

MEDIA RELEASE

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Challenges to school boards' decisions rare

The President of NZ School Trustees Association, Lorraine Kerr, says challenges to schools' decisions arising from student disciplinary cases are quite rare.

"Of the many hundreds of disciplinary decisions that boards of trustees and principals make regarding students, the vast majority are accepted as being fair and reasonable in terms of process, and in most cases, in terms of the outcome," she said.

Over the past 25 years since the introduction of *Tomorrow's Schools*, boards of trustees and principals have been responsible for dealing with complaints from parents and others, and for dealing with student disciplinary matters. Over this time, it has been rare for disciplinary decisions by boards of trustees to be challenged in the courts by parents.

The powers of the principal and the board of trustees with regard to student discipline and punishments are set in the Education Act says Ms Kerr.

"The purpose of the provisions concerning stand downs, suspension, exclusion and expulsion is to ensure that that individual cases are dealt with in accordance with the principles of fairness and natural justice".

There is always the potential for a parent to challenge a board's or principal's decision if they feel aggrieved at the outcome but that, of itself, does not call into question the board's or principal's right to take disciplinary action where there is a breach of school rules around expected behaviour within or outside the school.

"Parents' expectations of schools and school boards are high, and they expect the school to have rules in place to protect students, ensure the school is a safe environment, deal with unacceptable behaviour by students, and generally maintain the reputation of the school itself" says Lorraine Kerr.

"And I am confident that overall, boards and principals exercise their authority in handling complaints and dealing with student disciplinary matters very well, and to a high standard".

Ends

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