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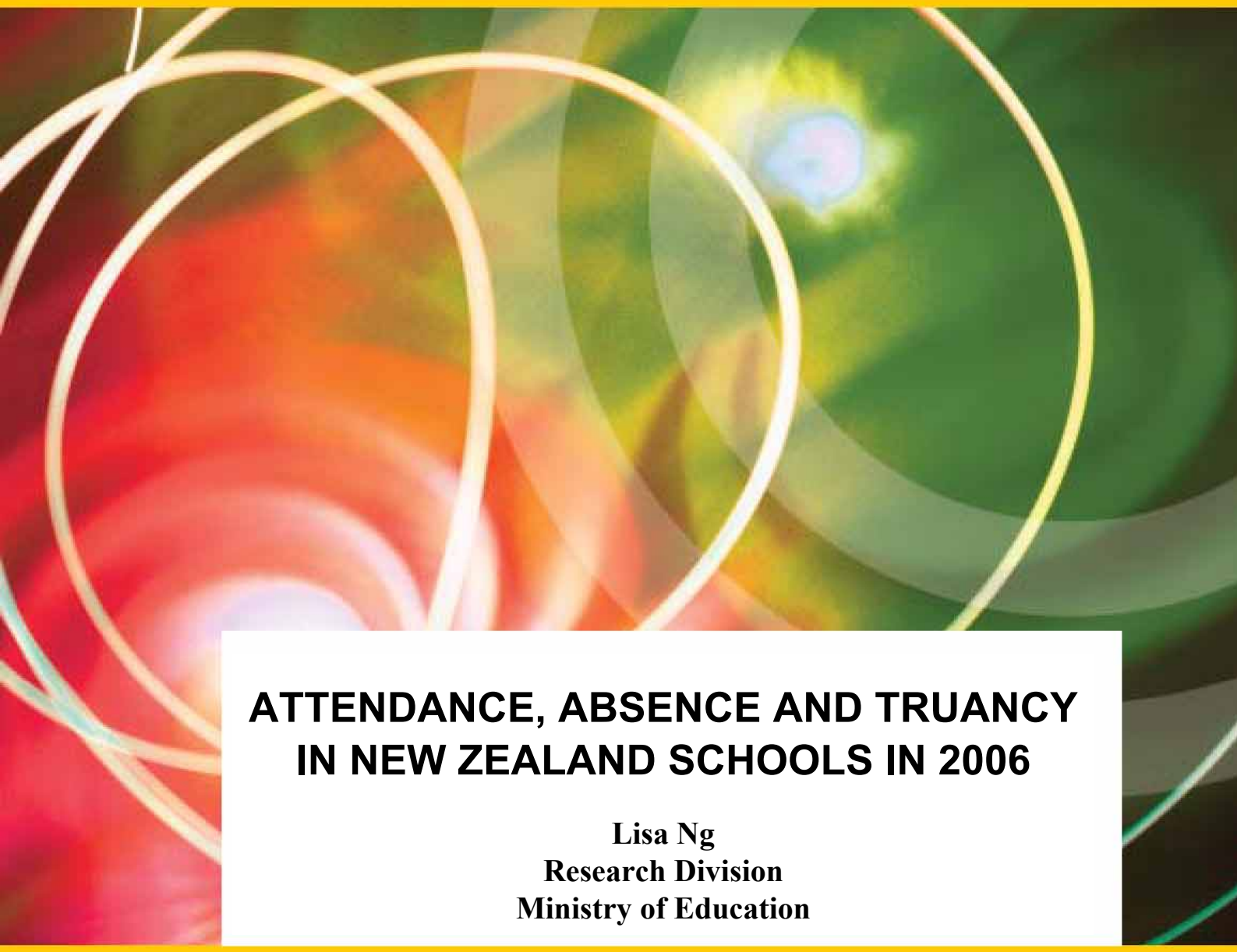

ATTENDANCE, ABSENCE AND TRUANCY IN NEW ZEALAND SCHOOLS IN 2006

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RESEARCH DIVISION
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the principals and staff of schools who took the time to complete the forms and provide us with such valuable information. We acknowledge that for many schools, this represented a huge effort on the part of school principals, administrators and teachers across the country, which we greatly appreciate. Their commitment to this survey ensures the Ministry of Education has relevant information to support schools with regard to school attendance.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent years, regular surveys of schools on their students' attendance have been carried out by the Ministry of Education. The most recent of these was carried out during the week of 21 to 25 August 2006. All state and state integrated schools, excluding private, special schools and Correspondence School, were asked to record information on individual student absence events. For each student absence, the data collection form was designed to capture the day and type of absence, and the year level, gender and ethnicity of the absent student. In the 2006 survey, 2,216 (91.3%) of all state schools participated.

For the purpose of the data collection, absences were classified into one of three types:

- **Justified absences** are absences recorded in the register, and marked as having been satisfactorily explained;
- **Unjustified absences** are absences, which are not explained, or not explained to the satisfaction of the school; and
- **Intermittent unjustified absences** occur when a student is absent for part of a morning (or afternoon) or part of a period without justification.

Data were also presented in terms of:

- **Overall absence,** being the sum of the above three absence types; and
- **Truancy,** being the sum of unjustified absences and intermittent unjustified absences.

The overall absence and truancy rates are based on the number of absence events (and not on the number of absent students). These rates are calculated with the denominator being the rolls for the participating schools; they relate to an average (mean) daily absence for the week per 100 students.

The main findings were:

- On an average daily basis, the 2006 survey indicated an overall absence rate of 11.5 percent with a truancy rate of 4.1 percent. In 2006, the overall absence and truancy rates were higher across all schools compared with 2004. Overall absence rate increased from 9% in 2004 to 11.5% in 2006 ,and truancy rate from 3.4% in 2004 to 4.1% in 2006.

- Rates across the different school sectors differed – secondary schools experienced an absence rate of 16.3 percent and a truancy rate of 8.3 percent; composite schools 12.7 percent and 3.5 percent respectively; intermediate schools 8.4 and 2.2 percent; and primary schools 8.9 and 1.9 percent.

- The absence rates for males and females were similar and tracked each other closely across all year levels and absence types until students reached secondary school level. From year 10 onwards,

unjustified absence rates (including intermittent absences) for females moved to slightly higher levels than for males. Justified absences become notably higher for females from year 10.

- The intermittent unjustified absence rates for both males and females increased rapidly during the secondary school years. Males had higher intermittent unjustified absence rates than females at years 12 and 13.

- Similar to 2004, in 2006, males attending co-educational schools had a higher overall absence rate than their counterparts in single sex schools from year 9 onwards, largely due to higher incidences of unjustified absences. In relation to truancy, girls in years 9 – 13 in single sex schools had the lowest truancy rate compared with other groups.

- Māori and Pasifika students had higher truancy rates when compared with New Zealand European and Asian students, a result also noted in the 2004 report. Unjustified absence was the main factor contributing to the higher truancy rates for Māori and Pasifika students. NZ European and Māori females had higher truancy rates than their male counterparts, while the situation was reversed for Asian and Pasifika students.

- The report also looked at absence and truancy rates for Māori students in Kura (including other Immersion) and non-Immersion schools. In 2006, for both primary and composite schools, the overall absence rate was higher for Māori students in Kura and other Immersion schools than for Māori students in non-immersion schools. Truancy rate was also higher for Māori students in primary Kura and other Immersion schools, but the reversed was true for composite schools, where Māori students in non-Immersion schools had a higher truancy rate than Māori students in composite Kura and other Immersion schools.

- Similar to past surveys, the most visible trend in the absence data with respect to school decile is the smaller overall absence (13.1% for decile 1 and 8.9% for decile 10) and truancy rates (6.3% for decile 1 and 1.8% for decile 10) in higher decile schools. This was a result of the lower level of unjustified absences observed in higher decile compared to lower decile schools, there being no clear pattern in the justified and intermittent unjustified absences.

- Compared to 2004, most regions experienced an increase in absence rates, however, the absence rates for the Hawkes Bay and Canterbury regions remained consistent, and the Wellington region had a lower absence rate in 2006 than in 2004. In 2006, the Northland, Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne, Hawkes Bay, Nelson and West Coast regions had higher truancy rates compared with the national average (4.1%). The Nelson region had the highest overall absence rate (14.5%), and the Bay of Plenty (5.8%) and Gisborne (5.7%) regions experienced the highest truancy rates.

- Similar to 2004, overall absence and truancy rates were lowest in rural areas, the contributing factors being lower unjustified and intermittent unjustified absences when compared with schools in other localities.

- School size was not an important factor related to truancy among full and contributing primary schools in 2006. For intermediate schools, larger intermediate schools tended to have lower truancy rates than smaller ones. In 2006, truancy rates for both types of secondary schools (year 7-15 and year 9-15) were similar for schools with 100-250 students and schools with 251-500 students, however, like intermediate schools, the truancy rates decreased for both these types of secondary schools when there were more than 500 students.

This report investigates the nature and distribution of absence in New Zealand both at a school level and at a student level. The findings have been an integral part of the Ministry's ongoing policy planning and development in relation to student engagement, identifying national trends and areas where further support is needed.

SECTION 1:

Introduction

Background

Participating in education is fundamental to student achievement. The Education Act 1989 requires that parents enrol their children at school and that they attend school whenever it is open for instruction. This latter responsibility is shared with school boards of trustees, as Section 31(3) of the Act states that:

> *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).*

Students may be absent from school for a number of reasons. These may relate to the student themselves, to the school, or to a student's home or family circumstances, and often it can be interplay between these factors. While we acknowledge that student learning is enhanced when the learner is personally motivated, school or teacher factors can also have an influence on attendance. These relate, for instance, to teaching quality, the school culture, and to school-community links.

The Ministry of Education is committed to improving all aspects of student engagement and to helping all students stay at school until at least the age of sixteen. The Ministry's current approaches to improving engagement and retention are wide-ranging and involve:

- **The provision of 'second chance' learning opportunities**, through Alternative Education and Teen Parent Units, to allow students who have become disengaged from mainstream schooling to continue their education in non-traditional settings;
- **The provision of information to families and communities,** through established communications campaigns such as Team Up and Te Mana, to promote the importance of staying at school;
- **Improvements in teaching and learning practices,** through professional development initiatives such as Te Kōtahitanga and developments in assessment and teaching practices, to support personalised and student-centred learning;
- **Support for successful transitions to further education or employment,** through Gateway, the Youth Transitions Service, the Secondary Tertiary Alignment Resource and the Creating Pathways and Building Lives (CPaBL) programme; and
- **The Student Engagement Initiative (SEI)** is a multi-year programme that aims to reduce the incidence of suspensions, exclusions and early-leaving exemptions, and to increase attendance. Since its introduction in 2001, between 80-100 schools per annum schools receive support and funding to develop approaches to raise their levels student engagement. The SEI has resulted in the introduction of new

support at the systems level, including a new 'streamlined' truancy prosecution process and a revision of the national structure and funding for the District Truancy Service.

The Attendance and Absence survey has been an integral part of the Ministry's ongoing policy planning and development in relation to student engagement, identifying national trends and areas where further support is needed.

A high level summary report is available at:
http://educationcounts.edcentre.govt.nz/publications/schooling/attendence-absence-06_preliminary.html

SECTION 2:

The Research, Methodology and Response Rates

Research aims

The main aim of the research was to gather data on student attendance during the week of 21-25 August 2006. The research aimed to investigate the relationship between absence, and truancy, and school (e.g. type of school, decile) and student factors (e.g. gender, ethnicity, year level of the student).

Definitions of attendance, absence and truancy

In this survey, an absence is reported only on a daily basis. For the purpose of the data collection, absences were classified into one of three distinct types.

- ***Justified absences (JA)*** are absences recorded in the register, and marked as having being satisfactorily explained. A school has to make a judgement as to which explanations they will accept. The basis for such judgements is a matter of school policy, and as such the balance of justified and unjustified may vary slightly from school to school.
- ***Unjustified absences (UA)*** are absences, which are not explained, or not explained to the satisfaction of the school.
- ***Intermittent unjustified absences (IUA)*** occur when a student is absent for part of a morning (or afternoon) or part of a period without justification. For example, a student who arrives 15 minutes late to school without a reason, or with a reason that is not acceptable to the principal would be recorded as an intermittent unjustified absence.

Schools were not requested to record ***intermittent justified absence*** (when students are out of a class for a justified reason for part of a morning or afternoon, or part of a period) for this study as it was considered that it would place undue compliance costs on schools to complete the survey.

Schools were asked to record only one type of absence for a student for any given day. On occasions when multiple absence types occurred on the same day for a particular student, schools were instructed to give unjustified absences priority over other absences. For example, if a student had an intermittent unjustified absence during one half of the day and was unjustifiably absent for the other half they were to be recorded as an unjustified absence. Similarly, if an absence was justified for half the day and unjustified for the other half, it was to be recorded as an unjustified absence. An intermittent unjustified absence and a justified absence on the same day would be recorded as an intermittent unjustified absence.

For reporting purposes, the data collected were also presented in terms of:

- ***Overall absence**, being the sum of the three absence types noted above;*
- ***Truancy**, being the sum of **unjustified** absences and **intermittent unjustified absences**.*

Rates for each of the absence types are calculated based on the total school rolls for the participating schools and relate to an average (mean) daily absence per 100 students for the surveyed week. It should be noted that this does not tell us whether it is the same students that are absent, or whether different students are involved each day.

Methodology

A letter was sent out to all state and state integrated primary, intermediate, secondary and composite schools (a total of 2,426 schools) in July 2006 explaining the purpose of the study and inviting schools to take part in the study. This was followed closely by the survey form. The survey consisted of two parts, the first being a general questionnaire gathering information on schools' procedures in following up absences and whether they had engaged in the prosecution process in regard to truancy. The second part was a form to record information on individual absence events occurring during the week of 21 – 25 August 2006. For each student's absence, this form was designed to capture the day and type of absence, and the year level, gender and ethnicity of the absent student. (Copies of the forms and instructions are included in Appendix A.) Reminder letters were sent out to schools on 14 September 2006.

Schools were asked to return their completed forms by 8 September 2006. It is acknowledged that, as a result of this tight timeframe, a number of absences will be recorded as unjustified which in the course of time would have transpired to be justified. It is also acknowledged that a number of schools were closed due to adverse weather conditions during the surveyed week.

Response Rates

Response rates were analysed by type of school and school decile[1]. These are the two main components that have in the past shown different levels of absences.

[1] A school's decile indicates the extent to which the school draws its students from low socio-economic communities. Decile 1 schools are the 10% of schools with the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic communities, whereas Decile 10 schools are the 10% of schools with the lowest proportion of these students. Five factors are used in determining a school's socio-economic indicator. These factors (household income, parents' occupations, household crowding, parents' educational qualifications, and parents receiving income support) are based on families with school age children within the catchment area of the school to determine the school's socio-economic indicator and thus the school's decile.

Table 1: *Response rates by school type*

School type	Schools surveyed N	Schools responding		
		N	%	% of total roll [a]
Full primary (Year 1-8)	1,090	979	89.8	92.4
Contributing primary (Year 1-6)	798	760	95.2	94.5
Intermediate (Year 7-8)	121	117	96.7	97.2
Composite [b] (Year 1-15)	96	74	77.1	80.0
Restricted composite (Year 7-10)	5	4	80.0	95.8
Secondary (Year 7-15)	96	86	89.6	92.6
Secondary (Year 9-15)	220	196	89.1	87.9
Total	**2,426**	**2,216**	**91.3**	**91.7**

[a] *Source: Data Management Unit, Ministry of Education. This refers to the roll of students (including domestic and Foreign Fee Paying students) as at July 2006. This was the most accurate source of roll data available closest to the surveyed week.*

[b] *Composite schools include Composite (Year 1-15) schools and Kura Teina schools.*

A total of 2,426 schools of all types were surveyed. Completed returns were received from 2,216 schools (91%). The responding schools had a total of 659,275 students on their rolls, representing 92 percent of the student population of all state and state integrated schools. The lowest response rate was from composite schools (77%), and the highest response rate was from intermediate schools (97%). The overall response rate has increased overall compared to the 2004 survey (from 87% to 91%).

In order to make the data collection less time consuming for schools, the Ministry gave schools the option to respond either by completing paper returns or by sending responses generated electronically through their Student Management Systems (SMS). The vast majority of responses were received in paper format. Seventy-seven schools responded to the 2006 survey electronically.

Table 2 indicates that there was a similar pattern in the response rate across different deciles.

Table 2: *Response rate by school decile*[a]

Decile	Surveyed	Returned	Response rate (%)
1	248	216	87.1
2	244	218	89.3
3	236	214	90.7
4	246	229	93.1
5	241	221	91.7
6	242	217	89.7
7	251	236	94.0
8	226	211	93.4
9	247	225	91.1
10	243	227	93.4
Unspecified	2	2	100.0
Total	**2,426**	**2,216**	**91.3**

[a] *See footnote 1 for an explanation of decile.*

SECTION 3:

Results

Number of Absences Reported

Schools who responded to the survey reported 381,174 absences of all types over the survey week. Table 3 shows the relative proportions of absence types during the 2006 survey.

Table 3: *Number of absences reported*

Type of absence	**N**	**%**
Justified Absences	245,076	64.3
Unjustified Absences	77,235	20.3
Intermittent Unjustified Absences	58,863	15.4
Total Absence Events	**381,174**	**100.0**
Total Roll [a]	**659,275**	

[a] *Source: Data Management Unit, Ministry of Education. This refers to total roll as at 1 July 2006*

Absences on Different Days of the Week

When compared with the previous survey, the overall absence rate for all schools in 2006 was higher (increased from 10.9% in 2004 to 11.5% to 2006). The justified absence rate was similar to 2004 (7.4% in 2006 and 7.5% in 2004), and the truancy rate, which consists of the unjustified absence rate including intermittent absences, was higher compared to the truancy rate in 2004 (up from 3.4% in 2004 to 4.1% in 2006).

Table 4: *Absence for each day of the week*

Day	Absence rate		Justified absence rate		Truancy rate		Unjustified absence rate		Intermittent unjustified absence rate	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Monday	87,200	13.2	57,953	8.8	29,247	4.4	17,504	2.7	11,743	1.8
Tuesday	73,547	11.2	47,941	7.3	25,606	3.9	14,044	2.1	11,562	1.8
Wednesday	69,284	10.5	44,458	6.7	24,826	3.8	13,000	2.0	11,826	1.8
Thursday	69,135	10.5	43,801	6.6	25,334	3.8	13,625	2.1	11,709	1.8
Friday	82,008	12.4	50,923	7.7	31,085	4.7	19,062	2.9	12,023	1.8
Total [a]	**381,174**	**11.5**	**245,076**	**7.4**	**136,098**	**4.1**	**77,235**	**2.3**	**58,863**	**1.8**

[a] *All percentages are based on total rolls as at 1 July 2006.*

Figure 1: *Absence rates for each day of the surveyed week*

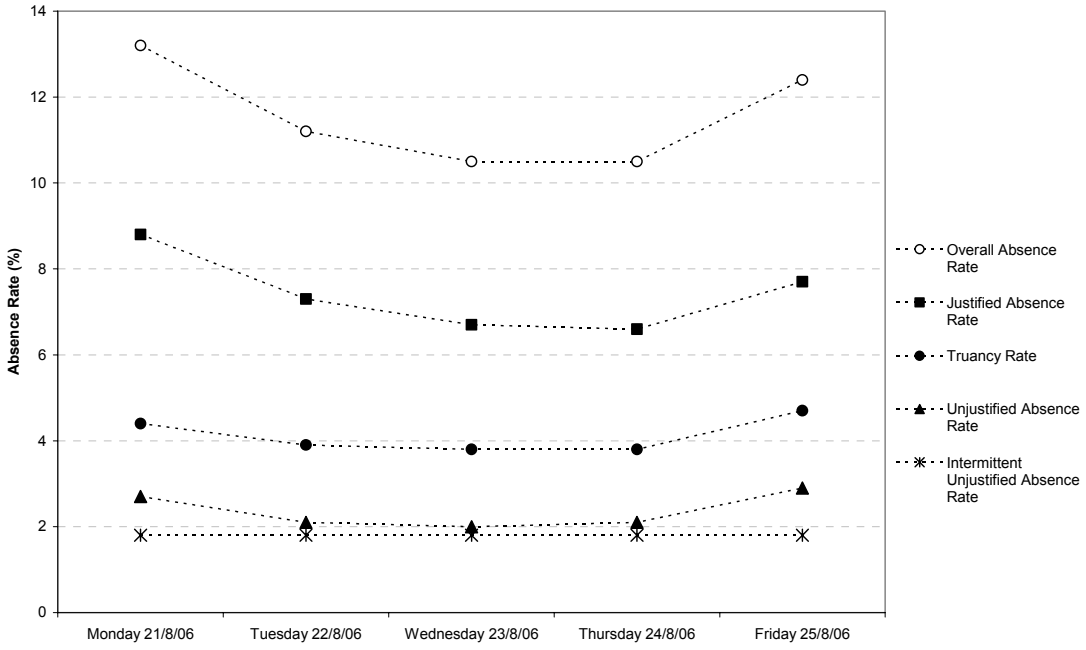


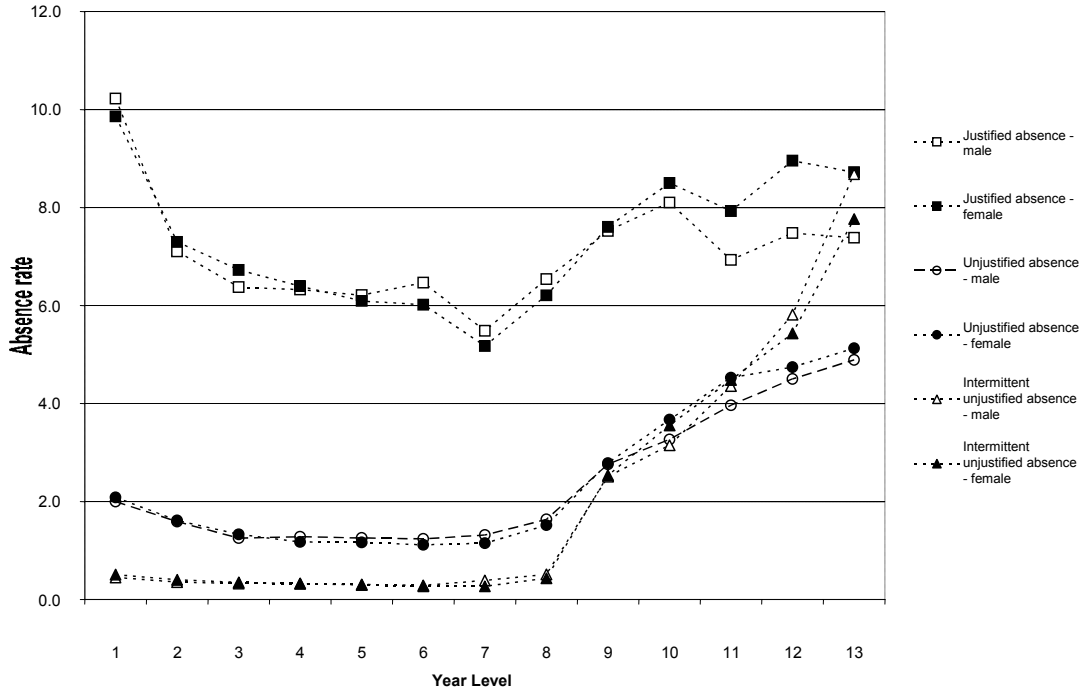
Table 4 and Figure 1 show the results of the 2006 survey by each day of the week. The overall absence rate was highest on Monday (13.2%), followed by Friday (12.4%) and Tuesday (11.2%). The intermittent unjustified absence rate (1.8%) was constant throughout the survey week in 2006. The overall pattern of 2006 truancy rates is similar to 2004 with Monday and Friday having the highest rates (see Appendix Figure D1). However, for each day of the surveyed week, the overall absence rate was higher in 2006 than in 2004 for Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

Student Factors

Gender of Student and Year Level

There was only a very slight difference evident between males and females in their overall absence rates (11.2% for males and 11.5% for females) and truancy rates (4.0% for males and 4.1% for females). Justified absences (7.2% for males and 7.4% for females), intermittent unjustified absences (1.7% for males and 1.8% for females), and unjustified absences (2.2% for males and 2.3% for females) were similar but consistently higher for females than for males. The following set of graphs look at gender differences in relation to absence and at what year level they might occur.

Figure 2: *Gender, year level and type of absence*



Similar to the 2004 results, in general, absence rates for males and females track each other closely all year levels and absence types until students reach secondary school level (see Figure 2 above). From year 10 onwards, unjustified absence rates (including intermittent absences) for females move to slightly higher levels than for males, while justified absences become notably higher for females. At years 12 and 13, males had higher intermittent unjustified absences than females. Noticeable is the rapid increase in the intermittent unjustified absence rate for both males and females during the secondary school years.

The relationship between gender, year level and student absence is also associated with whether the school is single-sex or co-educational. Figures 3-7[2] compare absences for males and females in co-educational and single sex schools for students in years 7 – 13[3].

Figure 3: *Absence rate, gender and year level in single sex and co-educational schools*

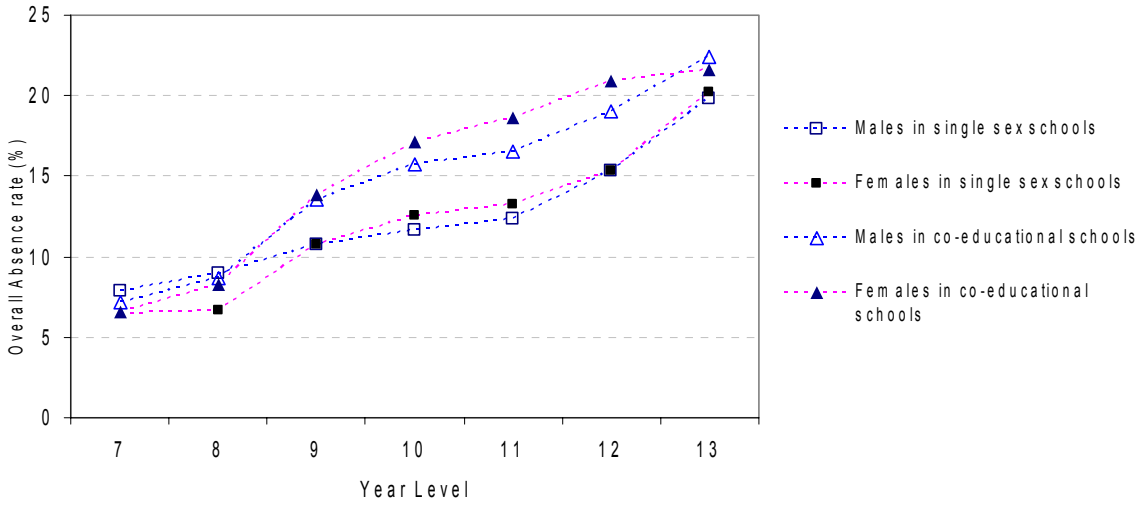


Figure 3 shows the overall absence rate for males and females in years 7-13 according to whether they attended single-sex or co-educational schools. Similar to 2004, females in co-educational schools had higher absence rates than females in single sex schools across all year levels. The overall absence rate for males in co-educational schools was higher than for males in single sex schools from year 9 onwards, with this trend persisting for males at senior levels. Note the absence rates for males and females in single sex schools track each other closely from year 9 onwards.

Figures 4 and 5 further explore how justified absences and truancy (unjustified absences including intermittent unjustified absences) are associated, respectively, with the gender and year level of the student, and the type of school.

[2] Note that the scales for y-axes in Figures 3 – 4 are not the same. This has been done to get a clearer picture of trends in absence rates by gender.

[3] School rolls in single sex schools below year 7 are too small for meaningful comparison of absence rates.

Figure 4: *Justified absence rate, gender and year level in single sex and co-educational schools*

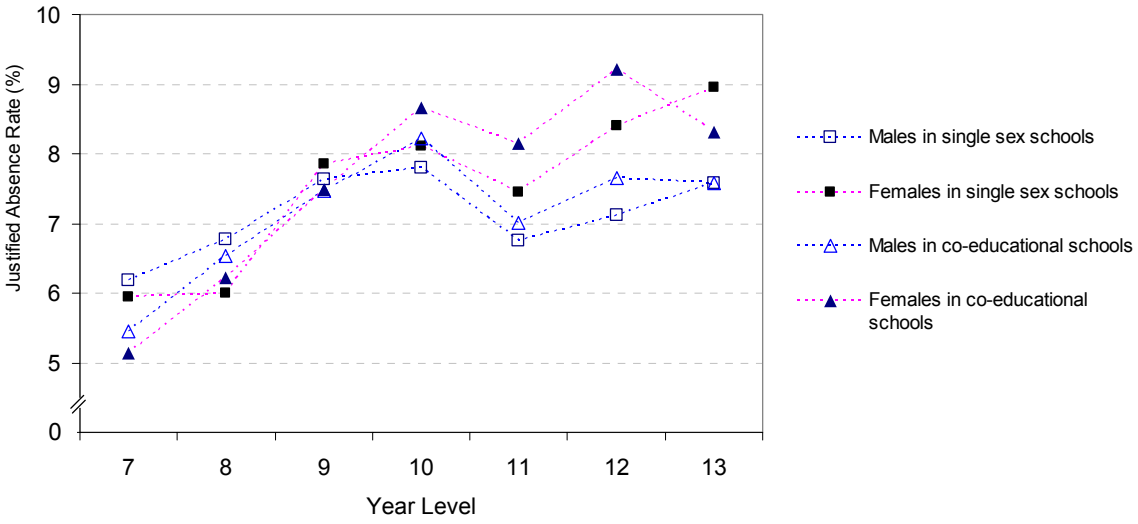


Figure 4 shows the justified absence rates for males and females in single-sex and co-educational schools, from years 7 to 13. Justified absences for females were lower in single sex schools than in co-educational schools for years 8, 10, 11 and 12. Justified absences for males in single sex schools were higher in years 7-9, but were lower in the years 10-12 than in co-educational schools. Justified absence rates were the same for year 13 males in single sex and co-educational schools.

Figure 5: *Truancy rate, gender and year level in single sex and co-educational schools*

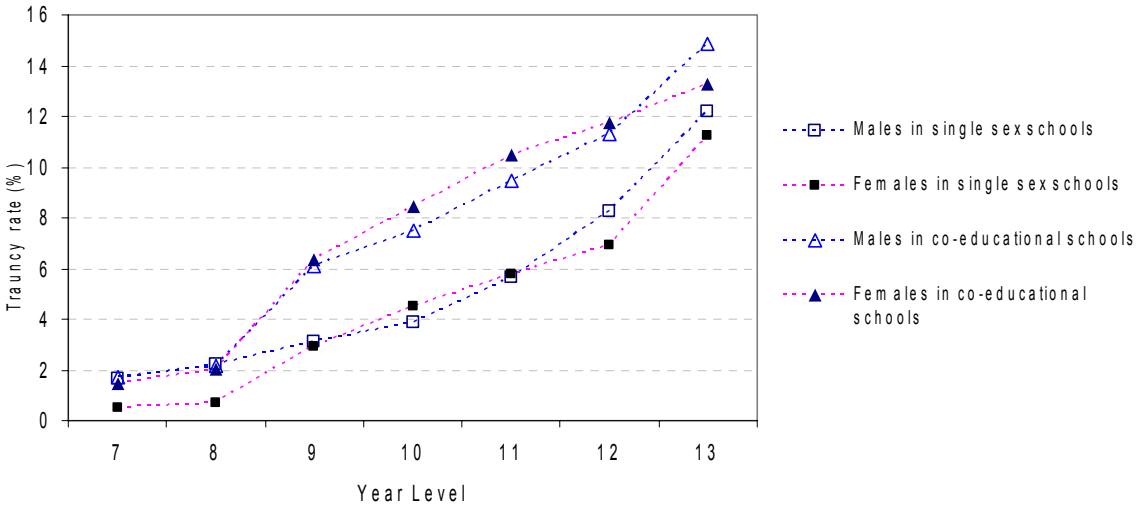
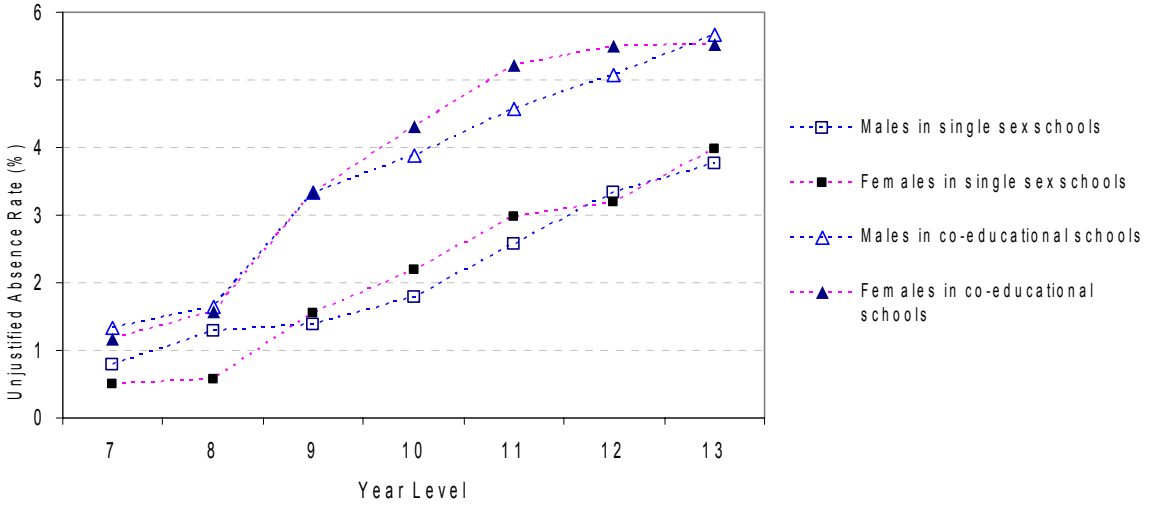


Figure 5 shows the truancy rate is higher for both males and females in the later years than the earlier years. In 2006, females in years 7-8 and years 12-13 in single sex schools had the lowest truancy rate compared

with other groups. This result was different to 2004 when males in single sex schools had the lowest truancy rate. In 2006, males in co-educational schools in year 13 had the highest truancy rate. In the middle years (years 9 to 12) the truancy rate for females in co-educational schools was higher than other groups of students.

Figure 6: *Unjustified absence rate, gender and year level in single sex and co-educational schools*



Figures 6 and 7 look more closely at truancy, which comprises both unjustified and intermittent unjustified absences. Figure 6 shows the rate of unjustified absences for males and females in co-educational and single sex schools, for year levels 7 to 13. Similar to 2004, in 2006, the unjustified absence rate for both males and females in co-educational schools was almost twice the rate in single sex schools, although in the earlier years this held only for females in single sex schools. In general, years 10-12 females in co-educational schools had a higher unjustified absence rates than other groups of students. In year 13, males in co-educational schools had the highest unjustified absence rate.

Figure 7: *Intermittent unjustified absence rate, gender and year level in single sex and co-educational schools*

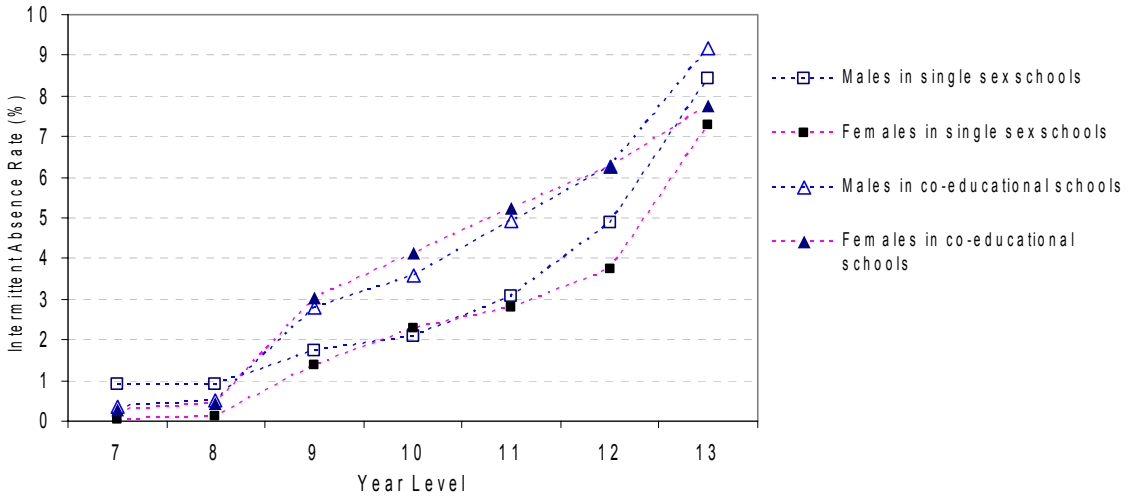


Figure 7 shows the levels of intermittent unjustified absences for males and females in co-educational and single sex schools from year levels 7 to 13. Between years 9-12, females in co-educational schools had consistently higher intermittent unjustified absence rates than for other students, a similar pattern previously noticed in the case of unjustified absences. Boys in co-educational schools had the highest intermittent unjustified absence rate at year 13. At years 12-13, females in single sex schools have the lowest level of intermittent unjustified rate compared to other students. Years 9-13 males attending co-educational schools had higher intermittent unjustified absence rates than males in single sex schools.

While the relationship between gender and year level of the student, and absence in co-educational and single sex schools is noticeable, it is worth noting that the co-educational and single sex schools differ systematically in ways other than their gender enrolment policy. Of the schools in the survey, single sex schools are typically slightly higher deciles than co-educational schools. Also, co-educational schools are much more likely to be state[4] rather than state integrated schools compared to single sex schools[5] (see Appendix Table D4). Both type of school (state and state integrated) and decile appear to be related to absence rates, although they may not alone be sufficient to explain the gender variations (see discussion of decile and type of school below).

[4] *State schools* are co-educational (mixed sexes) at primary and intermediate level but some offer single-sex education at secondary level. Lessons are based on the New Zealand Curriculum. *Integrated schools* are schools that used to be private and have now become part of the state system. They teach the New Zealand Curriculum but keep their own special character (usually a philosophical or religious belief) as part of their school programme.

[5] Source: Data Management Unit, Ministry of Education. This refers to the number of co-educational schools as at July 2006.

Absence and Ethnicity

Table 5 shows the absence rate, its components and the truancy rate for each ethnic group of students. It is important to note that the absence rate and truancy rates are calculated on the basis of occurrences of absences during the surveyed week.

Table 5: *Absence and ethnicity*

Ethnicity	Total roll [c]	Absence rate (%)	Justified absence rate (%) (N=245,076[b])	(%)	Unjustified absence rate (%) (N=77,235[b])	Intermittent unjustified absence rate (%) (N=58,863[b])
NZ European	358,233	10.2	7.5	2.8	1.3	1.4
Māori	144,304	15.0	8.1	7.0	4.5	2.5
Pasifika	61,324	12.1	5.9	6.2	4.0	2.2
Asian	53,249	7.2	4.3	2.9	1.2	1.7
Other	34,740	10.5	7.3	3.2	1.7	1.5
MFAT/FFP[a]	7,425	-	-	-	-	-
Total	**659,275**	**11.5**	**7.4**	**4.1**	**2.3**	**1.8**

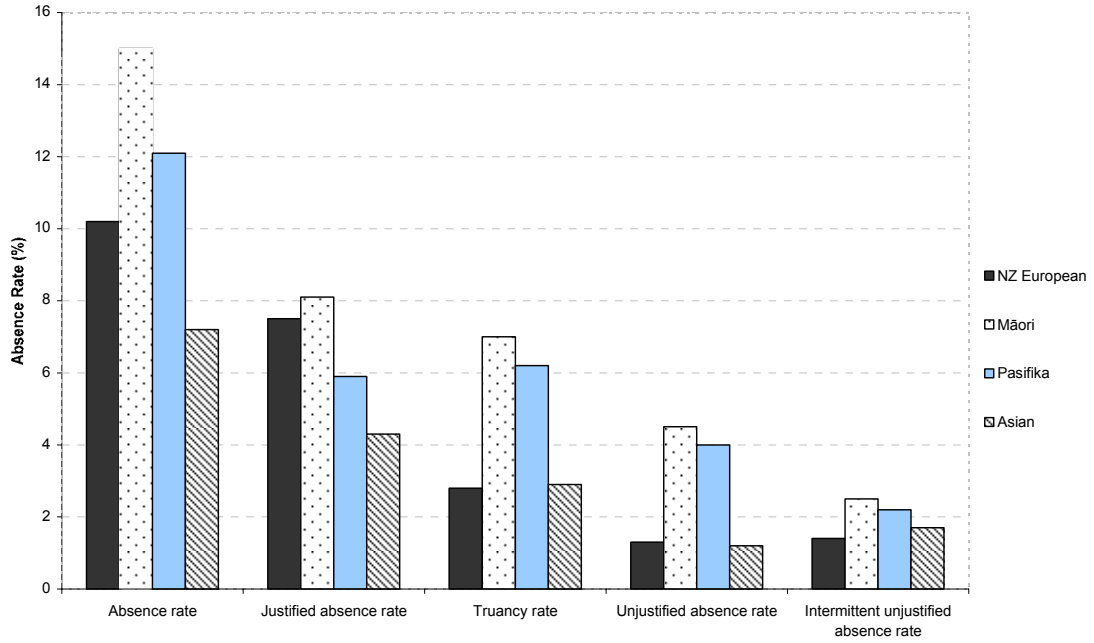
[a] *Refers to Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade Scholarship (MFAT) and Foreign Fee-Paying (FFP) students.*

[b] *Total number of absences over one week.*

[c] *Source: Data Management Unit, Ministry of Education. This refers to the roll of students as at 1 July 2006.*

Absence rates in Table 5 are shown graphically in Figure 8. Compared to 2004, the absence rates in 2006 increased for NZ European, Māori, and Asian students. There was a slight decrease for Pasifika students (from 12.2% in 2004 to 12.1% in 2006) and a large decrease for students classified in the "other" ethnicity grouping (from 29.0% in 2004 to 10.5% in 2006) in overall absences. However, it must be noted that this large decrease for students in the "other" ethnicity group may be due to schools having better ethnic coding of students in the 2006 survey compared to 2004. In 2006, Asian students had the lowest absence rate followed by NZ European students, while Māori and Pasifika students had the highest absence rates.

Figure 8: *Absence and ethnicity*



In 2006, Māori and Pasifika students had higher truancy rates when compared with New Zealand European and Asian students, a result also noted in the 2004 report. Unjustified absence was the main factor contributing to the higher truancy rates for Māori and Pasifika students, although these students also had higher intermittent unjustified absences than other students.

In relation to truancy, NZ European and Māori females had higher rates than their male counterparts, while the situation was reversed for Asian and Pasifika (see Table 6). Compared to 2004, the truancy rates for females and males of all ethnic groups increased by at least 0.6 percentage points, except for females and males students in the "other" ethnic group. Māori females had the largest increase (from 5.6% in 2004 to 7.1% in 2006).

Table 6: *Absence, ethnicity and gender*

Ethnicity	Total roll [c]	Truancy rate (%)	Unjustified absence rate (%) (N=77,235[b])	Intermittent unjustified absence rate (%) (N=58,863[b])
NZ European				
- males	183,603	2.6	1.3	1.4
- females	174,630	2.9	1.4	1.5
Māori				
- males	74,112	6.6	4.2	2.4
- females	70,192	7.1	4.6	2.5
Pasifika				
- males	31,201	6.4	4.0	2.4
- females	30,123	5.7	3.8	2.0
Asian				
- males	27,453	3.2	1.3	1.8
- females	25,796	2.5	1.0	1.5
Other				
- males	17,665	3.2	1.7	1.5
- females	17,075	3.1	1.7	1.4
Total [a]	**659,275**	**4.1**	**2.3**	**1.8**

[a] *Note that the total includes data where gender or ethnicity is missing.*

[b] *Total number of absences over one week*

[c] *Source: Data Management Unit, Ministry of Education. This refers to total roll as at 1 July 2006*

Absence in Kura Kaupapa Māori And Other Immersion Schools

There were 88 Kura Kaupapa Māori and other Māori Immersion schools as at 1 July 2006[6]. Out of these, 56 responded to the 2006 survey. These consisted of 38 primary and 17 composite schools[7], representing a total roll of 4,347 Māori students. The 56 Kura and other Immersion schools reported a total of 2,081 absent students during the surveyed week[8]. These contributed to a total of 3,788 occurrences of absences with 2,925 being reported as justified, 774 as unjustified and 89 as intermittently unjustified. Since the roll of Māori students in Kura and other Immersion schools is relatively small and because the response rate of these schools is lower (63.6%) than the overall response rate of the survey (91.3%), all interpretation of the data in this section must be treated with caution.

[6] Source: Data Management Unit, Ministry of Education as at 1 July 2006.

[7] One secondary school has been taken out of this analysis, because it was the only secondary immersion school.

[8] It must be noted that during the surveyed week, some schools (especially in the Waikato region), reported a high rate of absence in the early part of the week due to the Māori Queen's funeral.

Table 7 below compares the absence rates of difference types, for Māori students in Immersion schools or Kura with those for Māori students in all other primary schools. The same comparison is made for students in composite schools.

Table 7: *Absence and truancy of students in Kura Kaupapa Māori and Māori Immersion schools by school type*[a]

	Total Māori roll[b]	Absence rate (%)	Justified absence rate (%)	Truancy rate (%)	Unjustified absence rate (%)	Intermittent unjustified absence rate (%)
Māori students in Primary Kura and other Immersion schools (N=38 schools)	2,263	15.7	10.3	5.3	4.9	0.5
Māori students in all other primary schools (N = 1,818 schools)	**92,460**	**10.9**	**7.3**	**3.7**	**3.1**	**0.6**
Māori students in composite Kura and other Immersion schools (N=17 schools)	2,084	19.4	16.9	2.5	2.1	0.4
Māori students in all other composite schools (N = 61 schools)	**5,303**	**14.0**	**8.2**	**5.8**	**4.6**	**1.2**

[a] *These findings must be treated with caution due to the relatively small numbers involved.*

[b] *Source: Data Management Unit, Ministry of Education. This refers to the roll of Māori students as at 1 July 2006.*

Table 7 shows that, in 2006 for both primary and composite schools, the overall absence rate was higher for Māori students in Kura and other Immersion schools (15.7% in primary schools, 19.4% in composite schools) than for Māori students in non-Immersion schools (10.9%, 14.0%). However, the truancy rates for composite schools were lower for Māori students in Kura and other immersion schools (2.5%) than Māori students in non-Immersion composite schools (5.8%). For composite schools, both components of truancy (unjustified absences and intermittent unjustified absences) were lower for Māori students in Kura and other Immersion schools than for Māori students in non-Immersion schools.

For primary schools, the truancy rate was higher for Māori students in Kura and other Immersion schools (5.3%) compared to Māori students in non-Immersion primary schools (3.7%).

School Factors

Absence and School Decile

Similar to past surveys (1998, 2002 and 2004), the most visible trend in the absence data with respect to school decile was a lower overall absence rate in higher decile schools (13.1% for decile 1 compared with 8.9% for decile 10 schools in 2006) and in the truancy rate (6.3% for decile 1 compared with 1.8% for decile 10 schools) – see Table 8.

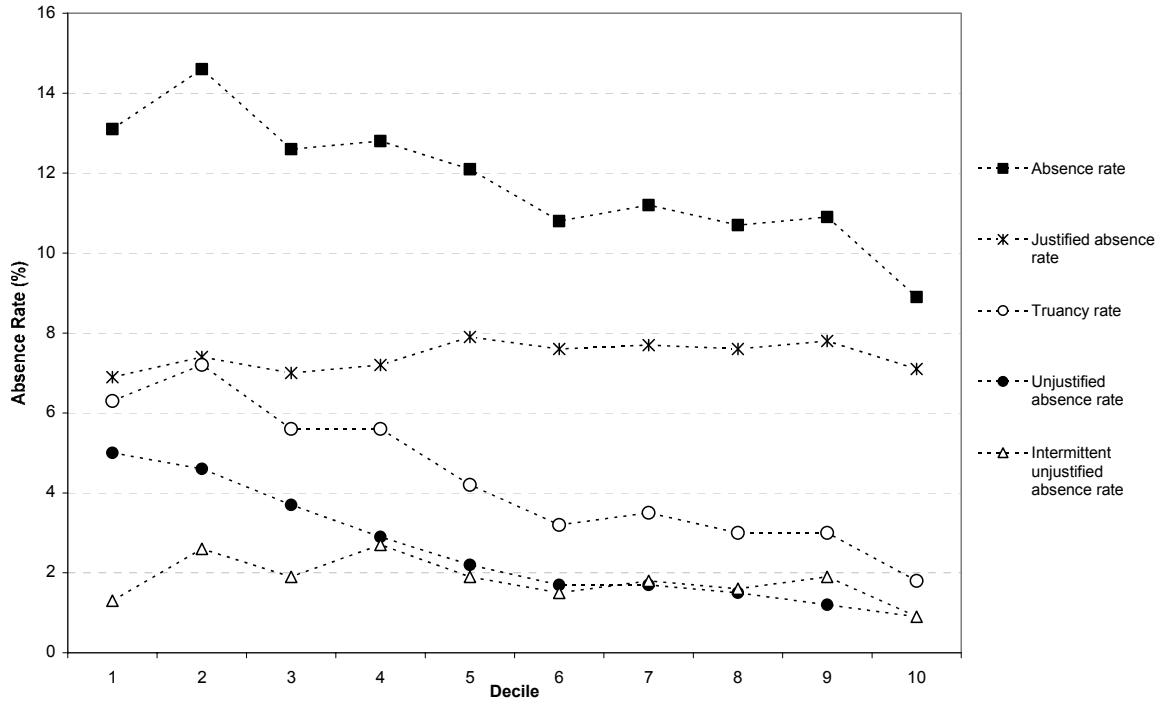
Table 8: *Absence type and decile*

Decile	Total roll [a]	Absence rate (%)	Justified absence rate (%) (N=245,076[a])	Truancy rate (%)	Unjustified absence rate (%) (N=77,235[a])	Intermittent unjustified absence rate (%) (N=58,863[a])
1	52,215	13.1	6.9	6.3	5.0	1.3
2	54,412	14.6	7.4	7.2	4.6	2.6
3	53,939	12.6	7.0	5.6	3.7	1.9
4	68,500	12.8	7.2	5.6	2.9	2.7
5	69,879	12.1	7.9	4.2	2.2	1.9
6	60,181	10.8	7.6	3.2	1.7	1.5
7	73,000	11.2	7.7	3.5	1.7	1.8
8	65,371	10.7	7.6	3.0	1.5	1.6
9	69,030	10.9	7.8	3.0	1.2	1.9
10	92,364	8.9	7.1	1.8	0.9	0.9
Unspecified	384	7.2	7.1	0.1	0.0	0.1
Total	**659,275**	**11.5**	**7.4**	**4.1**	**2.3**	**1.8**

[a] *Source: Data Management Unit, Ministry of Education. This refers to the roll of students as at 1 July 2006*

Figure 9 shows that justified absences and intermittent unjustified absences do not show a clear trend with decile. The justified absence rate ranged from 6.9% to 7.9%. The intermittent unjustified absence ranged from 0.9% to 2.7%. Decile 6 to 10 schools were more likely to have a lower overall absence rate compared with schools of lower decile (deciles 1 to 5). This is because deciles 6 to 10 schools were more likely to have lower unjustified absences than lower decile schools. Also, unjustified absences followed a steeper gradient for decile 1-5 schools than for decile 6-10.

Figure 9: *Absence type and decile*



Absence and Type of School

Findings from past surveys indicated that absences were more prevalent at the secondary school level rather than in primary, intermediate or in composite schools. Table 10 shows the variation in absence types associated with the type of school.

Table 9: *Absence and type of school*

School type	Schools responded (N)	Total roll (N) [b]	Absence rate (%)	Justified absence rate (%) (N=245,076[a])	Truancy rate (%)	Unjustified absence rate (%) (N=77,235[a])	Intermittent unjustified absence rate (%) (N=58,863[a])
Full primary	979	155,075	9.1	7.5	1.6	1.3	0.3
Contributing primary	760	198,976	8.8	6.9	1.9	1.5	0.4
Intermediate	117	55,849	8.4	6.1	2.2	1.8	0.5
Composite	74	18,900	12.9	9.4	3.6	2.7	0.9
Restricted composite (Year 7-10)	4	1,537	10.0	6.7	3.4	2.4	1.0
Secondary (Year 7-15)	86	50,819	12.7	7.7	5.0	2.5	2.5
Secondary (Year 9-15)	196	178,119	17.3	8.1	9.2	4.2	5.0
Total	**2,216**	**659,275**	**11.5**	**7.4**	**4.1**	**2.3**	**1.8**

[a] *Total number of absences over one week.*

[b] *Source: Data Management Unit, Ministry of Education. This refers to the roll of students as at July 2006*

Figure 10: *Absence and Type of School*

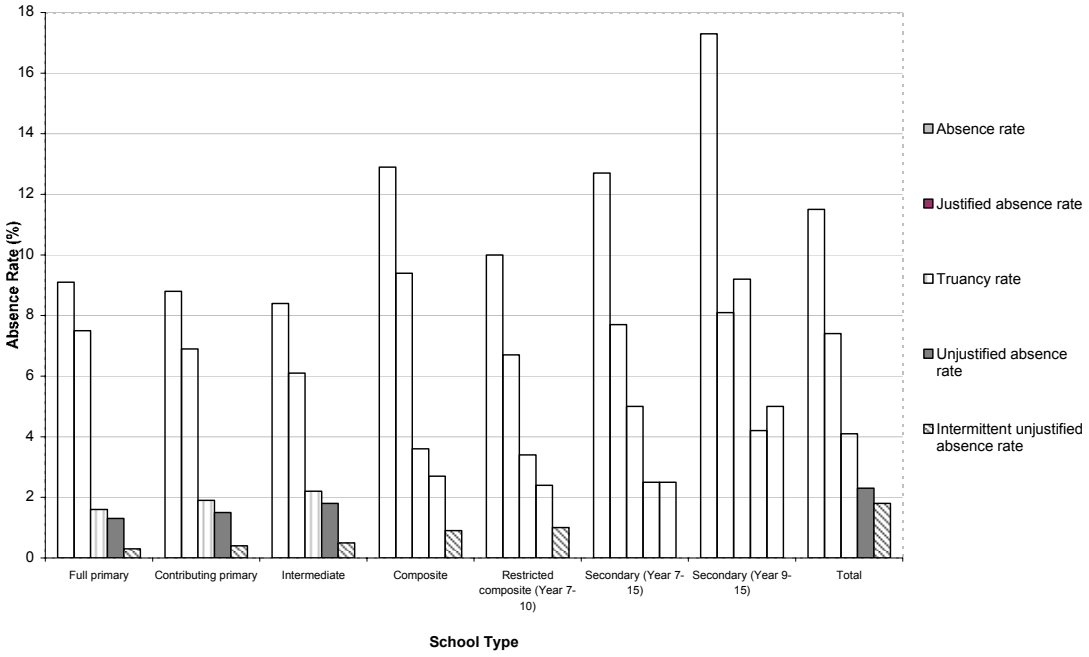


Table 9 and Figure 10 indicate that for full primary, contributing and intermediate schools there is little variation in the overall absence rates. There is some difference in justified absences between school types, ranging from 6.1 percent in intermediate schools to 9.4 percent in composite schools. Similar to previous surveys, divergence appears at the secondary school level, particularly in year 9-15 secondary schools, where the level of intermittent unjustified absence is higher than for other school types. This coupled with the high level of unjustified absences contribute to the higher levels of truancy recorded in year 9-15 secondary schools.

Table 10: *Comparison of absence and truancy rates for 1998, 2002, 2004 and 2006*

School type	Absence rate (%)				Truancy rate (%)			
	1998	2002	2004	2006	1998	2002	2004	2006
Primary	6.9	7.2	8.9	8.9	1.4	1.4	1.8	1.9
Intermediate	6.3	7.2	8.9	8.4	1.4	1.8	2.0	2.2
Composite	9.0	8.8	11.6	12.7	2.5	2.4	3.3	3.5
Secondary	11.6	11.9	15.2	16.3	5.6	6.0	6.9	8.3

The 1998, 2002, 2004 and 2006 data are grouped into the four main school types in Table 10 above. When compared with previous surveys, the overall absence rate and truancy rates in 2006 were higher for composite and secondary schools. Although there was a slight decrease in the absence rate for intermediate schools, their truancy rate still increased from 2004. This was due to a decrease in the justified absence rate for intermediate schools, pulling their overall absence rate down. Truancy rates in 2006 increased across all school types, particularly so for secondary schools.

Absence And Its Variability Between Schools

To explore the variation in the absence rates between the different types of schools that responded to the 2006 survey, the deviation of each school's absence rate was calculated from the national average of 11.5 percent. Note that it is better to look at the overall absence rate since it is a more reliable measure than unjustified absence (including intermittent unjustified absence). This is because schools adopt different policies when unjustified absence is concerned. Figure 11 illustrates the extent to which a school's overall absence varies from the national absence rate.

Figure 11: *Differences in absence rates in the 2,216 schools, from the national average (11.5%)*

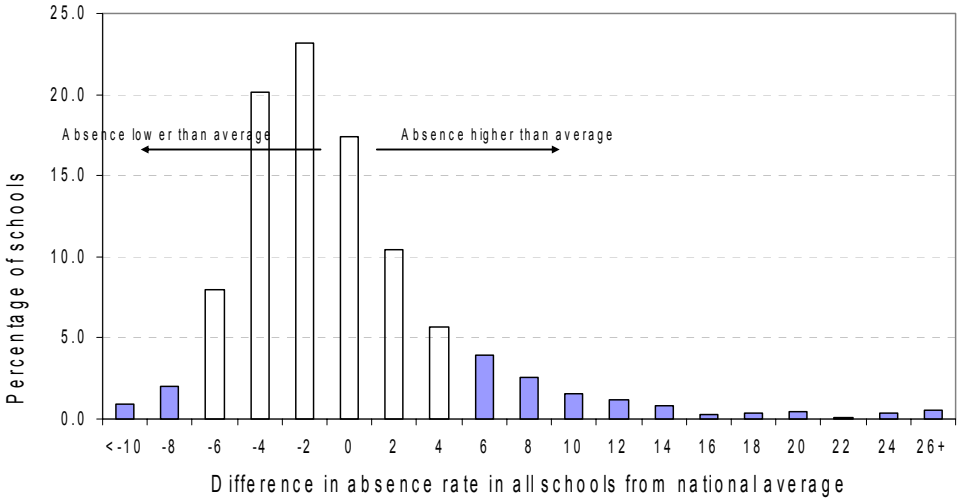


Figure 11 shows that there are a large number of schools that have absence rates that are closest to the national average absence rate. However, a minority of schools have absence rates much higher than the national average, indicated by the tail to the right of the darker bar in Figure 11. This suggests that focusing on attendance in those schools with exceptionally high rates of absence could have a substantial effect on the national absence rate.

We further analysed the variation in the absence rate by the type of the school. Figures 12 and 13 show the difference of the absence rates for the primary (including full primary, contributing, and intermediate schools) and secondary (including composite, restricted composite and secondary schools) school sectors from their national averages respectively.

Figure 12: *Difference in absence rate in primary school sector from national average (8.9%)*

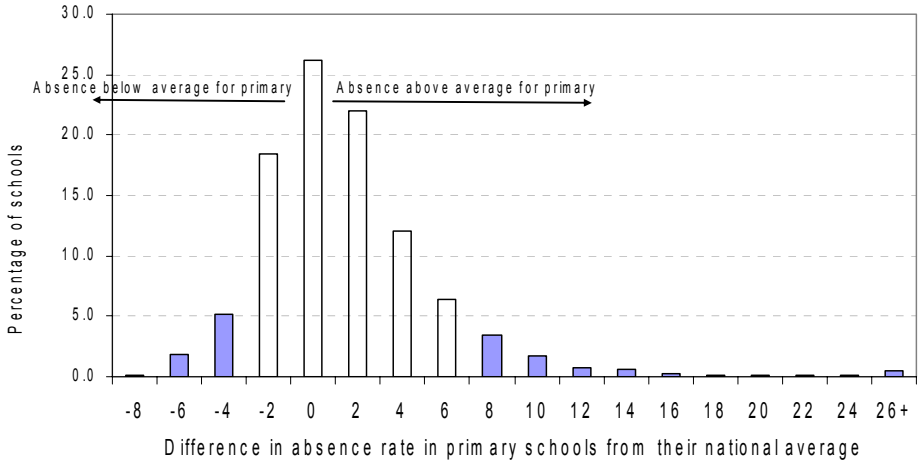
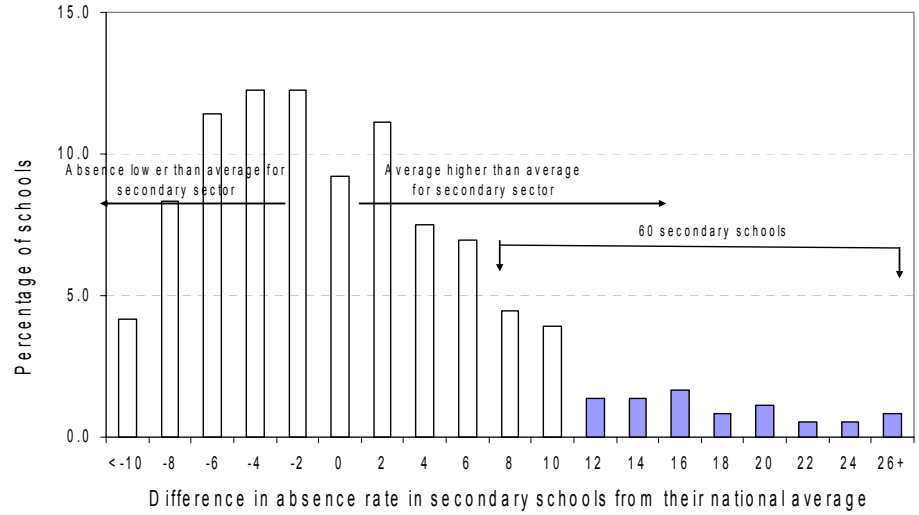


Figure 13: *Difference in absence rate in secondary school sector from national average (15.0%)*



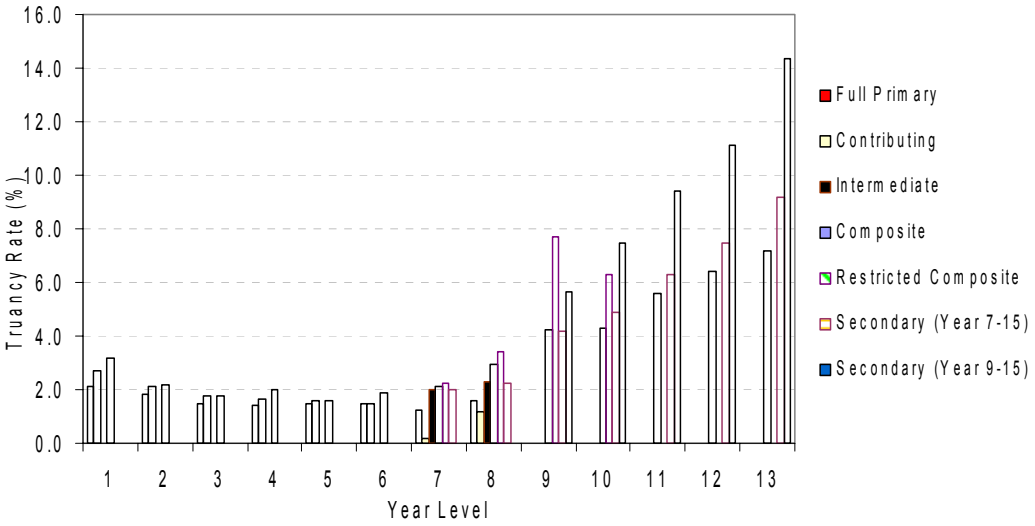
Clearly, there is more variability in the absence rates for secondary schools compared to primary schools. This is illustrated by the wider distribution of the deviation in the absence rates for secondary schools compared to primary schools. This suggests that the higher absence rates for a number of secondary schools are driving up the national average absence rate.

In addition, we further explored the sixty secondary schools (shown by the bars in the right side of the tail in figure 13 above) with the highest absence rates and analysed whether there was any relationship with the composition of their student population. It was found that on average, 42 percent of the students in these schools were Māori and Pasifika. This suggests that the high absence rates in a few schools may be related to the ethnic composition of the student population in those schools.

Absence, Year Level of Student and School Type

While differences in the 2004 truancy rates exist between the different types of schools, this may be a reflection of the year levels of schooling offered. Figure 14 shows the truancy rate by year level for different types of schools. The graph shows very little variation between different types at lower year levels up to year 7. There is a rapid increase in truancy rates from year 8 for all types of schools with students beyond year 9, but in particular for restricted composite and year 9-15 secondary schools. A likely source of this result is the difference in the authority of these schools, i.e. whether the school is state or state integrated[9]. It is noted that out of the 37 out of 86 (43%) secondary year 7-15 schools that responded to the survey were state integrated, compared with 24 out of 196 (12%) secondary year 9-15 schools. This is a possible source of variation in absence noted and discussed in the next section. As there was very little difference between these two types of schools in the proportion of Māori and Pasifika students, differences in absences cannot be attributed to this[10].

Figure 14: *Year level, type of school and truancy*



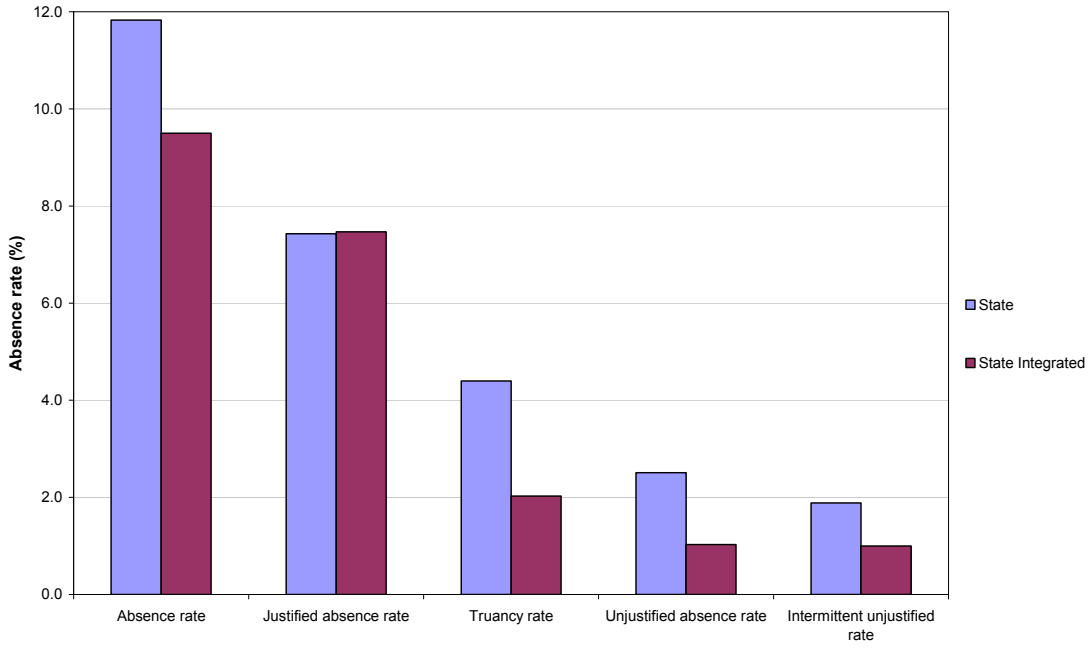
[9] *State schools* are co-educational (mixed sexes) at primary and intermediate level but some offer single-sex education at secondary level. Lessons are based on the New Zealand Curriculum. *Integrated schools* are schools that used to be private and have now become part of the state system. They teach the New Zealand Curriculum but keep their own special character (usually a philosophical or religious belief) as part of their school programme.

[10] In 2006, Māori and Pasifika students represented 23 and 28 percent of the student population in year 7-15 and year 9-15 secondary schools that responded to the survey respectively.

Absence and School Authority

Noted earlier was that schools factors could impact on the levels of absence. One of these was whether the school was state or state-integrated. *State schools* are co-educational (mixed sexes) at primary and intermediate level but some offer single-sex education at secondary level. Lessons are based on the New Zealand Curriculum. *Integrated schools* are schools that used to be private and have now become part of the state system. They teach the New Zealand Curriculum but keep their own special character (usually a philosophical or religious belief) as part of their school programme. Figure 15 shows the breakdown of absence types according to whether schools were state or state integrated. This shows that the overall absence rate experienced in state schools is higher than that experienced in state integrated schools. This is purely a result of a higher level of truancy (with higher unjustified and intermittent unjustified absence rates) in state schools. Justified absences in the two types of systems were similar.

Figure 15: *Absence and School Authority*



Absences in Rural and Urban Localities

Table 11 examines the distribution of absence types of three different school environments: main urban, secondary urban, minor urban and rural. The absence and truancy rates were more or less similar for schools located in main urban, or secondary or minor urban centres. Unlike the case in 2004, where there was little variation in the justified absence rate across school localities, in 2006, minor urban areas had a slightly higher level of justified absences than other school environments. However, similar to 2004, schools in rural centres experienced the lowest absence rate, attributed to lower unjustified and intermittent unjustified absences than those experienced by other school localities. This may be due to the more isolated nature of

these schools, thus limiting the range of places for students to go to for a short period of time. It may also be a result of there being proportionately more primary than secondary schools in rural areas, the latter group of schools experiencing higher levels of intermittent absences. As in 2004, the truancy rates and overall absence rates in secondary urban and minor urban centres were slightly higher in comparison with rural or main urban environments. Again this may be partially due to there being proportionally more primary than secondary schools in rural areas, with secondary schools having higher truancy rates.

Table 11: *Absence in different rural/urban localities*[a]

Rural/urban localities	Total roll (N)[b]	Absence rate (%)	Justified absence rate (%) (N=24,507[c])	Truancy rate (%)	Unjustified absence rate (%) (N=77,235[c])	Intermittent unjustified absence rate (%) (N=58,863[c])
Main Urban	483,107	11.4	7.2	4.2	2.4	1.8
Secondary Urban	47,957	12.5	7.7	4.7	2.2	2.5
Minor Urban	72,543	13.4	8.4	5.0	2.9	2.1
Rural	55,668	9.9	7.9	2.0	1.5	0.4
Total	**659,275**	**11.5**	**7.4**	**4.1**	**2.3**	**1.8**

[a] *Main Urban: centres with a population of greater than 30,000.*
Secondary urban: centres with a population of 10,000 to 30,000.
Minor Urban: centres with a population of 1000 to 9,999
Rural: Population less than 1,000.

[b] *Source: Data Management Unit, Ministry of Education. This refers to the roll of students as at July 2006.*

[c] *Number of absences over one week*

Absence Across Different Regions

Table 12 shows the absence and truancy rates by local body regions (see Appendix B for absence and truancy rates by territorial local authority districts). The absence rate varied from 10.5 percent in the Chatham Islands County to 14.5 percent in the Nelson Region.

Table 12: *Absence across different regions*[a]

Region	Absence rate (%)	Justified absence rate (%)	Truancy rate (%)	Unjustified absence rate (%)	Intermittent absence rate (%)
Northland Region	12.6	8.0	4.6	3.4	1.2
Auckland Region	10.9	6.6	4.2	2.7	1.5
Waikato Region	12.5	7.9	4.6	2.6	2.0
Bay Of Plenty Region	12.6	6.9	5.8	3.1	2.6
Gisborne Region	12.9	7.2	5.7	3.9	1.8
Hawkes Bay Region	12.1	7.7	4.4	2.4	2.0
Taranaki Region	11.3	7.7	3.6	2.2	1.4
Manawatu-Wanganui Region	10.8	7.2	3.6	2.0	1.6
Wellington Region	11.5	7.8	3.7	1.6	2.1
Tasman Region	13.2	11.0	2.2	1.4	0.8
Nelson Region	14.5	9.7	4.8	2.1	2.7
Marlborough Region	13.0	8.9	4.1	1.6	2.5
West Coast Region	11.9	7.7	4.2	1.6	2.6
Canterbury Region	11.2	7.9	3.3	1.6	1.7
Otago Region	10.7	8.2	2.4	1.3	1.2
Southland Region	13.0	9.2	3.7	1.7	2.0
Chatham Islands County	10.5	7.9	2.6	2.6	0.0
Total	**11.5**	**7.4**	**4.1**	**2.3**	**1.8**

[a] *Region refers to local body region.*

A closer look at the absences reveals that in 2006, the Northland, Waikato[11], Bay of Plenty, Gisborne, Hawkes Bay, Tasman, Nelson, Marlborough, West Coast, and Southland regions had relatively higher overall absences rate compared with the national average. Regions like Taranaki, Wellington, Tasman, Canterbury, Otago[12], Southland and Chatham Islands County showed relatively higher justified absence rates but relatively lower truancy rates compared to the national average. In 2006, the Northland, Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne, Hawkes Bay regions, and Chatham Islands County noted relatively higher unjustified absence rates compared with the national average.

[11] Note that schools in the Waikato region reported high rates of absences in the early part of the survey week due to the Māori Queen's funeral.

[12] Note that a majority of schools in the Otago region were closed on Tuesday of the survey week due to snow.

Comparisons between the absence and truancy rates between 2004 and 2006 were also made (see Appendix Table D3). Figures 16 and 17 illustrate the change in the absence and truancy rates respectively across regions in 2006 compared to 2004. Generally most regions experienced an increase in absence rates in 2006 compared to 2004 but this trend has a few outliers. These were the Hawkes Bay and Canterbury regions where the absence rates in 2006 remained relatively consistent with 2004 and the Wellington region where the absence rate in 2006 decreased (from 14.2% in 2004 to 11.5% in 2006).

Figure 16: *Absence rate across regions in 2004 and 2006*

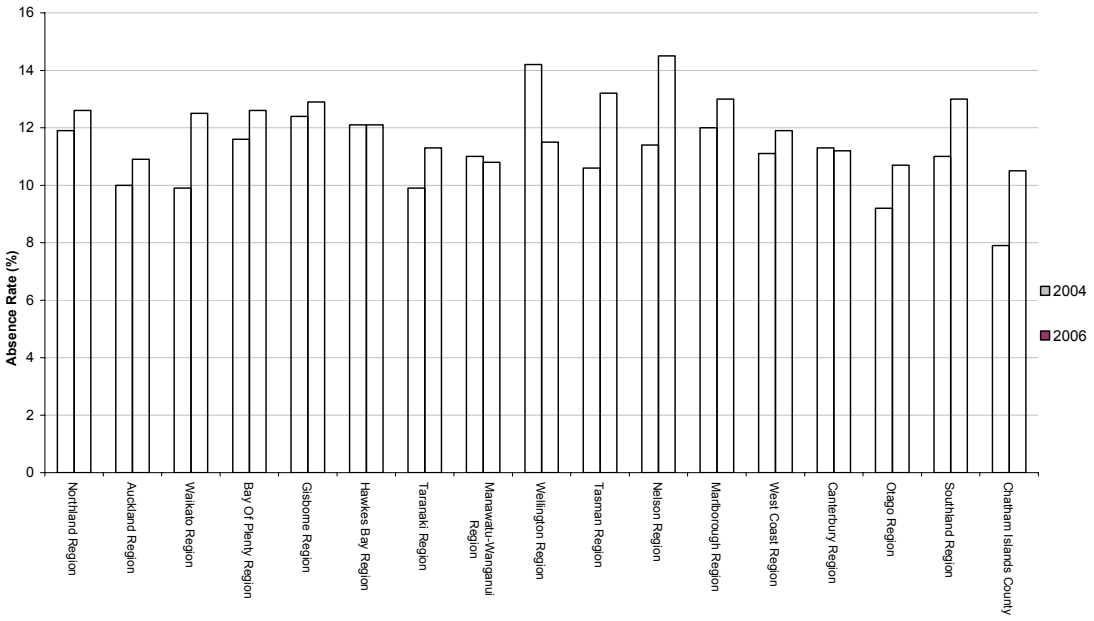
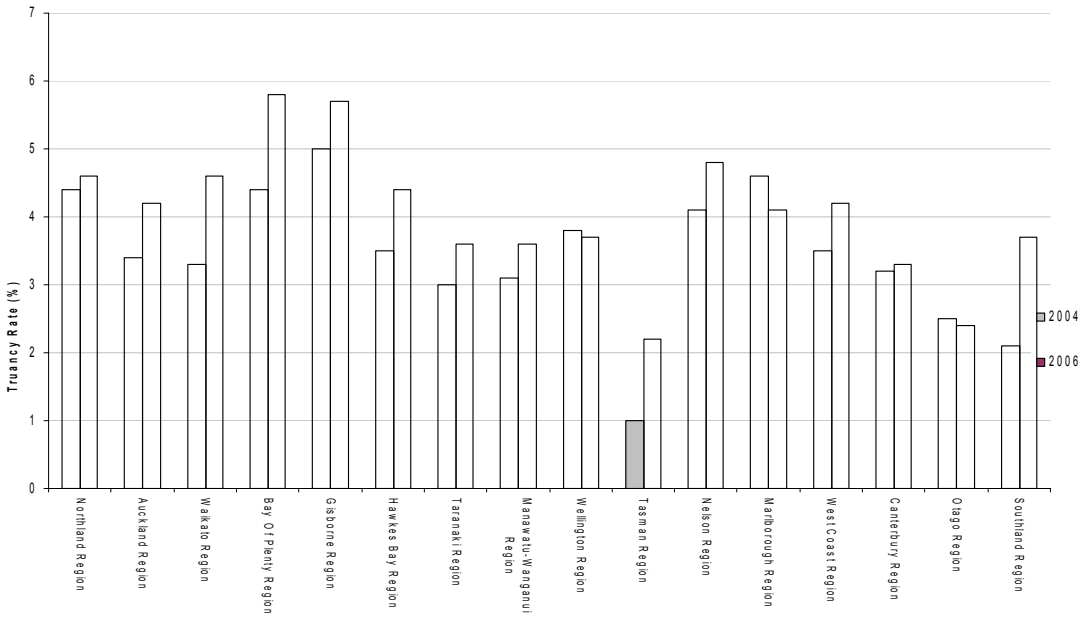


Figure 17 shows some differences between 2004 and 2006 for a few regions in regard to their truancy rates. In 2006, the Southland region experienced the largest increase in its truancy rate followed by Bay of Plenty, Waikato and Tasman regions, while Marlborough, Wellington, and Otago regions experienced decreases in their truancy rates. It is interesting to note that while Marlborough and Otago regions experienced a decrease in their truancy rates in 2006, the rise in its justified absence rate outweighed this effect, eventually leading to a slight overall increase in absence rates.

Figure 17: *Truancy rate across regions in 2004 and 2006*



School Size and Truancy

The size of the school may also be a factor with regard to levels of truancy. On the one hand larger schools may have more difficulty keeping track of students, on the other, these are the schools that may have more systematic or formalised monitoring systems in place. To investigate further, each school type was clustered into four groups according to size (fewer than 100 students, 100-250, 251-500, and more than 500 students).

Figure 18: *School size, type and truancy*

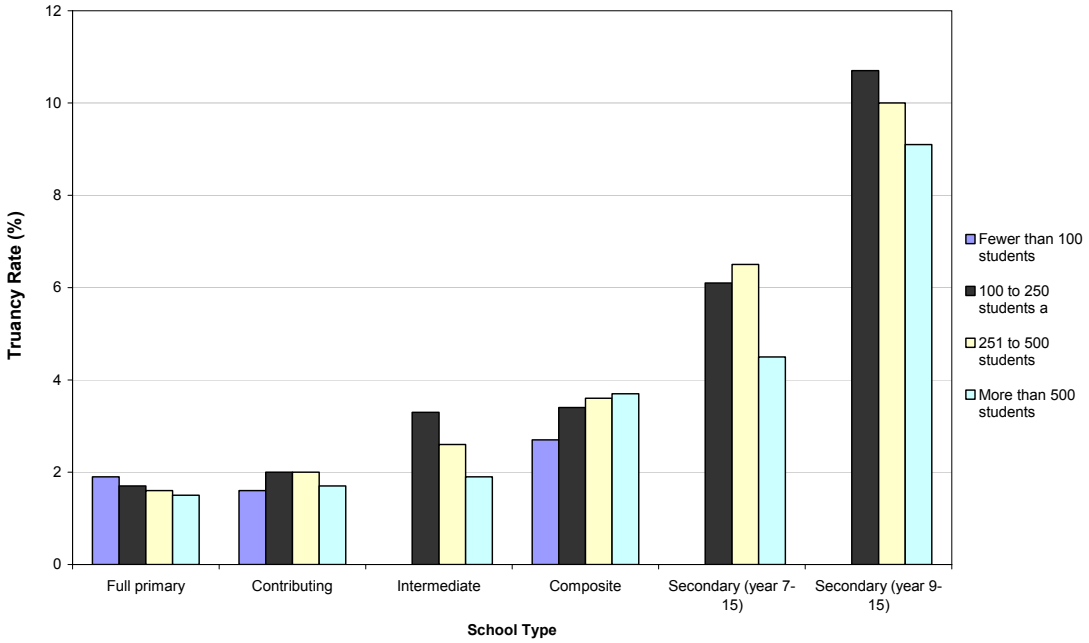


Table 13: *School size, type and truancy*

School type [b]	Fewer than 100 students		100 to 250 students [a]		251 to 500 students		More than 500 students	
	Number	Truancy rate (%)	Number	Truancy rate (%)	Number	Truancy rate (%)	Number	Truancy rate (%)
Full primary	449	1.9	325	1.7	170	1.6	35	1.5
Contributing	143	1.6	263	2.0	272	2.0	82	1.7
Intermediate	-	-	16	3.3	49	2.6	52	1.9
Composite	11	2.7	39	3.4	18	3.6	6	3.7
Secondary (year 7-15)	-	-	12	6.1	28	6.5	46	4.5
Secondary (year 9-15)	-	-	9	10.7	37	10.0	150	9.1
Total	**603**	**1.8**	**664**	**2.2**	**574**	**2.8**	**371**	**6.0**

[a] *One secondary school (year 7-15) which had its roll less than 100 is included in the 100-250 category.*

[b] *Because of the small number (N=4) of restricted composite (year 7-10) schools they are not included in this table.*

Figure 18 and Table 13 show some variation in truancy rate according to school size and school type. For full primary and contributing schools, there was not much difference in their truancy rates with respect to their sizes. Larger intermediate schools tended to have lower truancy rates than smaller intermediate schools. In 2006, truancy rates for both types of secondary schools (year 7-15 and year 9-15) were similar for schools with 100-250 students and schools with 251-500 students. However, like intermediate schools, the truancy rates decreased for both types of secondary schools when there were more than 500 students. Also the gap between the truancy rates of year 7-15 and year 9-15 secondary schools was consistently large for all school sizes.

SECTION 4:

Summary and Discussion

The 2006 survey on attendance, absence and truancy has provided a large amount of information about the nature and distribution of absence in New Zealand schools. This survey was conducted in August 2006 and carried out over a one-week period. Responses were received from 2,216 schools, representing 91 percent of schools surveyed, with some under-representation of composite schools. The last survey was conducted in 2004 when individual student data was collected for the second time. This report is based on the third year of individualised data collection.

On a daily basis, while the vast majority of students attend school, findings from the survey indicate an overall absence rate of 11.5 percent, with a truancy rate of 4.1 percent. Secondary schools had an absence rate of 16.3 percent and at truancy rate of 8.3 percent, composite schools 12.7 percent and 3.5 percent, primary schools 8.9 percent and 1.9 percent, and intermediate schools 8.4 percent and 2.2 percent respectively.

In 2006, the overall absence rate was higher than for 2004 (up by 0.6 percentage points, from 10.9% to 11.5%). The justified absence rate was fairly consistent compared to 2004 (7.5% in 2004 and 7.4% in 2006), and the truancy rate, which consists of the unjustified absence rate including intermittent absences, was slightly higher (up by 0.5% points) in 2006 compared with 2004.

An analysis of the absence rate by each day of the week showed that Monday had the highest overall absence rate due to the comparatively high rate of justified absence on those days. In 2006, there was a slight increase again in the absence rate on Friday, a result consistent with previous surveys. As in 2004, in 2006, Monday and Friday had similar and slightly higher truancy rates compared to other days of the week. However, the overall absence rate was higher for Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday in 2006 than in 2004. The absence rate was lower for Wednesday in 2006.

Overall it was found that absences for males and females were similar, and tracked each other closely across all year levels and absence types until students reached secondary school level. From year 10 onwards, unjustified absence rates (including intermittent absences) for females moved to slightly higher levels than for males. Justified absences become notably higher for females from year 10. At years 12 and 13, higher intermittent unjustified absences were reported for males than for females. The intermittent unjustified absence rate for both males and females increased rapidly during the secondary school years.

There were some complex relationships between gender and the types of schools students attend. Similar to 2004, in 2006, males attending co-educational schools had a higher overall absence rate than their counterparts in single sex schools from year 9 onwards. This trend continued for males at senior levels,

largely due to higher incidences of unjustified absences being recorded. In relation to truancy, in 2006, females in years 9-13 in single sex schools had the lowest truancy rate compared with other groups. This result is different to 2004 when males in single sex schools had the lowest truancy rate. In 2006, males in co-educational schools in year 13 had the highest truancy rate compared to other year 13 students.

The overall absence rate for females showed a similarly consistent pattern as for males in that from year 8 onwards, females in co-educational schools had higher overall absence rates than females in single sex schools. In 2006, in years 9 to 12, the truancy rates for females in co-educational schools were the highest in relation to other groups of students, contributed by their higher levels of both unjustified and intermittent unjustified absences.

While the effects of gender and year level on absence in co-educational and single sex schools is noticeable, it is worth noting that the co-educational and single sex schools differ systematically in ways other than their gender enrolment policy. Of the schools in the survey, single sex schools were typically slightly higher deciles than co-educational schools. On the other hand, co-educational schools were much more likely to be state schools than are single sex schools (see Appendix Table D4). These factors appear to influence absence rates and are independently notable factors in truancy.

As also found in the 2004 survey, the ethnicity of the student was an important factor with regard to truancy. Māori and Pasifika students had much higher truancy rates when compared with New Zealand European and Asian students, a similar result found in 2004. Unjustified absence was the main component of the high truancy rates for Māori and Pasifika students, although intermittent absences also contributed. In relation to truancy, there was generally little difference between males and females of the same ethnic group, Māori females however, had a truancy rate (7.1%) that was slightly higher than that for Māori males (6.6%), while the situation was reversed for Asian and Pasifika males and females (3.2% and 2.5% respectively for Asian students and 7.1% and 6.6% respectively for Pasifika students). Compared to 2004, the truancy rates for females and males of all ethnic groups increased by at least 0.6 percentage points.

We looked at the absence and truancy information of Māori students in a total of 56 Kura and other Immersion primary and composite schools that responded to the 2006 survey. The findings about these students should be treated with caution due to the relatively small numbers involved. In 2006, for both primary and composite schools, the overall absence rate was higher for Māori students in Kura and other Immersion schools than for Maori students in non-Immersion schools. However, the truancy rates for composite schools were lower for Māori students in Kura and other immersion schools than Māori students in non-Immersion composite schools. For primary schools, the unjustified absence rate was higher for Māori students in Kura and other Immersion schools compared to Māori students in non-Immersion primary schools.

An analysis of absences by the type of school reveals that there was generally little difference in justified absences between school types. The striking difference emerges at the secondary school level, particularly in year 9-15 schools, where the level of intermittent unjustified absence is particularly high compared to other school types. This coupled with the high level of unjustified absences contribute to the higher levels of truancy recorded in year 9-15 secondary schools.

Non-attendance or absence was more of an issue for some schools than for others – not all schools experience truancy equally. Schools reported a range of absence rates with some schools in both the primary and secondary sectors experiencing quite high levels of absences. The report examined the variability in the absence rate by school type. There was more variability in the absence rates for secondary schools compared to primary schools. This suggests that the high absence rates for a number of secondary schools are driving up the national absence rate. Reducing absence in these schools that have exceptionally high rates of absence could have a substantial effect on the national absence rate.

While differences in truancy rates exist between the different types of schools, this may be a reflection of the year levels of schooling offered. There was little variation in the truancy rate between school types at lower year levels up to year 7. There was a rapid increase in truancy from year 8 for all types of schools with students beyond year 9, but particularly for restricted composite and year 9-15 schools in the upper year levels (years 10-13).

Similar to past surveys, the most visible trend in the absence data with respect to school decile (see footnote 1 for an explanation of decile) was the smaller overall absence rate (13.1% for decile 1 and 8.9% for decile 10) and in the truancy rate (6.3% for decile 1 and 1.8% for decile 10) in higher decile schools. This was a result of the lower level of unjustified absences observed in higher decile compared to lower decile schools, there being no clear pattern in the justified and intermittent unjustified absences.

A closer look at absences reveals that in 2006, the Northland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne, Hawkes Bay, Tasman, Nelson, Marlborough, West Coast, and Southland regions had relatively higher overall absences rate compared with the national average. Regions including Taranaki, Wellingon, Tasman, Canterbury, Otago, Southland, and Chatham Islands County showed relatively higher justified absence rates but relatively lower truancy rates compared to the national average. In 2006, the Northland, Auckland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne, Hawkes Bay regions and Chatham Island County noted higher unjustified absence rates compared with the national average. Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Marlborough, Nelson, West Coast and Southland regions experienced relatively higher intermittent unjustified absence rates compared the national average. Compared to 2006, most regions experienced an increase in absence rate since 2004 with a few outliers. The absence rates for the Hawkes Bay and Canterbury regions remained consistent, and the Wellington region had a lower absence rate in 2006 than in 2004.

Some differences were evident in attendance according to where the school was situated with regard to its rural/urban location and with regard to the size of the school. Overall absence and truancy were lowest in rural areas. In particular, schools in rural areas experienced a lower level of intermittent unjustified absence than schools in other localities. It may, however, be a result of there being proportionately more primary than secondary schools in rural areas, with the latter group of schools experiencing higher levels of intermittent absence.

School size was not an important factor related to truancy among full and contributing primary schools in 2006. Larger intermediate schools tended to have lower truancy rates than smaller intermediate schools. In 2006, truancy rates for both types of secondary schools (year 7-15 and year 9-15) were similar for schools with 100-250 students and schools with 251-500 students, however, like intermediate schools the truancy rates decreased for both these types of secondary schools when there were more than 500 students. Also, the gap between the truancy rates of year 7-15 and year 9-15 secondary schools was consistently large for all school sizes.

As stated above, the 2006 survey on attendance, absence and truancy provided a large amount of information about the nature and distribution of absence in New Zealand schools. This is currently being used by the Ministry of Education to inform its work in relation to student engagement in education.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Instructions, Response Form and Questionnaire

Survey on Attendance, Absences and Truancy 2006

Definitions used by the Ministry for this survey

The principal has the legal responsibility for determining which explanations can be accepted as Justified Absences, or should be considered to be Unjustified Absences.

1. Justified Absences **(J)** are those recorded in the Register, and marked as having been satisfactorily explained. For example, most principals would probably determine that a student's sickness should be recorded as a Justified Absence. A suspension would also be recorded as a justified absence.
2. Unjustified Absences **(U)** are those absences that are either not explained, or where the principal does not accept that the explanation justifies the student's absence from school.
3. Intermittent Unjustified Absences **(I)** occur when a student is absent for part of a morning/ afternoon, or even just part of a period without justification. For example, a student who arrives 15 minutes **late** to school without a reason, or with a reason that is not acceptable to the principal would be recorded as an intermittent unjustified absence.

Truant students are those students who are identified as having had an Unjustified Absence **(U)** or Intermittent Unjustified Absence **(I)** at any time during the week of the data collection.

Instructions for completing the survey form

1. ***Please record an absent student only once on any day[13] during the survey week. If they are absent on more than one day during the survey week they should still appear on only one row of the survey form.***
   - To distinguish between students, please ensure that you use different initials/codes for different students. As we do not need to know the names of those who are absent, you are free to select the initials/codes you want.
2. Please include on the form all **full-time** enrolled students (domestic and Foreign Fee Paying students) who are **ABSENT** for any part of the survey week.
3. For ethnicity of the student, please record ONE option only.
4. ***Unjustified absences (U) have priority over other absences as well as over being present.***
   - If a student has an Intermittent Unjustified absence **(I)** during one half of the day and an Unjustified absence **(U)** for the other half, please record this as an Unjustified Absence **(U).**
   - If a student's absence is Justified **(J)** for one half of the day and Unjustified **(U)** for the other half, please record this as an Unjustified Absence **(U).**
   - If a student has a justified absence for one half of the day and is present in the other half, please record this as a Justified Absence **(J).**
   - If a student has an Intermittent Unjustified Absence **(I)** for one half of the day and a Justified Absence **(J)** for the other half, then please record this as an Intermittent Unjustified Absence **(I).**
5. 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 absences **(U)** (as at 25 August 2006).

[13] We are aware that registers are marked twice daily. However, for simplicity sake, this survey operates on a daily basis according to the priority in 4 above.

Survey on Attendance, Absences and Truancy – 2006

School Number:

School Number

Shade to indicate school number

Instructions:-

- To enable us to calculate accurate absence and truancy rates for your school please fill out **one form per class**. For each **ABSENT** student please use one row only. Do not complete a row for students who are <u>not absent</u> at all during the survey week.
- Initials: To distinguish between different students, please use different initials/codes for each student.
- Clearly shade the circles that apply with black ink in the following way **Answer Selection**: Correct = ▣ Incorrect = ⊘ ✗ ✓

Please do not photocopy this form, if you need more survey forms please contact Andrea Mill, andrea.mill@minedu.govt.nz or (04) 4638531 at the Ministry of Education.

Justified Absences (J) are absences that have been satisfactorily explained. **Unjustified Absences (U)** are those which are either not explained, or are unsatisfactorily explained. **Intermittent Unjustified Absence (I)** occurs when a student is absent for part of a morning/afternoon, or even just part of a period without justification. It is important that you refer to the attached Definitions and Instructions for additional explanations. **Please do not shade in more than one option for any given day that the student is absent.**

- Return to: Freepost 159045, Data Management Unit, Ministry of Education, PO Box 1666, WELLINGTON (return envelope enclosed).

Initials	Gender		Year level													Ethnicity					Mon 21 Aug			Tue 22 Aug			Wed 23 Aug			Thur 24 Aug			Fri 25 Aug		
	M	F	Yr 0/1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11	Yr 12	Yr 13	NZ Euro	Maori	Pasifika	Asian	Other	J	U	I	J	U	I	J	U	I	J	U	I	J	U	I
	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
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Total number in this class: Males ☐ **Females** ☐ **(Include both present & absent students in this line only, and fill in once for every class)**

School Number:

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga

Questionnaire on Attendance, Absences and Truancy — 2006

Please complete the questionnaire below by ***8 September 2006.*** *You can either do this online at www.minedu.govt.nz/goto/attendancesurvey OR respond on this sheet and post it back with the forms used for recording absences for the* ***week beginning 21 August 2006.*** *Use the envelope provided (no stamp required) to: Freepost Authority Number 159045, Data Management Unit, Ministry of Education, PO Box 1666, WELLINGTON. Thank you.*

1. **What is your position in the school?**
   - ❑ Principal
   - ❑ Deputy/Assistant Principal
   - ❑ Other *(please specify)*:.....

Absence Notifications

2. **Please identify the methods that your school has used to follow-up on day-to-day and persistent absences in the past twelve months (tick all options that apply)**

   Day-to-Day Absences
   - ❑ Phone calls to parents/caregivers from school staff
   - ❑ Automated (i.e.: electronic) messages to parents/caregivers
   - ❑ Other *(please specify)*:

   .....

   Persistent Absences
   - ❑ Letters to parents
   - ❑ Involvement of District Truancy Services
   - ❑ Involvement of Police
   - ❑ Other *(please specify)*:

   .....

3. **What are the current barriers to following-up on day-to-day and persistent absences for your school (in order of priority, 1 = the most common barrier)?**

   Day-to-Day Absences

   1.....

   2.....

   3.....

   Persistent Absences

   1.....

   2.....

   3.....

4. **Would you be interested in using an automated process of notifying parents/caregivers of their child's absence?**
   - ❑ Yes
   - ❑ No
   - ❑ Already Use An Automated Process

Prosecutions

5. **Have you ever carried out a prosecution of a parent/caregiver for his or her child's absence?**
   - ❑ Yes
   - ❑ No
   - ❑ No, but in the process of carrying out a prosecution

6. **What do you see as the current barriers that prevent prosecution from being used at your school (in order of priority, 1 = the most common barrier)?**

   1.....

   2.....

   3.....

7. **Would clearer guidelines on the prosecution process be useful to your school?**
   - ❑ Yes
   - ❑ No

Other Questions

8. **Schools currently can exercise their judgement about what constitutes a 'justified absence'. Would you appreciate clearer guidelines from the Ministry to help you determine what does and does not constitute a 'justifed' absence?**
   - ❑ Yes
   - ❑ No

9a. **In the past twelve months, are you aware of any families/whānau having removed their children from school to go on holiday?**
   - ❑ No
   - ❑ Yes (please go to questions 9b and 9c)

   9b. If yes, how many families/whānau have removed their children and how many children were removed from school to go on holiday?

   Number of families/whānau that removed children from school .....

   Number of children removed from school .....

   9c. Does your school consider such an absence to be 'justified' or 'unjustified'?
   - ❑ 'Justified' absence
   - ❑ 'Unjustified' absence
   - ❑ Depends on nature of holiday
   - ❑ Other *(please specify)*.....

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 available to all participating schools through the MOE website and individual school data on attendance will be made available on the schoolSMART website of the Ministry.

Appendix B: Absence and Truancy Rates by Territorial Local Authority Districts

Territorial Local Authority Districts	Absence rate (%)		Truancy rate (%)	
	2004	2006	2004	2006
Far North District	13.0	13.7	5.1	5.9
Whangarei District	11.4	12.2	4.1	4.0
Kaipara District	10.6	10.9	3.2	3.4
Rodney District	9.7	11.9	1.9	3.0
North Shore City	9.4	10.2	2.4	3.3
Waitakere City	10.1	10.7	3.4	4.1
Auckland City	10.5	9.9	3.5	3.4
Manukau City	10.0	11.8	4.0	5.6
Papakura District	8.6	12.1	3.8	5.8
Franklin District	9.1	11.1	2.5	4.6
Thames-Coromandel District	11.3	9.7	3.8	1.9
Hauraki District	9.3	12.6	2.8	4.5
Waikato District	10.1	13.5	3.1	3.8
Matamata-Piako District	7.8	10.2	1.9	4.1
Hamilton City	9.5	13.7	3.1	5.3
Waipa District	9.3	11.2	2.9	4.7
Otorohanga District	7.3	14.6	1.8	6.3
South Waikato District	13.2	13.0	7.7	6.7
Waitomo District	9.6	11.2	2.5	2.8
Taupo District	11.3	11.8	3.2	3.0
Western Bay Of Plenty District	9.6	11.0	2.6	3.9
Tauranga City	11.5	10.8	4.4	4.0
Rotorua District	12.0	14.2	5.1	7.5
Whakatane District	12.7	15.4	4.9	8.2
Kawerau District	12.2	13.7	3.0	7.9
Opotiki District	10.9	14.1	4.8	6.5
Gisborne District	12.4	12.9	5.0	5.7
Wairoa District	15.9	12.4	7.6	5.3
Hastings District	11.5	12.7	3.4	5.4
Napier City	11.9	10.9	3.3	3.2
Central Hawkes Bay District	13.2	14.8	2.6	4.4
New Plymouth District	9.8	11.9	2.8	3.8
Stratford District	8.0	8.4	1.9	2.3
South Taranaki District	10.6	10.8	4.0	3.7
Ruapehu District	13.0	15.7	6.0	9.7
Wanganui District	9.6	11.9	2.6	3.9
Rangitikei District	12.3	13.5	1.9	4.2
Manawatu District	8.3	8.1	0.6	1.4
Palmerston North City	11.4	7.7	3.2	1.7
Tararua District	13.7	9.6	4.4	2.4
Horowhenua District	10.5	14.4	3.1	6.2

Kapiti Coast District	9.4	11.4	2.1	3.3
Porirua City	15.9	12.5	5.5	4.7
Upper Hutt City	12.1	10.7	1.9	3.0
Lower Hutt City	16.0	11.9	5.3	4.8
Wellington City	13.5	10.9	3.2	3.1
Masterton District	16.5	13.7	3.6	4.5
Carterton District	11.2	8.9	1.4	0.5
South Wairarapa District	14.2	10.0	0.9	0.9
Tasman District	10.6	13.2	1.0	2.2
Nelson City	11.4	14.5	4.1	4.8
Marlborough District	12.0	13.0	4.6	4.1
Kaikoura District	12.3	15.2	1.4	5.2
Buller District	7.9	9.3	0.5	2.0
Grey District	12.1	10.6	4.7	3.3
Westland District	11.8	17.2	3.8	8.3
Hurunui District	10.7	9.9	2.2	2.3
Waimakariri District	11.4	11.5	2.6	3.2
Christchurch City	12.2	11.0	3.8	3.7
Banks Peninsula District	13.4	11.2	2.0	2.1
Selwyn District	9.6	12.4	2.4	2.2
Ashburton District	12.4	12.7	5.2	4.4
Timaru District	8.3	10.4	1.9	1.9
MacKenzie District	5.9	10.1	0.9	2.0
Waimate District	6.6	11.4	0.4	1.0
Waitaki District	9.2	9.0	1.2	1.5
Central Otago District	8.0	9.5	1.5	1.7
Queenstown-Lakes District	6.8	12.5	1.2	2.3
Dunedin City	9.6	11.0	3.3	2.8
Clutha District	8.9	9.9	1.6	2.2
Southland District	7.8	10.2	1.0	1.7
Gore District	8.9	9.8	1.9	0.6
Invercargill City	11.7	14.8	2.4	5.2
Total	**10.9**	**11.5**	**3.4**	**4.1**

Appendix C: 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 in the week of 21-25 August 2006, close to the middle of the third school term. A number of regions suffered from exceptionally adverse weather conditions during this week. As a result, a number of schools were either closed or had a high number of students not turning up to school. A few schools that were closed during that week due to weather conditions did not submit any data for the day that they were closed. This was the case on Tuesday for the majority of schools in the Dunedin region, where most schools were closed due to snow.

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 few schools were involved in school activities such as senior exams during the survey week.

Other schools, especially in the Waikato region, commented on the high rate of absence in the early part of the survey week due to the Māori Queen's funeral.

Timeframe for responding to the survey

Schools were asked to record absences as at 25 August 2006. 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. Obtaining 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 lower than reported in 2004. Some schools may still be inclined to classify absent students as 'Other' or may not have included the information when, on the school roll, these students may appear in one of the ethnic groups listed in the survey.

The use of a scanner for data entry purposes

All completed survey forms in 2006 were scanned using specialised scanning software. It is acknowledged that the scanning software may have contributed to data entry error.

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 entered, and the way the absence and truancy rates were calculated. These must be taken into account when making comparisons between years. These differences include:

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

The 1998 survey was carried out in late May, while the 2006 and 2004 surveys were carried out in mid August, and the 2002 and 1996 surveys were carried out early September when one might expect higher absences due to winter illnesses.

The response rate was 92% for 2006 survey, 87% for the 2004 survey, and 86% for the 2002. It is not clear how much of any differences between the years 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 2006, 2004 and 2002 surveys, absence rates were calculated differently. Previous surveys gathered school level summary data and took an arithmetic mean, whereby each school's rates were calculated, then the overall mean was calculated. The 2006, 2004 and 2002 surveys used, as a denominator, the number of students on the roll and the individual students participating in the survey, this providing a more accurate representation of student absence.

Appendix D: Additional Information

In the 2006 attendance survey, additional information was sought from all surveyed schools relating to the barriers they have in following-up on day-to-day and persistent absences.

The three most common barriers for schools include:

- difficulties contacting or communicating with parents/caregivers regarding the student's absences;
- poor attitudes from parents towards absences; and
- time and resource constraints of the school.

Appendix Table D1 shows that for primary, intermediate and composite schools, the most common barrier for these schools to follow-up on day-to-day absences was the difficulty in contacting or communicating with parents. However, for secondary schools, time and resource constraints at the school were the most common barrier in following-up on day-to-day absences. For persistent absences, over half of secondary schools rated they had no barriers while the remaining rated difficulties in contacting or communicating with parents/caregivers.

Some of the "other barriers" listed by schools included genuine long-term health issues of students, the negative attitudes of students towards attending school, and complex family circumstances of the students making it difficult to locate students.

Appendix Table D1: *Most common barrier in following-up on day-to-day and persistent absences by school type*

	School Types									
	Day-to-day absences					Persistence absences				
	Primary (%) (n = 1,544)	**Intermediate (%) (n = 68)**	**Composite (%) (n = 102)**	**Secondary (%) (n = 259)**	**Total (%) (n = 1,973)**	**Primary (%) (n =1,188)**	**Intermediate (%) (n = 98)**	**Composite (%) (n = 24)**	**Secondary (%) (n = 231)**	**Total (%) (n = 1,541)**
Poor attitudes from parents / caregivers towards absences	4.0	2.9	2.9	8.1	4.5	28.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	21.9
Difficult contacting or communicating with parents / caregivers	63.1	72.5	57.4	39.8	60.4	32.4	79.6	54.2	44.2	37.5
Time and resources constraints	22.3	19.6	26.5	44.8	25.3	18.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	14.0
Do not have barriers in following up on absences	8.2	3.9	1.5	1.5	6.8	10.6	3.1	41.7	55.4	17.3
Other barriers	2.3	1.0	11.8	5.8	3.0	10.4	17.3	4.2	0.4	9.3
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Appendix Table D2: *Absence for each day of the surveyed week in 2004*

Day	Absence rate		Justified absence rate		Truancy rate		Unjustified absence rate		Intermittent unjustified absence rate	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Monday	71,826	11.9	49,799	8.2	22,027	3.6	13,840	2.3	8,187	1.4
Tuesday	63,368	10.5	43,918	7.3	19,450	3.2	11,514	1.9	7,936	1.3
Wednesday	70,443	11.6	50,783	8.4	19,660	3.2	11,829	2.0	7,831	1.3
Thursday	60,742	10.0	40,948	6.8	19,794	3.3	11,725	1.9	8,069	1.3
Friday	65,144	10.8	41,968	6.9	23,176	3.8	14,837	2.5	8,339	1.4
Total	**331,523**	**10.9**	**227,416**	**7.5**	**104,107**	**3.4**	**63,745**	**2.1**	**40,362**	**1.3**

Appendix Table D3: *Absence and truancy rates across regions in 2004*

Region	Absence rate (%)	Justified absence rate (%)	Truancy rate (%)	Unjustified absence rate (%)	Intermittent absence rate (%)
Northland Region	11.9	7.5	4.4	3.0	1.3
Auckland Region	10.0	6.6	3.4	2.3	1.1
Waikato Region	9.9	6.6	3.3	1.9	1.3
Bay Of Plenty Region	11.6	7.2	4.4	2.5	1.9
Gisborne Region	12.4	7.4	5.0	3.3	1.7
Hawkes Bay Region	12.1	8.5	3.5	2.5	1.1
Taranaki Region	9.9	6.9	3.0	2.0	1.0
Manawatu-Wanganui Region	11.0	7.9	3.1	1.6	1.5
Wellington Region	14.2	10.4	3.8	2.2	1.6
Tasman Region	10.6	9.6	1.0	0.9	0.1
Nelson Region	11.4	7.3	4.1	1.3	2.8
Marlborough Region	12.0	7.3	4.6	1.7	2.9
West Coast Region	11.1	7.6	3.5	1.6	1.9
Canterbury Region	11.3	8.1	3.2	1.7	1.5
Otago Region	9.2	6.7	2.5	1.1	1.4
Southland Region	11.0	8.9	2.1	1.8	0.4
Chatham Islands County	7.9	5.7	2.1	2.1	0.0
Total	**10.9**	**7.5**	**3.4**	**2.1**	**1.3**

[a] *Region refers to local body region*

Appendix Table D4: *Comparison of single and co-educational schools in the survey*

Type of school	Boys schools		Girls schools		Co-educational schools		**Total schools**	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	**N**	**%**
State	22	52.4	22	45.8	1,873	88.1	**1,917**	**86.5**
State integrated	20	47.6	26	54.2	253	11.9	**299**	**13.5**
Total schools	**42**	**100.0**	**48**	**100.0**	**2,126**	**100.0**	**2,216**	**100.0**
Average (mean) decile	6.5		8.9		5.5		**5.6**	
Total roll [a]	37,092		36,183		586,000		**659,275**	

[a] *Source: Data Management Unit, Ministry of Education. This refers to the roll of students as at 1 July 2006.*

Appendix Figure D1: *Absence for each day of the surveyed week in 2004*