

2024 suspensions and expulsions

Introduction

This fact sheet contains information on suspensions and expulsions in NSW public schools.

School principals may suspend students for serious or unacceptable behaviour, as defined by the approved [grounds for suspension](#). The purpose of suspension is not punitive. It is used to protect the wellbeing and safety of all students and staff, while ensuring that the suspended student is supported to successfully re-engage with learning on their return.

In the most serious cases, and only after other interventions have been exhausted, a principal, together with their director, educational leadership (DEL), may consider expulsion. Given the seriousness of this decision, it must always follow principles of procedural fairness.

The vast majority of students in NSW Government schools are not suspended. Of all students enrolled, **less than 6% (41,125) of the total student population received a suspension in 2024.**

Suspension data is an important tool for understanding how schools respond to complex behaviour, maintain safe and respectful learning environments, and plan effective support for students.

The 2024 fact sheet is based on the revised 'Student behaviour policy' for NSW public schools, which was implemented in Term 1 2024. The previous 'Student behaviour policy' was in effect from Term 4 2022, until the end of 2023. **Comparisons with previous suspension data are therefore discouraged, and where such comparisons are made in this fact sheet, the policy change should be taken into consideration.**

Additional features of the 2024 policy changes include:

- the introduction of potential immediate suspensions for serious behaviours
- removal of the cap on the total number of suspensions a student can receive in a calendar year, while maintaining the cap on the maximum number of days that a student can be suspended in a calendar year before approval is needed (for students in Kindergarten to Year 2 this is 30 school days, and for students in Years 3 to 12 this is 45 school days)
- introduction of new behaviour grounds that are not directly comparable with those used under previous policies
- the introduction of system-generated notifications to the Team Around a School to enact a proactive suspension support response.

Analytical summary (2024)

- Overall, most students in NSW Government schools were not suspended. Less than 6% were suspended at least once in 2024.
- Approximately 1 in 50 (2.0%) primary school students and 1 in 10 (10.5%) secondary school students were suspended during this period.
- The average number of days that students were suspended fell from 5.3 in 2023 to 4.2 in 2024.
- In 2024, there were 107 students expelled, representing an expulsion rate of 0.01% (1 in 10,000 students) across NSW Government schools.

2024 suspensions

Table 1: All students suspended by education level, 2024

All students	Suspensions	Students suspended	FTE suspension rate	Last year suspension rate (2023)
Primary students	17,767	9,288	2.0%	1.5%
Secondary students	59,831	31,840	10.5%	8.6%
All students	77,598	41,125	5.4%	4.3%

Suspensions by education level and gender, 2024

Table 2: Students suspended by education level and gender, 2024

Education level	Suspended males	Male FTE suspension rate	Suspended females	Female FTE suspension rate	All students suspended	FTE suspension rate
K–2	2,109	2.1%	350	0.4%	2,459	1.3%
3–6	5,669	4.0%	1,163	0.9%	6,832	2.5%
Primary total	7,775	3.2%	1,513	0.7%	9,288	2.0%
7–10	18,946	16.3%	9,054	8.6%	28,000	12.7%
11–12	2,785	6.5%	1,077	2.5%	3,862	4.5%
Secondary total	21,715	13.9%	10,126	7.0%	31,840	10.5%
All	29,487	7.4%	11,639	3.2%	41,125	5.4%

Suspension of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students, 2024

The term 'Aboriginal' refers to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students. Aboriginal students account for approximately 9.8% of all government school student enrolments. Among Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students, 6.7% of primary school students and 25.1% of secondary school students were suspended at least once.

Table 3: Suspensions for Aboriginal students, 2024

Education level	Suspensions	Students suspended	FTE suspension rate	Last year suspension rate (2023)
K–2	1,540	776	3.9%	3.2%
3–6	4,876	2,314	8.7%	7.4%
Primary total	6,416	3,088	6.7%	5.6%
7–10	15,210	6,703	28.4%	25.7%
11–12	1,046	676	10.8%	9.8%
Secondary total	16,256	7,376	25.1%	22.7%
All	22,672	10,464	13.9%	12.3%

Suspension of students identified as receiving adjustments due to disability, 2024

In 2024, approximately 20.4% of total enrolments were identified as receiving supplementary, substantial or extensive adjustments due to disability. Among students identified as receiving supplementary, substantial or extensive adjustments due to disability, 7.0% of primary school students and 23.3% of secondary school students were suspended at least once in 2024.

Table 4: Suspensions for students identified as receiving adjustments due to disability, 2024

Education level	Suspensions	Students suspended	FTE suspension rate	Last year suspension rate (2023)
K–2	4,083	2,037	4.9%	3.7%
3–6	10,139	4,734	8.6%	7.1%
Primary total	14,222	6,768	7.0%	5.6%
7–10	28,887	12,267	27.0%	23.1%
11–12	1,815	1,174	8.9%	6.0%
Secondary total	30,702	13,429	23.3%	19.0%
All	44,924	20,194	13.1%	10.9%

Data by SA4 groups, 2024

The NSW Department of Education uses the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS 2021) to report data by geographical area. ASGS Statistical Area 4 (SA4) boundaries in NSW are combined into 11 groups for reporting.

SA4 groups map



In 2024, Sydney-North had the lowest suspension rate with 1.5% of students suspended, while North West NSW had the highest rate with 9.9% of students receiving suspensions.

Table 5: Suspensions by SA4 groups, 2024

SA4 group	Total suspensions	Total number of students suspended	Suspension rate
Sydney-North	1,863	1,253	1.5%
Sydney-Inner	2,592	1,551	2.8%
Sydney-South	5,626	3,241	4.4%
Sydney-South West	9,027	5,031	5.4%
Sydney-West	7,045	4,097	4.3%
Sydney-North West	4,250	2,445	3.7%
North East NSW	9,323	4,588	8.3%
North West NSW	12,577	6,151	9.9%
South West NSW	6,973	3,568	7.3%
South East NSW	8,541	4,424	6.4%
Central Coast, Newcastle	9,890	5,057	6.6%

All students suspended, by suspension ground, 2024

In 2024, 24,045 students were suspended in the 'Behaviour of concern' category and 25,943 students were suspended in the 'Serious behaviour of concern' category.

In the 'Behaviour of concern' category, 12,699 students were suspended for 'Continued/persistent disobedience and/or disruptive behaviour'. This represented 24.4% of all suspensions.

18,922 students were suspended for 'Seriously threatening or engaging in physically violent behaviour'. This represents 35.0% of all suspensions.

Table 6: All students suspended, by suspension ground, 2024

Suspension ground	Number of suspensions	Number of students suspended	Suspension proportion by suspension ground
Behaviour of concern			
Bullying and cyberbullying	1,160	1,112	1.5%
Continued/persistent disobedience and/or disruptive behaviour	18,907	12,699	24.4%
Discrimination	510	492	0.7%
Malicious damage to or theft of property	2,211	2,026	2.8%
Misuse of technology	2,678	2,402	3.5%
Other behaviour of concern	7,125	6,141	9.2%
Verbal abuse	6,193	5,053	8.0%
Total behaviour of concern	38,784	24,045	50.0%

Suspension ground	Number of suspensions	Number of students suspended	Suspension proportion by suspension ground
Serious behaviour of concern			
Being in possession of or using weapons	974	947	1.3%
Being in possession, use or supply of tobacco, vapes, alcohol, e-cigarettes	3,074	2,747	4.0%
Engaging in serious criminal behaviour related to the school	680	654	0.9%
Engaging in sexual harassment, assault or behaviour	1,107	1,033	1.4%
Other serious behaviour of concern	4,274	3,655	5.5%
Possession, use or supply of suspected illegal/restricted substance	1,098	1,037	1.4%
Seriously threatening or engaging in physically violent behaviour	27,131	18,922	35.0%
Using an implement as a weapon	476	460	0.6%
Total serious behaviour of concern	38,814	25,943	50.0%
All grounds	77,598	41,125	100.0%

Students suspended over time

It is important to note that there have been 2 policy changes over time. The previous 'Student behaviour policy' was in effect from Term 4 2022 until the end of 2023. The revised policy was implemented in Term 1 2024. In 2023, there were restrictions on the number of suspensions a student could receive in a year. These restrictions were lifted in 2024, giving schools more flexibility to suspend students when necessary. Due to the policy changes, comparisons with historical suspension data are discouraged.

Between 2015 and 2023, the suspension rate averaged approximately 4.5%. Though incomparable, in 2024, the suspension rate was 5.4%.

Expulsions over time

In 2024, a total of 107 students were expelled from NSW Government schools. Of these, 54 expulsions were for misbehaviour and 53 were for unsatisfactory participation for students 17 years and over. Though incomparable, from 2014 to 2020, expulsions peaked at around 300 per year and have declined since that time.

Data notes

Timeframe

Each year, the department's Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation collects suspension data in July and December. From 2024 onwards, data is published once a year.

The data presented in this fact sheet covers suspensions from the first day of Term 1, 2024, to the end of Week 8 Term 4 .

Calculations

Prior to 2024, the suspension rate was calculated by dividing the number of students suspended during the reporting window by the total number of student enrolments in the relevant population at a specific point in time – for example, the mid-year census in August. This method assumed that all students were enrolled for the entire reporting period and therefore equally at risk of being suspended. However, this approach did not account for student mobility where students enrolled or left part way through the reporting period, leading to a misrepresentation of the true suspension risk.

From 2024 onwards, the suspension rate has been replaced with the full-time equivalent (FTE) suspension rate. This new measure is calculated by dividing the number of students suspended during the reporting period by the FTE of student enrolments. The FTE enrolments take into account how long each student was enrolled during the reporting period. This provides a more accurate measure of suspension risk by reflecting the proportion of time each student was eligible to be suspended.

Due to changes in the way suspension rates were calculated between 2023 and 2024, this should be taken into account when comparing data across these years.

Totals columns

The 'Total suspensions' figures represent the total instances of suspension **not** the number of students who had received a suspension.

Grand totals involving the number of students suspended may not match the total when adding up individual rows. This occurs when students are suspended across different categories (such as educational levels, SA4 groups, gender) over the course of the year.

The 'Total expulsions' figures represent the total instances of expulsions **not** the number of students who were expelled.

NCCD students

Data for students identified as receiving adjustments due to disability is taken from the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD), which takes place in the first week of August each year. Data is included for students identified as requiring supplementary, substantial or extensive levels of adjustment. Students who require quality differentiated teaching practices are not included in the data. This is where teachers make slight adjustments within the same lesson or across the school context to meet the needs of students due to different capabilities. More information can be found on the [Strategies for differentiation](#) webpage.

The model for the NCCD is based on mandatory obligations to students under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA) and Disability Standards for Education 2005.

Suspensions issued to students identified as receiving adjustments due to disability are included in this publication if the student record was reported to the Australian Government in the NCCD. The publication will include suspensions across different schools, regardless of which school reported them under NCCD. Table headings have been shortened due to formatting constraints. References to 'students with disability' should always be read as 'students identified as receiving adjustments due to disability'.

For more information on the NCCD, including level of adjustment descriptors and disability categories, please refer to the NCCD [portal](#).

Limitations

Comparability

The 2024 'Student behaviour policy' introduced significant changes to the way student behaviour incidents are classified, recorded and responded to in NSW Government schools. Key changes included:

- revised suspension categories (behaviour of concern and serious behaviour of concern)
- removal of limits on the number of suspensions a student can receive in a year
- reintroduction of immediate suspensions
- a new method for calculating suspension rates based on full-time equivalent (FTE) enrolments, which accounts for mobility and part-year enrolments.

These changes mean that suspension data from 2024 is not directly comparable to data from previous years, including 2023. Both the definitions of behaviours and the calculation of suspension rates have changed, creating a new baseline for future monitoring.

Refer to the relevant policy documents and publications for further information and context on these changes.

Further reading

- [Suspensions and expulsion procedures](#)