

Parent complains after school removes doors to boys' toilets

'How can boys change attire?'

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IN A bid to prevent students from loitering, playing and smoking in the toilets, the management of a secondary school decided to get creative.

The main doors of four of the boys' toilets in the co-ed school, which is located in the northern part of Singapore, were removed last Wednesday.

But the move upset a father of one of the male students, who reacted by posting a photograph of the modified toilet on The Straits Times interactive news portal Stomp a day later.

He also complained online about the students' loss of privacy.

He wrote: "How are the (male) students in the school going to change their attire if they have any PE lessons?"

"Are they supposed to change in class where their female classmates are around?"

The parent said his son told him that the toilet doors were removed to curb a smoking problem.

"Based on what my child told me and on my understanding, there are students who smoke in school," he said.

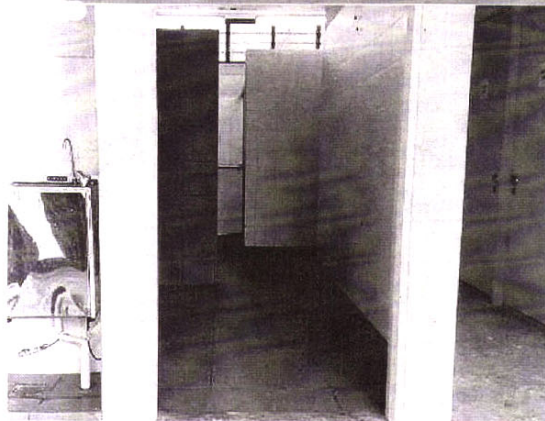
"Is this the way for the school to handle the case of students smoking in school?"

The parent also claimed that the school had employed additional staff to maintain discipline in school.

He fumed: "Is the situation in the school so bad that it requires so many people to maintain the discipline and remove the toilet doors?"

When contacted, the school's principal confirmed that the main doors of four of the boys' toilets had been removed.

But the cubicles inside still have doors.



POSTED ONLINE:
The irate father took a picture of the door-less toilet.

PICTURE: STOMP

She told The New Paper that the reason for the measure was "not really because of students smoking".

She said: "The measure was taken to maintain cleanliness in the boys' toilets and to prevent unnecessary wasting of time in the toilets by students.

"We also noticed the younger students playing around and slamming the toilet doors when we were making our rounds. We were worried that they'd get injured if their fingers got caught in the doors."

Proactive action

The principal said the school decided to be "proactive" and take action before an accident happened.

She said: "There was no compromise of the students' privacy as there was no direct view into the toilets affected.

"I checked on this aspect and so did the management committee."

She added that the main doors of the other

male toilets were not removed as it would have resulted in the students' loss of privacy.

It is not known how many male toilets there are in total in the school.

The principal said the school had not received any direct complaint from any parent. She e-mailed the father who posted the photograph online, but has yet to receive a reply.

The modified toilets have the same design as those in many shopping centres, which also do not have doors.

The principal said the reasons behind the measure, which was carried out as a trial, were explained to the students affected.

But on Monday, the school decided to re-install the doors, following an informal poll of the students.

The principal said: "Half the students liked the change, saying the toilets are better ventilated and brighter without the main doors, while the others were neutral.

"The doors were replaced as the students have got the message about being responsible users of the toilets."