

# 4 kids abused in top city school

By VINODHINI

**Chennai, July 7:** Sexual abuse of their children in a top school in the city has shocked the parents and authorities and put them in a dilemma on whether to report it to the police or not. According to the parents who spoke to this newspaper, four children studying in second standard wanted to watch a cartoon movie during lunch time and were taken by a helper to the audio-visual room. He then allegedly touched the private parts of the children.

The next day the parents complained to the school authorities who first transferred the attender and later

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CHENNAI SUNDAY 8 JULY 2007

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fired him after the parents gave a written complaint. While the helper is still on the loose and could abuse other children, parents are afraid of filing a police case as it might be traumatic for their children. "Although we want to complain to the police we are apprehensive that in case of an inquiry our children could be summoned and questioned ensuing in a long litigation process. It could be a harrowing experience for a six-year-old," a parent said on condition of anonymity. School authorities say the incident has been a lesson and were planning to conduct prevention of abuse programmes. "We discussed the issue with the parents and then decided not to give a police complaint. But to prevent such occurrences we are planning to conduct prevention programmes through which we parents and staff of the school will be sensitised on how to handle such incidents," they said. Child rights activists point out that although India is a signatory UN declaration on the rights of the child, the legal system is abysmally insensitive to the problem. "The litigation process is very child-unfriendly and the police force is yet to be sensitized to handle such cases. The biggest problem is the compulsive behavior of the child abuser who repeats the abuse by planning and seeking access to children," said Ms Vidya Reddy, executive director of Tulir, a center for prevention and healing of child sexual abuse. The problem is compounded by the fact that hardly 6 per cent of cases of child sexual abuse are reported, according to a one-and-a-half year nationwide study done by the ministry of women and child development among 17,220 children. "More than 53 per cent of the children reported having faced one or more forms of sexual abuse and most children did not report the matter to anyone," the report released this year said pointing out that much needed to be done to tackle the issue of child abuse.