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School for deaf accused of catalogue of child abuse

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A YEAR-LONG investigation of a leading school for the deaf by police and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children has disclosed "an appalling catalogue of child abuse and neglect".

Among the allegations are that some pupils at the Royal School for the Deaf in Cheadle Hulme, Stockport, Greater Manchester, suffered broken bones and lost teeth, while others were subjected to unwarranted restraining procedures.

NSPCC officials also investigated claims that deaf or emotionally disturbed children had been punched, tied up and doused with water hoses. Some of the school's 78 pupils have physical and emotional difficulties.

The NSPCC said yesterday that fundamental child protection procedures had been undermined at the school. However, there have been no allegations of sexual abuse. Four members of staff were under suspension while the investigation continued.

Senior staff at Stockport social services have met to discuss the report's findings. Jean Daintith, the department's director, said: "Problems of this nature cannot be allowed to continue and the Stockport child care agencies will ensure that practices at the school are radically improved."

The National Deaf Children's Society said it was appalled by the NSPCC's findings. "It is clear from the report that children at the school have been failed and subjected to an appalling catalogue of abuse and neglect," said a spokesman.

Ian MacLeary, the school's chief executive, said a new governing body had dealt with many of the issues raised in the report. New training procedures had also been introduced.

"These are children with complex emotional needs," he said, adding that "quite a lot" of them injured themselves.

"I would say there is not an oppressive regime at the school. I would have to accept that across the board procedures could have been better. We have acted on that and are co-operating with the authorities.

"I have great faith in my staff and I know they do a lot of good work here. I would say a lot can be explained if people understand the category of child we have here."

Dominic Tinner, the school's development manager, said: "Not one parent has withdrawn their child and they have all told me if they had the slightest doubts they would do so immediately."

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