



When One Door Closes:

Evidence based solutions to improve outcomes and open new doors for
students excluded or expelled from school in New Zealand

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1. Executive Summary

Children who are excluded or expelled from school encounter many short and long-term problems as a result of being removed from mainstream education. These include poor educational and training achievement which can lead to a reduced chance of employment, lower social wellbeing, health disparities, drug use, behaviour problems and isolation from society.

This report reviews literature and evidence regarding the outcomes of disciplinary methods when a young person is excluded or expelled from school. Due to lack of research available on school exclusions in New Zealand, a large portion of the research presented is from international sources. While the variation in approaches to exclusion and educational structures among countries should be considered, both the overseas and New Zealand evidence reviewed found consistent trends in the outcomes of school exclusions.

School exclusion in New Zealand disproportionately affects the most disadvantaged populations. Maori and Pacific students are 63% more likely to be excluded than any other demographic and school exclusions and expulsions are much higher in low quintile schools. While the average age for a child to be excluded from school is 13.5 years, students as young as six years old are excluded.

In New Zealand, students who are excluded from school are out of school for an average of 50.4 days before being placed elsewhere. This prolonged period causes a great drain on resources as the school they are eventually placed in then needs to assist the child to catch up. It is estimated that the average cost of excluding a student from school amounts to almost 41% more than it costs to keep them in mainstream school. While addressing concerns at an early stage can mitigate these costs, there is little requirement for schools to provide such intervention or support.

This report recommends a number of strategies to improve outcomes associated with school exclusion and expulsion including:

- Using early interventions
- Ensuring students are supported to move into another school immediately
- Collaborating with other schools and agencies
- Providing families with more input into decisions and solutions
- Establishing suitable interventions after a student is excluded
- Monitoring current practices
- Applying the same practices and support to students who are expelled.

These recommendations are the starting blocks in establishing a supportive system that can encourage positive change when reintegrating excluded/expelled students back into school so as to achieve the best possible outcome.

2. Introduction

A heavy sigh signals Karen's surrender as she hangs up the phone. She has just taken an extended leave of absence from work until Susan can go back to school. It is tough trying to get by without this income but the hardest part is that she does not know how long this will continue.

Susan has been out of school for more than 10 weeks and is less committed each day to doing any home schooling. Karen has been struggling to find her another school to attend and she now realises that Susan will have to repeat her school year again if she does manage to find her a school to go to.

Karen is concerned about the behaviour that caused Susan to be excluded and tries to help, knowing she is out of her depth. But Susan's behaviour has become harder to manage as she isolates herself from the family and stays in her room all day or leaves the house without explanation.

Question after question fills Karen's mind, 'How can I help Susan change her behaviour?' 'What do I need to do to get her into a school?' These concerns overwhelm Karen and she feels powerless to solve the situation.

Although the character is fictional, Karen's story is an example of what commonly happens when a student is excluded or expelled from school. Parents are often faced with the uncertainty of how they will cope while their child is out of school and unsure of what they can do to ensure their child can access the support they need to reintegrate into school again.

This report aims to assess the outcomes of school exclusions and expulsions in New Zealand in order to identify strategies that could improve these outcomes.

Evidence for this report found that students who are excluded or expelled from school are affected by isolation, marginalisation, and substance abuse; are more likely to offend; and contribute to a significant number of economic costs in education, social services, justice and health sectors.

Some studies suggest that schools do not always follow the protocols set out by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and as a result there can be significant disruption to a student's education when they are excluded or expelled from school. This disruption could be lessened through reducing the time they are out of school and ensuring they are adequately supported to continue their education.

Further research is required to find out why schools are not following all of the protocols set out by the MOE. There is also a need to ensure that all students, whether they are excluded or expelled, are assisted to find another school and provided with adequate support and interventions to ensure a successful transition.

3. Definitions

The following definitions refer to the types of punishments used in the New Zealand school system that result in students being permanently removed from a school. These definitions are based on the Guidelines for Principals and Boards of Trustees (Ministry of Education, 2009c).

Exclusion: A student under the age of sixteen who is no longer allowed to return to that school.

Expulsion: A student aged sixteen and over who is no longer allowed to return to that school.

There is a large body of evidence and literature focusing on school 'exclusion' specifically and for this reason this report mentions school exclusion most often.

4. Current Policy

The Ministry of Education Guidelines (2009) assists schools to meet their statutory requirements and states that schools must do the following when notifying parents and students of any suspensions, stand downs and/or exclusions:

- Notify parents when issues first arise with their child.
- Contact parents immediately once their child is sent home with the reasons why and for how long that period will be.
- Provide a pamphlet from the MOE relating to the action.
- Hold a meeting between the school and parents if requested.
- Send a full report to parents, student and the Board of Trustees (BOT) at least 48 hours before the meeting.
- Notify caregivers that they are entitled to speak at the meeting.
- Send a letter from the BOT to the parents on the final decision.

Once a child is suspended, stood down or excluded, the following must take place:

- The child must receive guidance counselling where appropriate.
- The principal must ensure the student's educational needs are met.
- The BOT is to monitor the student's progress.
- If the child is excluded, the principal must try to find a new school placement at a convenient and appropriate school within 10 days.
- The principal is to consult with the parents.
- If the principal is unable to find another school for the child, this responsibility is passed to the MOE.

4.1 Comment

It is important to note that the above listed guidelines are not the same for children who are expelled (i.e. those aged 16 and over). There is no requirement for the school or the MOE to find another school for students who are expelled. Instead, children who are expelled are only given notification that they can get assistance from the MOE. (Ministry of Education, 2009c).

Schools adopt a variety of methods to exclude a child from school, which may not align perfectly to the Ministry Of Education Guidelines (2009). Parents are sometimes convinced that voluntarily removing their child would be a better option, as it would save their child from having a bad record. Students are sometimes moved into alternative education and then refused re-entry to the original school. A student can also be denied entry to other secondary schools based on prior reputation. These alternative methods of removing students from school allow schools to reach targets in reducing exclusions and improve their academic achievement record (Smith, 2009). However, this also makes it difficult to gain accurate information about the number of students who are removed from school.

In some cases schools are not following the MOE guidelines. For instance, in the study 'Sent Home' by Andrew Smith (2009) some of the parents reported that:

- Schools did not hold meetings with the BOT
- Schools did not seek or provide alternative education options after prolonged suspension
- Parents did not have a clear idea of what processes and timeframes were established for their child to return to school.

Even when followed, the current practices do not require the school to address the issues and surrounding influences for the child's behaviour. While it is a requirement for the child to be offered guidance counselling, no specific interventions or programmes are built into the process.

The current system in New Zealand leaves parents disempowered by a process that does not allow them to be part of the choices that are made for their child. In Smith, 2009, the parents interviewed often felt they were being judged for their child's behaviour, even though many of these parents were described by Smith as "communicated, articulate people" who were "caring and involved parents who had invested considerable time and energy" in their children.

Smith, (2009) found parents did not understand the protocols and did not know where to find information. Not one of the parents interviewed in Smith's study mentioned receiving any information, such as the pamphlets that were outlined as a requirement in the Ministry of Education Guidelines (2009).

Similarly, the Education Act (1989) requires school principals to take responsibility for the transfer of a child to a new school. Yet students who were excluded in 2009 were out of school for an average of 50.4 school days (Ministry of Education, 2009a).

While the majority of students in 2009 were enrolled into a new school (59.6%), there were still 20% students (309) who did not continue with any schooling in New Zealand for the following reasons (refer to table 2 section 6.5):

- They are still awaiting action
- They were given early leaving or home school exemptions
- In Child Youth and Family residence
- They left New Zealand
- They were over the age of 16

(Ministry of Education, 2009d).

5. Outcomes for Children and Young People

The evidence is clear that students who remain in education have better health outcomes, lower criminality, higher lifetime income, and higher self-rated happiness (McClellan, 2006; Smith, 2009) than those who are excluded. In contrast, those excluded from school have an increased risk of unemployment, criminal involvement, homelessness, social emotional and behavioural difficulties, poor health and decreased sense of wellbeing. (Brown, 2007; Hayden, 2009; Vincent, Harris, Thomson, & Toalster, 2007; World Health Organization, 2010)

This next section discusses the impact of being removed from school across key factors known to influence long-term wellbeing.

5.1 Balancing immediate needs with long-term outcomes

Exclusion may be a necessary precaution to ensure the safety of other students and staff (Dupper, Theriot, & Craun, 2009). In the right situation, and when managed effectively, exclusions from school can help provide positive change for a student. For example, some students are able to use it as an opportunity for a new beginning. Where their reputation in their previous school may have provided challenges to changing their behaviour, a fresh start in a new school could allow them to 'reinvent themselves' (Berridge, Brodie, Pitts, Porteous, & Tarling, 2001; Vincent et al., 2007). However, there is concern that schools are able to use exclusion as an easy remedy. In many ways it can provide schools with the ability to avoid managing challenging students and assist in maintaining schools' records of academic success by reducing the number of underperforming students (Cullingford, 1999 in Smith, 2009). It is these concerns that often overshadow the rights of the child and the consequences of removing the child from school, which can lead to poor outcomes for the student (Vincent et al., 2007).

The New Zealand Families Commission believes that efforts need to be made to find alternative strategies to exclusion for undesirable behaviour, particularly in a child's younger years when these behaviours are less ingrained (Beaumont, 2009). The children most likely to be excluded from school often already display academic difficulties and problem behaviour. These children may already be disadvantaged,

underperforming and suffering inequalities in various forms. Disciplinary measures that exclude these children from school have been found to only exacerbate these problems (Brown, 2007; Hayden, 2009)

5.2 Disruption of education

In New Zealand, students who are excluded are out of school for an average of 50.4 days (approximately one school term) (Ministry of Education, 2009a). This length of disruption to school attendance can cause these students to miss out on learning. Students can then slip further behind, failing subsequent classes, and sometimes kept back to catch up (Brown, 2007). This disruption can have further consequences on behaviour and habits. For example, there is evidence to suggest that exclusion from school can impact on a student's attendance rates in the future. Vincent et al refers to a youth offending client with a 100% attendance rate before he was excluded. By the time this client was placed back in school his attendance rate had fallen to below 10% (Vincent et al., 2007).

The processes involved in school exclusion can exacerbate the period of time out of education (Smith, 2009). When MOE legislation is not followed and students are not supported to find other education, it is difficult to relocate to another school. Instead, students are reliant on support from their family to negotiate this process. This relies heavily on the student's caregivers having good knowledge about the protocols and steps involved in reintegrating back into mainstream education. Despite requirements that families are supplied with specific information (Ministry of Education, 2009c), Smith found that many caregivers do not have an understanding of the education system, or where to get support. As a result, many of these students are put into home based education (11.1%, refer to Table 2 section 4.5). Home based education requires supervision by an adult and is not always an ideal learning method, particularly for a child who may already have behavioural and learning problems. In many cases home based education is impossible without a parent leaving employment (Smith, 2009).

These extended timeframes, during which many excluded children are without education, can be attributed to a lack of resources with regard to staff time and availability (Panayiotopoulos & Kerfoot, 2007). However, the prolonged period of time that a child has spent without education inevitably causes a greater drain on resources for the school they are finally placed with, as they assist the child to catch up (Brown, 2007). It is ultimately a more efficient use of resources to maintain a child's education.

5.3 Impact on family

The effects of sending a student home from school go beyond the student affected and extend to parents and the family, who are subject to emotional strains including: anger, frustration and grief. This emotional strain is heightened by the increase in responsibility they inevitably take on, as their child has to be taught at home. While caregivers try to find another place for their child to learn, they can develop financial problems resulting from taking leave from work or paying for care for their child while out of school (Smith, 2009).

5.4 Isolation and marginalisation

Exclusion from school can be the first step towards isolation from society (McCrystal, Percy, & Higgins, 2007; Smith, 2009). Brown, (2007) has argued that once excluded from school, students become stressed. They often face family disruption, which contributes to further deterioration of possibly already poor relationships with parents, teachers and peers. For the excluded student, this can lead to feelings of rejection that can transfer into resistance to further teaching and controls and can inhibit their ability to acquire basic skills, limiting their chances of success in the future (Brown, 2007; McCrystal et al., 2007).

These excluded students are disadvantaged when entering adulthood and the workforce, as they are unlikely to receive the same transitional supports that they would have had when at school. This increases their likelihood of marginalisation and exclusion from the rest of society (McCrystal et al., 2007). German (2003) found that children in the United Kingdom who were excluded from school were 90 times more likely to become homeless than those that achieved a school qualification (as cited in McCrystal et al., 2007).

5.5 Substance abuse

Sending students away from school can exacerbate drug use and sometimes push a child closer towards drug culture and associated problem behaviour (McClellan, 2006; McCrystal et al., 2007).

Studies have found comparatively higher rates of substance abuse in students who have been sent out of school into alternative education compared to those in mainstream school. For example, a study by McCrystal et al (2006), found that their sample of students who had been suspended or excluded from school when compared to the sample who attended school

- Were four times more likely to have abused solvents and amphetamines
- Were three times more likely to have used ecstasy
- Were two times more likely to have used cannabis
- Had an increased likelihood of habitual smoking
- Had an increased likelihood of problem drinking.

Similar results have been found in a survey of 4000 students in alternative education in which there were high response rates for illicit drug use, intoxication, and smoking (McCrystal et al., 2007). Unfortunately neither study recorded whether the students they studied were already engaging in drug and alcohol use prior to being sent away from school. However, the Wisely, Glendhill, Cyster & Shaw (1997) survey of heroin users found that 80% had been excluded from school before they began using heroin (McCrystal et al., 2007).

5.6 Offending

A study by the United Kingdom Government Statistical Service found that exclusion from school escalated offending in those who had already offended and put pressure on those who had not committed crimes before, to begin offending (Berridge et al., 2001). Likewise, McCrystal et al. (2007) found that of those who had been suspended and excluded from school, 88% had been in trouble with the police, 71% had been arrested and 27% summoned to court. Compared to those who had been in school, this was a significant difference with only 32% in trouble with the police, 9% arrested and 3% summoned to court.

5.7 Economic costs

When considering the poor outcomes associated with sending a student home from school, it is important to consider the potential financial costs, which include costs associated with crime, drug use, and unemployment (Panayiotopoulos & Kerfoot, 2007). These financial costs could be addressed through reducing school exclusion and managing students to remain in education longer.

School exclusions are the cause of considerable costs to the education sector, social services, the health sector, justice and police. The public cost of excluding a student from school on average amounts to almost 41% more than it does to keep them in mainstream school (Panayiotopoulos & Kerfoot, 2007). Addressing concerns at an early stage can mitigate these costs. For example, Foster & Conners (2005) study of young mental health consumers found that providing early interventions such as improving community mental health services for youth, reduced public expenditure in hospitalisation, justice, child welfare and special education (Foster & Conner, 2005).

6. Statistics

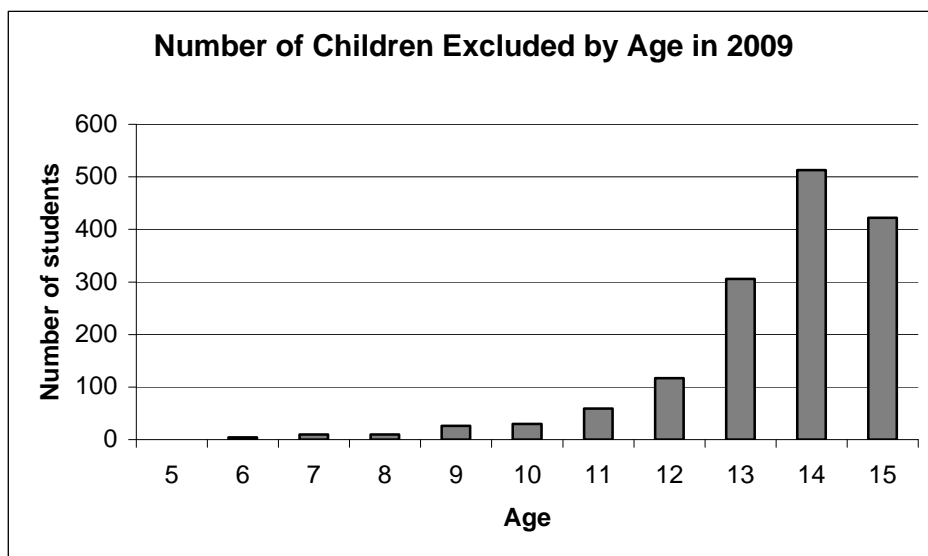
In 2008, 1,364 students were excluded from schools in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2009b). The following is a breakdown of the age, reasons, ethnicity, quintiles, and outcomes of the students who were excluded.

6.1 Age distribution

The students excluded from school in 2009 were aged between 6 and 15 years old, with an average age of 13.5. The highest number of students excluded from school were those aged 14 years old (513) (Ministry of Education, 2009a).

Figure 1:

The number of students excluded from school in 2009 by age



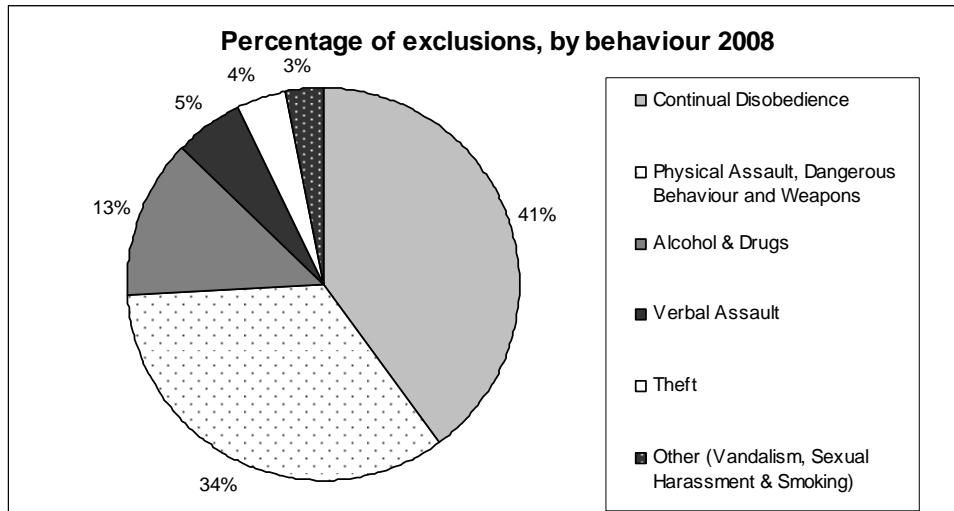
(Ministry of Education, 2009b)

6.2 Reasons for exclusion

The most common reasons for exclusion from school in 2008 were continual disobedience (41%), physical assault, dangerous behaviour and weapons (34%) and alcohol and drugs use (13%), (Ministry of Education, 2009b).

Figure 2:

Different reasons students were excluded from school in 2008



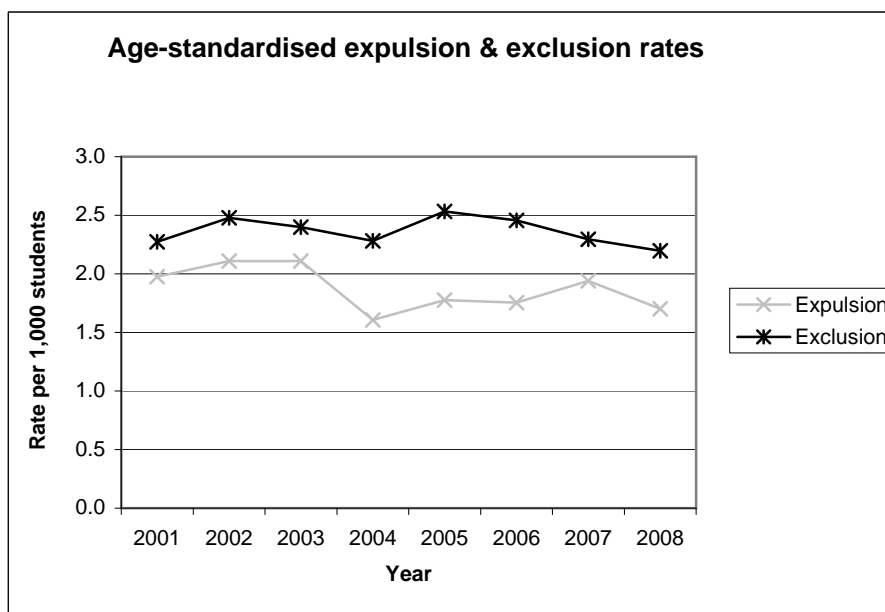
(Ministry of Education, 2009b)

6.3 Exclusion and expulsion rates over time

Figure 3 indicates that while expulsions have shown a slight decline, exclusions have been fluctuating over the past seven years which suggests there has been little change (Ministry of Education, 2009b).

Figure 3:

Rates of exclusion and expulsion from 2001 to 2008 for all students in New Zealand



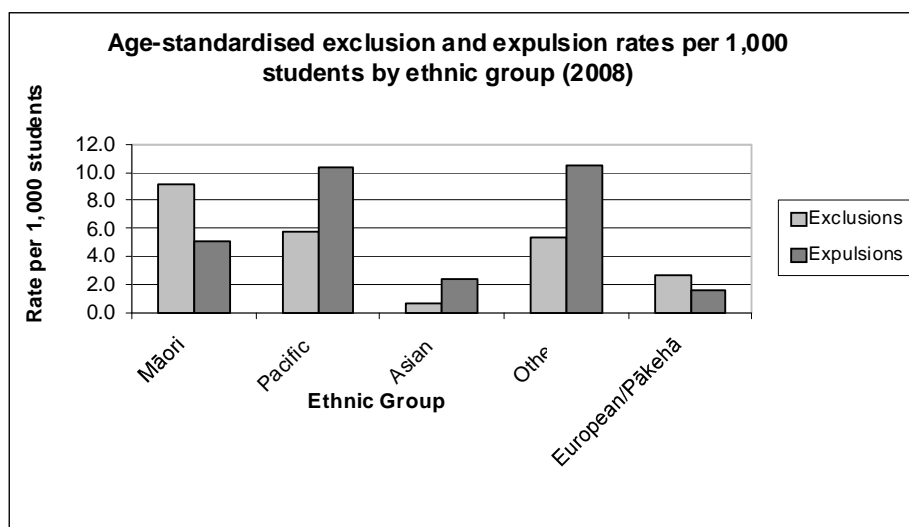
(Ministry of Education, 2009b)

6.4 Inequalities

Throughout the world, ethnic minorities and disadvantaged groups have higher exclusion rates (Dupper et al., 2009; Panayiotopoulos & Kerfoot, 2007; Smith, 2009). Within New Zealand, both Maori and Pacific students are over-represented in school exclusion statistics. Maori and Pacific students were excluded more often in 2008 than any other ethnic group (see figure 4). Maori were 63% more likely to be excluded and Pacific students 32% more likely than non-Māori/non-Pacific students. School exclusions and expulsions were much higher for those in low quintile² schools in comparison to high quintile schools, with 61% of those excluded from school being from quintile 1 and 2 schools (see Table 1), (Ministry of Education, 2009b).

Figure 4:

Rates of exclusion and expulsion in 2008 by ethnic group



(Ministry of Education, 2009b)

Table 1:

Rates of expulsion and exclusion in 2008 by school quintile

Quintile ²	Expulsion	Exclusion
1	3.6	3.7
2	2.8	3.6
3	0.9	2.3
4	1.2	1.4
5	1.4	0.9

(Ministry of Education, 2009b)

² Quintile is a 1-5 rating given to schools based on socio-economic factors, e.g. schools in low socio-economic areas are rated decile 1 or 2 (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2009).

6.5 Outcomes

Table 2 shows the outcomes for students who were excluded from school in 2009. Most students were enrolled into a new school once their exclusion cases were finalised (893, 59.6%) (Ministry of Education, 2009d).

Table 2:

Outcomes of students excluded in 2009 by number and percentage

Table of placement outcomes for finalised exclusion cases for 2009		
Placement outcome	Number of students	Percentage
Awaiting Ministry action	119	7.9
Awaiting school action	7	0.5
Correspondence School	166	11
Early leaving exemption	49	3.3
Enrolled at new school	893	59.6
Foreign student	1	0.1
Homeschooling exemption	1	0.1
In Child, Youth and Family residence	6	0.4
Left New Zealand	19	1.2
Returned to suspending school	129	8.6
Turned 16, finished school	107	7.1
Untraceable	1	0.1
Total	1498	100

(Ministry of Education, 2009d)

6.6 Normalisation of exclusion and suspension

The MOE guidelines state that “*Stand-downs and suspensions should remain a last resort. You must consider the student’s individual circumstances as well as the facts of the particular incident.*” (Ministry of Education, 2009c).

Section 13 of the *Education Act 1989* states that a school must consider the following before suspending, standing down or excluding a student:

- a. Provide a range of responses for cases of varying degrees of seriousness.
- b. Minimise the disruption to a student’s attendance at school and facilitate the return of the student to school when that is appropriate.
- c. Ensure that individual cases are dealt with in accordance with the principles of natural justice (Ministry of Education, 1989).

A study in the United Kingdom by Brodie and Berridge (1996) showed that in several cases correct processes had not been followed, and that the schools involved had excluded these children as if it were a routine punishment instead of a last resort. This normalisation of exclusion as a routine punishment has the potential to become more prevalent in New Zealand as many of our schools have zero tolerance policies toward drugs. While the MOE advises schools they can forbid drugs on school premises within the context of legal, education and safety concerns (McClellan, 2006), the Ministry of Education Guidelines (2009) also state every situation is different and therefore the consequence cannot be pre-determined by a school rule or policy. Instead, the MOE recommends schools consider a number of positive approaches including 'pastoral care'¹(McClellan, 2006).

7. Review of Potential Solutions

This section highlights and provides examples of initiatives from both within and outside New Zealand that can improve outcomes for students likely to be excluded or expelled from school.

These include a number of early intervention models that can assist in preventing a student from being excluded/expelled, as well as practices and protocols that can assist a student once they have been excluded/expelled.

7.1 Family involvement

"... parents know their child best, care the most and bear the cost of bad decisions" (Harrison, 2004, p.19). With this in mind, current processes could be improved by providing parents more input into the decisions made and how problems are managed. Many parents feel disempowered by the current system and, in some cases, they can be left to feel it is the quality of their parenting that is to blame. Parents want to be more involved in the process and work in cooperation with the schools to find solutions for their children (Smith, 2009).

One way to involve parents is to provide closer links and open communication among families, students and teachers (Panayiotopoulos & Kerfoot, 2007; Smith, 2009). Examples of where this has been done successfully include Nelson's Victory Primary School, which encourages parents to participate in educating their child (see section 5.2d for more information) (Beaumont, 2009).

7.2 Early interventions

Dupper et al. (2009) suggests that schools need to incorporate programmes that will provide ways to improve student behaviour rather than focusing on the child as the problem. Effective programmes have been found to be ones that enable teachers to

¹ Pastoral care encourages social development that accompanies and stretches past the academic needs of a student (University of Canterbury Students Association, 2010).

understand the source of a child's problem rather than focus on removing the child from the classroom (Panayiotopoulos & Kerfoot, 2007).

The following are examples of four early intervention models that focus on improving problem behaviour.

7.2.1 Restorative Justice

Restorative justice is a practice that is being considered by more New Zealand schools. Restorative justice looks at where the problem began. While the student may still be punished, the main objective is to heal the damage caused by the behaviour in question instead of focusing on punishment (Drewery & Windslade, 2003).

Most often restorative justice is adopted where there is a victim from the action of the young person. The process revolves around allowing the young person to understand the consequence of their actions on others so that they may accept responsibility (Drewery & Windslade, 2003).

7.2.2 Culture Abilities Resilience and Effort (CARE)

CARE is an example of a programme that helps schools to look at the causes of the problems using evidence based methods to overcome these problems and improve academic results (Dupper et al., 2009).

7.2.3 High on Life

High on Life was an intervention that ran in Whanganui and Taranaki. It focused on reducing the harms relating to alcohol and drug use through informing students, parents and support workers about drug related harm, alcohol and drug treatment and small group intervention. These programmes saw a reduction in drug related suspensions from 6.0 per 1000 to 1.3 in Taranaki and from 8.0 to 2.4 in Whanganui after implementation (McClellan, 2006).

7.2.4 Nelson's Victory Primary School

This school has not stood down a child in nine years. By setting up a School Community Centre the school has helped families to access medical help, counselling, adult education, childcare and legal advice. This has resulted in a decrease in truancy, reduction in behavioural problems, longer retention of students and improved educational outcomes (Beaumont, 2009). Collaboration has allowed services to acknowledge the issues for the child without holding the responsibility with any one agency (McClellan, 2006). Although successful, to replicate this initiative a school would need to have similar interagency support and resourcing.

It is important to acknowledge that recommended early interventions must also consider the needs of the teachers and school staff as well as those of the students (Hayden, 2009). Any intervention, programme or policy used to address problem behaviours requires adequate resources for the schools and the agencies supporting them. For example, the evaluation of High on Life found that the demand for clinical support was extended beyond its feasibility (McClellan, 2006).

7.3 Improving outcomes of exclusion

Once a child is identified as needing removal from school, a collaborative cross-agency approach is recommended to encourage the best outcomes for the child (Panayiotopoulos & Kerfoot, 2007). Examples of how this could work include both Coalfields Alternatives to Exclusion and Scotland's Exclusion Protocol.

7.3.1 Coalfields Alternatives to Exclusion (CATE)

CATE is a system in the United Kingdom that was developed to manage the transfer of students between schools as an alternative to permanent exclusion. Under CATE a Pupil Placement Panel was established to oversee the programme. This panel included the deputy principals from schools in the region, as well as representatives from the education sector, welfare services and youth offending. Monthly meetings were held where the panel arranged for pupils to be transferred between schools and the support that would be in place for them (Vincent et al., 2007).

The CATE system enabled providers to deliver a strengths based model that would see a 'best fit' for each child by focusing on which schools were best placed to meet the needs of each pupil. This system also included prevention strategies and support from the school as well as external agencies for students who were at risk of being excluded (Vincent et al., 2007).

Students who were transferred through the CATE system did not suffer a gap in education, they felt cared about, wanted, listened to and supported. This was reflected in a greater than 50% reduction in problem behaviour and an improvement in student confidence amongst participating schools (Vincent et al., 2007).

7.3.2 Scotland's exclusion protocol

In Scotland exclusion is defined only as a temporary movement of a student to another school. The permanent removal of student from school in Scotland is called 'removed from the schools register'. The population of Scotland is over 5 million (Scottish Government, 2008a) yet only 164 students were permanently removed from schools' registers in Scotland in 2008 (De Wit, 2009). To put this in context, this is 831.7% less than New Zealand, which had 1,364 permanent exclusions in 2008 (Ministry of Education, 2009b).

When a student is temporarily excluded from school in Scotland the student remains on their school's roll and that school is responsible for the transfer of a student to a new school until it is a suitable time for them to return. Similar approaches have been adopted in Denmark, Spain, Belgium, France, Germany, Austria, Luxembourg and the Netherlands where the responsibility to find alternative placement for the child is with the principal of the school (Panayiotopoulos & Kerfoot, 2007). This is different to New Zealand where the principal of the school is responsible for placing a student for 10 days after which this responsibility is transferred to MOE (Ministry of Education, 2009c).

This system also requires the school to remain responsible for the welfare of the child by having them remain on their roll. The Scottish Government insists that every local authority use at least a few of the following recommended behaviour improvement approaches:

- Staged Intervention (*system to manage disruptive behaviour*)
- Solution Orientated Schools (*a strengths based school improvement programme*)
- Restorative Practices (*looks at restoring good relationships after a conflict*)
- Motivated Schools and Social, Emotional Learning Frameworks
- Cool in School (*development programme about respect for oneself and others*)
- Positive Emotional Health and Wellbeing programme
- Inclusion of children with social, emotional, or behavioural difficulties
- Nurture (*small group intervention*).

(Scottish Government, 2008b)

These programmes allow schools to intercept problem behaviour early and provide structured support for those who are excluded to be integrated into their new school with success (Education and Cultural Services, 2006).

8. Discussion

The MOE guidelines for Principals and Boards of Trustees provide opportunity for schools to engage a child and their family in the process. The guidelines require schools to talk with the parents at an early stage about problem behaviour; contact parents when sending a child home; and provide them with the opportunity to meet with the school (Ministry of Education, 2009c). Unfortunately there is evidence to suggest that in the past not all schools have followed this process (Smith, 2009) or taken these opportunities to build a cooperative solution. It is important to consider why these processes have not been followed, for instance, if there is a need to improve resourcing or review the guidelines. Due to the significant and long-term impact of exclusion on children's health and wellbeing, this is a real concern. Investigating why the MOE guidelines are not being complied with may be a starting point in resolving these issues.

There are still a few more areas for consideration that the New Zealand guidelines do not cover. For instance, many of the follow-up processes required for a school exclusion or suspension are not required when a student is expelled. Even though a student may legally leave school from the age of 16, they should still be given the assistance to remain in school if they want to. The New Zealand Government's Youth Guarantee has an expectation for all children under the age of 18 to be in work, training or education (Key, 2008), and the United Nations declaration of human rights clearly states "everyone has the right to education" (The United Nations, 1948). Unfortunately the reality is that for these children this is out of the question without support and assistance.

The literature presented found that caregivers do not have adequate knowledge about procedures following their child being sent home and the assistance available to them.

This lack of knowledge can either be an indication of parents not receiving or noticing the Ministry of Education information they are sent or that the information provided is not presented in a way that all parents can understand.

The MOE guidelines would benefit from also providing a framework for schools to work with a family and the affected student to find solutions and consider whether these solutions can be met through looking at any immediate needs within the family itself (Smith, 2009).

Evidence from New Zealand and overseas provides numerous examples of collaborative frameworks that demonstrate benefits to schools. These frameworks work with families and external agencies to install strategies to prevent and address problem behaviour, not only for students who have been excluded from school and reintegrated into a new school, but for those who are at risk of exclusion (Beaumont, 2009; Education and Cultural Services, 2006; McClellan, 2006; Scottish Government, 2008b; Vincent et al., 2007).

One of the key influences in poor outcomes from exclusions is the time a student may spend out of education. For those under 16 years old, the principal is required to find a suitable school within 10 days. If the principal is unable to find anywhere for the student within 10 days then this responsibility is handed over to the MOE (Ministry of Education, 1989, 2009c). This process is not always practiced efficiently. In 2009 there were 309 excluded students who were not placed into New Zealand schooling (Ministry of Education, 2009d). Those that were, took on average 50.4 school days (approximately one school term) to be placed.(Ministry of Education, 2009a). This raises a need to consider why students are left to wait so long before beginning school again and why some are not continuing with schooling at all. A student needs to be assisted to reintegrate to a new school so as to reduce the disruption to the student's education and therefore reduce the chance of the student suffering from an academic disadvantage that could lead to various social, financial and health inequalities later in life (Brown, 2007; Hayden, 2009; McCrystal et al., 2007).

It would be beneficial to consider relocation strategies that go a step further in supporting reintegration to school, by establishing pupil placement panels in regions throughout New Zealand as modelled on the CATE system in the United Kingdom (Vincent et al., 2007). Pupil Placement Panels would provide regions with a strengths-based approach to problem behaviour by allowing schools to decide which of them are best placed to work with a particular student based on the student's needs and the resources within that school. The Pupil Placement Panels provide an ideal opportunity to link in supporting services and discuss the various aspects of a student's needs in order to provide solutions that looks at all aspects of a student's environment.

It is important to note that any intervention or strategy needs to be adequately resourced. Currently teachers are poorly equipped to deal with specific types of behaviour and unable to distinguish between bad behaviour and disturbed behaviour (Panayiotopoulos & Kerfoot, 2007). These teachers are in need of training and resources to identify and respond to behavioural problems, mental wellbeing concerns

and substance abuse among their students (Ross, 2000). In recognising these options, the responsibility for the outcomes of a student excluded from school cannot be left solely to the school and its staff. Quality interventions utilise the supports of external agencies and build on improving systems themselves.

9. Key Considerations

Based on the findings of this report, it is recommended that the New Zealand education sector considers the following strategies to minimise the poor outcomes associated with excluding and expelling students from school.

- Reduce school exclusion rates by incorporating support frameworks within a school such as those used by Nelson’s Victory Primary School
- Incorporate follow-up practices to ensure that students who are excluded are managed into other forms of education and training immediately, e.g. Scotland's approach to transferring students
- Develop collaborative networks between schools, agencies and parents to find solutions to unwanted behaviours
- Monitor current practices to ensure legislation is followed and, in particular, practices intended to minimise the disruption to the student’s schooling by:
 - sending school work home from the day the student is sent home
 - assisting parents with relocating the student to a new school
 - providing suitable interventions and support to manage the transition to a new school and address problem behaviour
- Apply the same solutions and practices to students who are expelled from school rather than only supporting those who are excluded.

There are several examples of frameworks that provide support for a student who is excluded from school, including those of the Scottish Government and the Pupil Placement Panel used by the CATE system in the United Kingdom. Models such as these provide opportunities to address the broad range of health and social impacts of exclusion in New Zealand. Exploring the potential to integrate these concepts into process requirements for school exclusion may have wide benefits for individuals, families, schools and the community as a whole.

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