

# School loses a third of students amid 18 sex incidents

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**A PRIMARY school embroiled in sexual assault allegations has recorded 18 cases of "sexualised behaviour" between children since last year, with 11 cases reported to police.**

Eight of the 18 alleged incidents have happened this semester.

Both girls and boys are alleged offenders. Experts said children could be copying each other's behaviour.

[Education Queensland](#) admits there is a crisis of confidence at the school on Brisbane's northern outskirts, with nearly a third of students withdrawn by parents this year.

[Kid sex a copycat syndrome](#)

[Queensland Teachers Union](#) members have also taken a vote of no confidence in the principal, who is under a separate investigation by the department.

*The Courier-Mail* revealed earlier this year that two girls had allegedly been sexually assaulted by two year 1 boys in toilets at the school, while a number of girls were allegedly inappropriately touched outside the classroom.

Education Queensland director-general Julie Grantham acknowledged what was happening at the school was "not normal" and said the department was trying to do everything possible to raise confidence in the school.

Staff had been provided with additional child protection training, teacher aide time had been stepped up in the playground to monitor behaviour and a psychologist had been providing specialised support to children.

Parents would also be addressed by Family Planning Queensland.

"We think we have done as much as we can . . . we will do whatever it takes," Ms Grantham said.

"With the sexual assaults – we have done a separate investigation into the full handling of this and the school has followed all the appropriate behaviours – they have followed the checklist in every one of the cases."

Only one student has been suspended. None has been expelled.

Griffith University School of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Professor Stephen Smallbone, said children could be influenced by their peers' behaviour.

Ms Grantham – who refused to say how many alleged offenders were involved in the 18 incidents, as it may identify children – said it was unfair to categorise the incidents as sexual assaults, given the age of those involved.

Incidents which were not reported to police include a younger boy trying to kiss two older girls, and another calling out with sexist language.

Ms Grantham said all "sexualised behaviour" involving alleged inappropriate touching had been reported by staff to police.

The department's student protection policy requires principals to form a reasonable suspicion that a student has been harmed or is at risk of harm prior to making a report.

Parents, carers and relatives have told *The Courier-Mail* of widespread unrest at the school fuelled this year by the alleged sexual assaults and behaviour.

Parents have withdrawn 85 students this year from the school, which had 298 pupils enrolled in February.

Ms Grantham said some of the parents had moved intra or interstate because of work or other personal circumstances, while 35 new students had enrolled.

Enrolments have dropped by almost half since 2005, when 429 were enrolled.

An investigation into the school principal's leadership is expected to be completed in the coming week.

<http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,,26438147-3102,00.html>