

Times 28/7 p18

Beating is illegal discipline

CORPORAL punishment is illegal and has been since 1996 with the passing of the South African Schools Act.

Yet your report ("Education department suspends hosepipe headmaster", TimesLive, July 24) reveals that corporal punishment is still in existence. One can only hope that your publication of this illegal act will assist in eradicating this practice.

A study in 2005 found that more than a quarter of South African school teachers admitted to resorting to corporal punishment to maintain order. This is a widespread problem. While the teaching of academics should be the focus, the disciplining of disruptive pupils is often inappropriate

and time-consuming. This not only hinders the ability and opportunity for pupils to be taught and their constitutional right to an education, but also infringes on the teachers' right to work in conditions that allow them to perform at their best without disruption.

A follow-up report states that the school principal had a case of assault opened against him. It is also distressing to read that the parents allegedly gave written consent to the principal to give their child a hiding when he displayed troublesome behaviour.

While institutions of learning may feel they have few options to deal with disruptive pupils who have difficulties in school and demonstrate inappropriate

behaviour, Girls and Boys Town offers intervention programmes and training workshops that tackle issues of behavioural problems in the classroom.

The Girls and Boys Town Well-Managed Classroom workshop has trained 9 098 educators and affected 268 536 pupils in all nine provinces, empowers educators with helpful skills and tools that facilitate appropriate school and classroom behaviour, allows educators to focus on teaching (rather than managing inappropriate behaviour) and develops both a culture of education as well as improved educator/learner relationships.

The Common Sense Parenting workshop allows

parents the opportunity to manage their children's behaviour in respectful and powerful ways that build on relationships in the family, removing the stresses of conflict and power struggles.

Girls and Boys Town's "learner-orientation" programmes teach young people alternatives to inappropriate behaviour, which include making good choices and decisions.

There is no question that support is necessary to ease the frustration of parents and educators who deal with such situations.

The Girls and Boys Town resources can be accessed on www.girlsandboystown.org.za.
— Lee Loynes, CEO of Girls and Boys Town