Note** that the 2018 Student Engagement reports and associated data are ready to be released on Education Counts.

**Summary**

- This briefing informs you of results of the 2018 student engagement data which comprises three collections - stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions; early leaving exemptions; and transient students.

- In 2018 stand-down rates continued to increase and have been steadily increasing since 2015.

- Overall national rates of suspensions, exclusions and expulsion decreased in 2018, which follows 2017 when all national rates increased. Rates remain below their peaks in around mid-2000.

- The rate of early leaving exemptions increased in 2018, but numbers have remained low over the last ten years. The rate of transient students declined in 2018 and has been declining since 2016.

- We will liaise with your office on communications approach for this release and the timing of publication on the Education Counts website.

- We also recommend that this Briefing Note is proactively released as part of the next publication.
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Group Manager  
Evidence Data and Knowledge  

13/06/2019

Hon Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education  

8/6/19
Background

1. This report summarises the 2018 results for the Ministry of Education's student engagement data, which covers three data collections (stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions; early leaving exemptions; and transient students). Refer to Annex Two for definitions of the collections.

2. The Ministry releases this data each year on the Education Counts website. Along with data tables, we release three education sector indicator reports which summarise the results and report on trends in the indicators for the three data collections.

Student Engagement Data

3. Schools have a keen interest in engagement data. Student engagement indicators have been developed to help decision-makers understand the engagement context and develop strategies to improve student engagement.

4. An upward trend may reflect more incidents of challenging behaviour being recorded but it may also be that schools are changing their approach to behaviour management in some way.

Highlights

5. The trends for 2018 for each indicator (stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions, expulsions, early leaving exemptions and transient students) are described in Annex One. In summary, the 2018 student engagement results show that:

a. In 2018, the rates\(^1\) for suspensions, exclusions and expulsions all decreased from the previous year (by 3%, 4%, and 13%, respectively). The rate for stand-downs increased from the 2017 rate (by 8%). All rates remain low compared to previous years.

b. Schools continue to stand-down, suspend, exclude, and expel more male students than female students. Female students are on average 62% less likely to be stood-down, suspended, excluded or expelled.

c. The majority (59%) of stand-downs and suspensions were received by students in the early secondary ages (12 to 15 years).

d. The majority of stand downs (65%) are 1-2 days in duration, as opposed to 3-5 days.

e. The most common reasons for stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions were physical assault on other students (29%), and continual disobedience (22%).

f. The number of approved early leaving exemptions increased in 2018 but numbers remain low compared to previous years. There were 637 early leaving exemptions in 2018, compared to 523 in 2017.

\(^1\) All rates represent the prevalence per 1,000 students. In the Stand-downs, Suspensions, Exclusions and Expulsions report rates are age standardised, which accounts for the increased prevalence of these actions for the 12-15 age groups.
g. The rate of transience declined slightly in 2018 (down 4% since 2017) but has generally remained stable over the past 5 years.

h. Across the regions there is no overall distinct pattern of growth in these indicators. Smaller regions tend to have slightly larger changes between years.

i. The increase in stand-downs has been reported in the shorter duration stand-downs (1-2 days) (12% increase in 2018). Although the total number of suspensions, exclusions and expulsions have gone down from 2017 to 2018, our analysis indicates that schools that increased their stand-downs in the last year have a slight tendency to have increased their suspensions, exclusions and expulsions over the same period. Numbers of suspensions, exclusions and expulsions are decreasing, but these are predominantly driven by schools that are also decreasing their stand-downs.

Connections to Education Work Programme

6. When information on students who have learning support needs is compared with those who are involved in stand-downs, suspensions, exclusions and expulsions, there appears to be a strong correlation, especially at primary school level. Planned changes to learning support, including the future provision of Learning Support Coordinators, will support schools to better meet the needs of these students.

7. Māori and Pacific students and those from lower socio-economic groups are over represented in the student engagement measures. This is further confirmation of the feedback we received through the education conversation that the school system needs to do a better job of meeting the needs of these students. These groups are the focus of specific work streams, and are also a priority for all parts of the education work programme.

Next Steps

8. We will liaise with your office regarding the timing of the release on the Education Counts website.

9. Key messages and questions and answers will be provided and we will continue to work with your office on communications surrounding this release.

Proactive Release

10. We recommend that this Briefing is proactively released as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.
Annexes

Annex 1: 2018 Student Engagement Data Trends by Indicator
Annex 2: Education Sector Indicator Definitions
Annex 1

Annex one: 2018 Student Engagement Data Trends by Indicator

Stand-downs, on the rise after period of decline

1. The latest stand-down rate is the highest since 2010 (see Figure 1). There were 19,414 stand-down cases in 2018, which were received by 14,247 students. This equates to 25.5 stand-downs per 1,000 students, up from 23.7 per 1,000 students in 2017. Since 2015 the stand-down rate has been increasing steadily.

   Figure 1: Age-standardised stand-down rates (2000 to 2018)

2. Stand-down rates for all ethnic groups except Pacific students increased in 2018 (see Figure 2). The rate for Pacific students decreased by 3.6%. European/Pākehā students had the biggest increase in stand-down rates between 2017 and 2018, growing by 12%. The rate for Māori students increased by 8%. Schools continue to stand-down more Māori students than any other ethnic group.

   Figure 2: Age-standardised stand-down rates by ethnic group (2000 to 2018)
Annex 1

3. Students from schools in the lowest quintile (deciles 1 and 2) were over four times more likely to be stood-down than students in the highest quintile (deciles 9 and 10). Stand-down rates were highest for Māori students across all quintiles, except quintile 1 where European/Pākehā students had the highest rate.

4. More than half of all stand-downs occur at ages 12-15. In 2018, this age range accounted for 54% of cases.

5. Male students were nearly three times more likely to receive a stand-down than female students. In 2018, the stand-down rate for male students was 37.0 per 1,000, while for female students it was 13.5 per 1,000.

6. Physical assault on other students was the most common reason for stand-downs, accounting for 32% of cases. Of every 1,000 students, 8.3 were stood down for this reason, up from 7.2 in 2016. Continual disobedience was the second most prevalent reason, accounting for a further 19% of stand-downs with a rate of 4.9 per 1,000 students.

7. Stand-downs can vary in length from 1-5 days. As in previous years most of the increase in stand-downs has occurred in the shorter duration ones of 1-2 days (12% increase since 2017) rather than the longer duration ones of 3-5 days (which increased by 6% since 2017). Furthermore:
   a. In 2018 there were 12,550 stand-downs of 1-2 days, equating to 65% of all stand-downs. There were 6,863 stand-downs of 3-5 days.
   b. Since 2017, within the shorter duration stand-downs the proportions of stand-downs physical assault on other students and physical assault on staff have slightly increased by 2% and 1%, respectively. Theft, vandalism or arson and continual disobedience have decreased slightly since 2017, by 2% and 1% respectively.

8. The Bay of Plenty/Waikato region shows the largest rate of increase in stand-downs in 2018 with (26.5 per 1,000 students), which was an increase of 5.9 per 1,000 students since 2017.

9. Otago/Southland had the highest rate of stand-downs in 2018 (32.9 per 1,000 students). Otago/Southland also had the second largest increase in rate of stand-downs with an increase of 4.1 per 1,000 since 2017.

Suspensions down, after a short period of increases

10. In 2018 the rate of suspensions decreased (see Figure 3). There were 3,065 suspension cases in 2018, which were received by 2,747 students. This equates to a rate of 4.0 per 1,000 students, down from the rate in 2017 (4.2 per 1,000). Despite increases in each of the last two years, the rate of suspensions was well below those seen prior to 2009.
11. Points to note for 2018 are:

   a. Suspension rates were higher in low-quintile schools. Suspension rates were highest for Māori across all quintiles.

   b. 56% of suspension cases occurred within the 13-15 age range. The suspension rate was highest among 14-year-olds (12.7 per 1,000 students). This was three times higher than the average rate (4.0 per 1,000).

   c. Male students receive more suspensions more often than female students (5.7 per 1,000 suspensions for male students and 2.3 per 1000 for female students).

   d. Physical assault on other students was the most common reason for suspensions (1.0 per 1,000 students) making up 25% of cases. This was also an increase on the 2017 rate of 0.09 suspensions per 1,000. The next most common reasons were continual disobedience and drugs (including substance abuse), accounting for 22% and 17% of suspensions, respectively (since 2017 rates for these reasons both declined by 0.11 and 0.07 respectively).

   e. Tai Tokerau continue to have the highest rate of suspensions (6.5 per 1,000 students). This rate has decreased since 2017 by 0.2 suspensions per 1,000 students.

   f. Taranaki/Whanganui/Manawatu showed the largest rate of increase in suspensions, (5.7 per 1,000 students), an increase of 1.0 suspensions per 1,000 students since 2017.
Annex 1

Exclusions down, after a short period of increases

12. Fewer students were excluded in 2018 (1.5 per 1,000 students) compared to 2017 (1.6 per 1,000) (see Figure 5). This tracks with the general reduction in the rate since 2009, from 2009 to 2018 the rate has dropped 33%. In 2018 there were 1016 exclusion cases received by 1001 students.

Figure 5: Age-standardised exclusion rates (2000 to 2018)

13. Points to note for 2018 are:
   a. Male students (2.2 per 1,000) were two times more likely to be excluded than female students (0.9 per 1,000).
   b. Continual disobedience was the most common reason for exclusions. It accounted for 29% of exclusions (0.45 per 1,000 students), with physical assault on other students accounting for another 25% of exclusions (0.38 per 1,000 students).
   c. Bay of Plenty/Waiairiki had the largest change in rate of exclusions with a reduction of 0.3 exclusions per 1,000 students to a rate of 1.2 per 1,000 students.
   d. Taranaki/Whanganui/Manawatu reported the highest rate of exclusions in 2018 (2.6 per 1,000 students). This is followed by Tai Tokerau (2.4 per 1,000) and Otago/Southland (2.3 per 1,000 students).

Expulsions down, and generally decreasing

14. The rate of expulsions among students aged 16 and over was 1.2 per 1,000 students in 2018, down from 1.4 per 1,000 in 2017. Expulsion rates have generally decreased over time, but vary from year to year due to the small number of expulsions (118 students were expelled in 2018, compared to 140 in 2017) (See Figure 7).
Annex 1

Figure 7: Age-standardised expulsion rates (2000 to 2018)

15. Points to note for 2018 are:
   a. Male students (1.8 per 1,000) were three times more likely to be expelled than female students (0.6 per 1,000 students).
   b. Physical assault on other students was the most common reason for expulsions, accounting for 32% of expulsions. Drugs (including substance abuse) accounted for 22% of expulsions and continual disobedience accounted for a further 17%.
   c. The Tai Tokerau region showed the largest change in the rate of expulsions, with a rate of 2.7 per 1,000 students, decreased from 5.0 expulsions per 1,000, in 2017.
   d. The regions with the highest rates of expulsions were, Tai Tokerau (2.7 per 1,000 students), Auckland (1.5 per 1,000 students) and Bay of Plenty/Waikato (1.4 per 1,000 students).

Early leaving exemptions, on the rise but at low levels

16. The number of early leaving exemptions increased in 2018 (from 523 in 2017 to 837 in 2018) but numbers have remained low over the last 10 years. In 2018 the rate of approvals of early leaving exemptions was 11.2 per 1,000 students (See Figure 9).
Annex 1

**Figure 9: Early leaving exemption application, approval and decline rates (2002 to 2018)**

17. Points to note for 2018 are:

a. Training provider courses were the most popular destination for 15 year-old students who received an early leaving exemption, with the majority (85%) of early leavers going there in 2018, up slightly from 2017. A further 6% of all early leavers went into full time employment with 9% enrolling in a Polytechnic course.

b. Male students receive up to 60% of early leaving exemptions (13.4 per 1,000 students).

c. The rate of early leaving exemptions at quintile 1 (20.9 per 1,000 students) schools was 9.5 times higher than that of quintile 5 schools (2.2 per 1,000 students).

d. Bay of Plenty (24.7 per 1,000), Tai Tokerau (20.4 per 1,000) and Nelson/Marlborough and West Coast (16.0 per 1,000 students) were the regions with the highest rates of early leaving exemptions. With Tai Tokerau more than doubling their rate from 10.1 per 1,000 in 2017 to 20.4 per 1,000 in 2018.

**Transient students down**

18. In 2018, 3,548 students were identified as transferring school twice or more between 1st March and 1st November. These students are considered transient. Of these transient students, 88% transferred school twice, 10% transferred 3 times, and 1% transferred 4 times or more.

19. The rate of transient students was 4.5 students per 1,000 for 2018, decreasing by 0.2 when compared to 2017 (see Figure 11). The spike in transience in 2011 was due to the impact of the Christchurch earthquake, which raised the rate to 6.5 per 1,000 for that year.
Annex 1

Figure 11: Transients per 1,000 enrolled students (2010-2018)

20. Points to note for 2018 are:

a. The rate of transience for Māori students decreased by 0.7 per 1,000 students (from 11.1 per 1,000 in 2017 to 10.4 per 1,000 students in 2018). This is the largest reduction in the rate of transience of all ethnic groups.

b. There have been consistently higher rates of female transient students from 2010-2017 but this gap narrowed in 2018. In 2018 females had a transient rate of 4.6 per 1,000 students compared to a male rate of 4.3 per 1,000 students. In 2012 the rate for females was 10% higher than that of males. This has decreased to a difference of 7% in 2018.

c. The regions with the highest rates of transience were Northland (16.6 per 1,000), West Coast (15.3 per 1,000) and Gisborne (14.8), but by far the largest rate is of students who attended correspondence school with a rate of 47.1 per 1,000 students. Auckland continues to have the highest number of transient students compared with these smaller regions.
Annex Two: Education Sector Indicator Definitions

Stand-down

1. A stand-down results when a principal formally decides to remove a student from school for a period of up to five school days. A stand-down for any student can total no more than five school days in any term, or ten school days in a year. Students return automatically to school following a stand-down.

Suspension

2. A suspension is the formal removal of a learner from a state or integrated school kura until the school Board of Trustees (the Board) decides the outcome at a suspension meeting. Following a suspension, the Board must meet within seven school days and make one of the following possible decisions:
   a. lift the suspension without conditions
   b. lift the suspension with conditions
   c. extend the suspension with conditions
   d. exclude (if the learner is under 16)
   e. expel (if the learner is over 16)

Exclusion and Expulsion

3. Following a suspensions meeting, a Board may decide to permanently remove a learner from attending its school. If the learner is:
   a. under the age of 16 it is called exclusion
   b. over the age of 16 it is called expulsion.

Age-Standardisation

4. Stand-downs, suspensions and exclusions peak for ages 13 to 15, and expulsions are highest at age 16. We standardise for age so that fairer comparisons can be made between different groups. That is, age-standardisation removes any differences due to one group having a younger or older population than other groups, or if the overall age distribution has changed from year to year.

5. An age-standardised rate is one where all subgroups, for all years compared, are artificially given the same age distribution, so that different years and different areas can be more accurately compared.
Annex 2

6. The age distributions of learners in each subgroup and year have been standardised to (or weighted by) the set of 2017 age-specific rates for all New Zealand.

7. Expulsions occur only for 16 year-olds and above, so the expulsion rate refers to the number of expulsions per 1,000 standardised for students aged 16 or over. Likewise, exclusions only occur for students aged 15 or under, so the exclusion rate refers to the number of exclusions per 1,000 standardised for students aged 15 or under.

**Early Leaving Exemptions**

8. Enrolment in school is compulsory for all students aged between 6 and 16 years old. However, parents of 15-year-old students may apply to the Ministry of Education for an exemption from schooling on the basis of educational problems, conduct, or the unlikelihood of the student benefiting from attending available schools. Parents are required to give details about training programmes or employment that the student would move on to in the event of an early leaving exemption being granted.

**Transient Student**

9. A student is considered transient if they move school twice or more over the period from the 1st of March to the 1st of November in the same year.