

Attending a board meeting about suspension

If a student is suspended the board meets to consider their suspension. Currently, a student, their parents and their representative are entitled to attend the meeting in person. Changes to the Act allow students and their parents to request to attend the board meeting about the suspension via a telephone conference or video link.

Source: Ministry of Education factsheet

This new amendment to the Act will greatly assist in situations where the student and their family/whānau are not able to attend the suspension meeting in person, allowing them to request to dial in to the meeting either via telephone or video link. At times, there have been logistical problems in having the student and their family/whānau in attendance. This may have been further complicated by the tight timeframe for holding a suspension meeting.

What do principals and boards have to do differently?

When the principal gives the suspended student and their family/whānau information about their rights, this will now include how to request attendance at the suspension meeting via telephone conference or video link. The information should specify that the request must be made in writing within a reasonable timeframe and that boards are not obligated to agree to the request if they have a good reason to refuse it.

Does this mean that schools must have the technology available to meet the request?

Boards should take all reasonable steps to have the technology available if it is requested. Ultimately, however, if the technology cannot be made available, the request may be refused.

When can boards refuse such a request?

Boards can only refuse such a request if they have good reason to do so. The Ministry has stated that good reasons for refusal include the request being made within an unreasonable timeframe or if the necessary technology is not available. These examples are not exhaustive.

Where do I find this in the Education Act?

Section 17B.

When do the changes take effect?

These provisions take effect from 31 December 2019.

Where do I get advice?

NZSTA will continue to update and advise you through factsheets, newsletters, and our website.

You can call **0800 782 435** or email actupdates@nzsta.org.nz.