

# Mum has maximum number of 'ghost' students in state

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**Mumbai:** The state government's verification drive to spot bogus students on its rolls has thrown up some alarming numbers, with public schools in Mumbai emerging as the worst culprits among all districts in the state.

A total of 21 lakh students on the rolls of public schools across the state have been found missing. The island city has an absentee record of 18.42% and Mumbai suburban has 16% missing students. The figures for the financial capital of the country are worse than the remote districts of Nanded, with 18% ghost students. Gondia, Dhule and Nandurbar, with 14% absentees, and Jalgaon with 11% missing students, remain some of the worst affected regions in the state.



The state education department on Wednesday presented its fact-finding report to chief minister Prithviraj Chavan. According to the report, roughly 6% of students in zilla parishads and 10.5% in all corporations were found to be missing or bogus. The alarming numbers prompted the government to immediately order setting up of a committee headed by chief secretary Ratnakar

## Worst Offenders

| Region               | % of 'Ghost' Students |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Mumbai (island city) | 18.42                 |
| Nanded               | 18                    |
| Mumbai (suburban)    | 16                    |
| Gondia               | 14                    |
| Dhule                | 14                    |
| Nandurbar            | 14                    |
| Jalgaon              | 11                    |

Gaikwad. The panel will look into the report, suggest immediate remedies, and take action against those found guilty in two months' time.

"Even if you take into account factors such as absenteeism due to illness, students dropping out because of personal problems, the numbers are genuinely alarming. What's most distressful and has come as a shock is that urban areas

such as Mumbai have emerged as the worst hit by this menace," said school education minister Rajendra Darda, who briefed the cabinet on the issue. He added, "We are satisfied with our efforts since at least now we can clean up the system and ensure our future grants go to right institutes," he said.

Earlier this year, a student verification drive initiated by the Nanded collector showed that 1.4 lakh of the 7 lakh students in the district were 'bogus'. Soon after, an education officer in charge of primary education for Nanded district was suspended for his alleged involvement in covering up irregularities at the schools. Shocked with the statistics, the state school education department ordered a state-wide drive to identify bogus students in government-aided and managed schools across the state.