

SUSPENSION DATA

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why does the Education Directorate publish suspension data?

The Education Directorate publically releases suspension data as part of its commitment to open and transparent government. The ACT Government has committed to recommendations in the *Schools for All Children and Young People* (2015), including that it monitor and publicly report on suspensions in Canberra public schools.

With a wellbeing focus, the Education Directorate is working to develop and enhance positive student behaviour and engagement, with the aim of improving learning outcomes and reducing suspension rates in Canberra Public Schools

Do Catholic and Independent schools publish their suspension data?

Catholic schools currently report suspensions to the Catholic Education Office which has processes for the collection and monitoring of suspension data. Independent Schools report to their Boards and their communities, suspension data is considered by each School Board. Both school sectors also report to the Minister for Education about the number and nature of critical incidents that occur in their schools. This information is included in the Directorate's annual report along with Canberra Public School data.

How will the Canberra Public School suspension data be published?

The Education Directorate publishes suspension data on Directorate website www.education.act.gov.au

Suspension data is organised by year, primary schools, high schools and college levels, expressed in a number of ways, including:

- a) the number of suspension incidents
- b) the number of days of suspension
- c) the number of students suspended at least once
- d) the percentage of the students (of the total number of enrolments) who were suspended at least once in the given year (suspension rate)
- e) the number of suspension incidents per 100 students, and
- f) the number of days of suspension per 100 students.

As there are changes in the total number of enrolments each year, measures (d), (e) and (f) allow data to be compared between years. Comparing information over time allows for trends to be identified.

How will data be used?

The Education Directorate records and analyses suspension data to assist with planning and school improvement.

Continuous improvement processes are used in schools and at a system level. Suspension data is one part of the information used to inform these processes. Where schools are identified as having higher rates of student suspensions principals may undertake to identify if there are any particular reasons for this necessitate further consideration and planning.

What does the data tell us?

The data shows measures of suspension have, on average, remained relatively steady in primary schools and colleges. There has been a slight decrease overall in the high school suspension rate when comparing 2013 and 2016. This may reflect the system's focus on school climate and student engagement in schools.

How will the Directorate try to prevent increases in the rates of suspensions?

The Education Directorate takes a student-centred approach to student engagement consistent with findings in the *Schools for All Children and Young People* (2015). The report identified that student centred schools involve understanding and addressing individual needs, providing a physically and emotionally safe environment for students and their families, investing in high quality relationships with students, acknowledging important linkages between wellbeing, learning and behaviour, engaging the learner, intervening early, the need for collaboration and the importance of a whole school approach. A student centred school uses a prevention and early intervention approach to address issues which may lead to suspensions.

How is suspension used in Canberra Public Schools?

Sometimes suspension of a student from a school is necessary and is used in accordance with section 36 of the Education Act (2004). This may include situations where the principal decides action is required to address a situation where a student threatens the safety and wellbeing of another student attending the school, a member of the staff of the school or another member of the community. This may involve threats of, or the use of violence.

Suspension is the process of temporarily withdrawing a student from school activities and school grounds, placing them in the care of their parents/ person with parental responsibility, when the student displays behaviours described under section 36 of the Act. Suspension is used when the student's behaviour has necessitated the need for the school to:

- restore a safe learning and working environment for the school community;
- establish or review safety risk assessments and support plans for the student, to assist a successful return to school;
- communicate the significance of a behaviour and its impact;
- seek additional services or supports where necessary for the student, parents/ carers and school community to address underlying reasons for the behaviour leading to the suspension, as well as the necessary safety controls.

What support can schools access to develop school specific processes?

Schools are required to review and update their behaviour support procedures and practices regularly, based on data and feedback, which includes seeking input from their school community. Where schools require support to develop their behaviour support procedures and practices, they can request input from their Network Student Engagement Team.

MORE INFORMATION

The following policies and procedures are at www.education.act.gov.au/publications_and_policies/policy_a-z

- [Suspension, Transfer and Exclusion Policy](#)
- [Safe and Supportive Schools Policy](#)
- [Education Participation \(Enrolment and Attendance\) Policy](#)

The EDU's Suspension, Transfer and Exclusion policy is currently undergoing the policy review process, community consultation is expected to commence at the beginning of 2018.

[Schools for All Children and Young People](http://www.education.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/856254/Attach-4-Expert-Panel-Report-Web.pdf) can be accessed at www.education.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/856254/Attach-4-Expert-Panel-Report-Web.pdf

For further information about this factsheet contact **the Student Wellbeing section of the Student Engagement Branch** ETDStudentWellbeing@act.gov.au

Feedback about the application of a Directorate policy should be raised with:

- the school principal, where applicable in the first instance;
- the Directorate's Liaison Unit on (02) 6205 5429;
- online at http://www.det.act.gov.au/contact_us.

See also the *Complaints Policy* on the Directorate's website.
