

12-year-old dies after alleged bullying in A'Ibom school

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File photo: Map of Akwa Ibom State

By Patrick Odey

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Fear has gripped the Federal Government College in Ikot Ekpene Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State following the death of 12-year-old Junior Secondary 2 (JS1) student Ufokobong Edwin Godwin, who was allegedly bullied to death by a senior student for refusing to share his provisions.

PUNCH Metro learnt on Wednesday that the incident, which began before the Easter break, resulted in the deceased being hospitalised on Easter Sunday due to a neck injury sustained during the alleged assault.

Narrating the incident on Wednesday, a student who lived in the same hostel as the deceased but requested anonymity due to the sensitivity of the incident said the senior student approached Godwin for his provisions during the terminal examinations, but he declined, insisting he did not have enough to share.

“A fellow student, a senior in SS3, asked the boy for provisions, but he refused. The student reportedly hit him on the neck, after which he went into a coma,” the student said.

“He later regained consciousness in the hospital and was taken back to school. When the holiday came, the parents picked him up without being informed of any incident involving their son—perhaps because the school did not think the injury was serious.”

The source added that the senior student continued hitting Godwin's neck until he fainted three times before other students raised the alarm.

"The students rushed to inform the boarding master, who took the deceased to an undisclosed hospital before he regained consciousness and left for the Easter vacation," the student said.

He further revealed that the school allegedly did not inform the parents about the incident or the need for continued medication at home during the Easter break.

"At home, the boy developed severe neck pain, shouting, 'My neck! My neck!' His parents initially bought him pain relief drugs, unaware that the injury was more serious," the source said.

"When the pain worsened, the father rushed him to the hospital, where he died on Easter Sunday. Back home, the parents said the boy had started complaining of throat pain on Wednesday, and they had obtained medication for him.

"On Saturday night, the father called some friends, asking them to pray for his son, who had been taken to the hospital. By Sunday morning, around 1:00 a.m., the boy passed away.

"The hospital later confirmed that he died from complications associated with blood clots around his throat (neck area)," the student added.

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When contacted on Wednesday, the state Police Public Relations Officer, DSP Timfon John, said she had not been informed about the incident but would find out.

However, she had yet to respond at the time of filing this report.

The principal of the school, Jude Ezeogu, confirmed the incident, describing it as unfortunate.

He said the circumstances surrounding Godwin's death would be communicated to the public after the school management committee meeting.

"It's an unfortunate incident. The entire school is in mourning. He is our child; he is a Nigerian child, so we are deeply touched by his demise.

“The school management committee will meet tomorrow to discuss the matter, and the circumstances of his death will be communicated,” Ezeogu said.

Meanwhile, the family of the deceased has called on the Federal Government to investigate the circumstances leading to their son’s death.

In a telephone interview with PUNCH Metro on Wednesday, the father said, “Though I am saddened by the incident, the government should intervene immediately for justice to prevail. I cannot talk now. I am calling on the Federal Government to intervene for justice. I will speak at the appropriate time.”

This incident comes amid a series of bullying cases in both public and private schools across Nigeria, with stakeholders calling for urgent action.

Last month, the Edo State Police Command summoned the management of Igbinedion Education Centre, Benin City, to produce the students involved in the bullying and assault of a schoolmate for investigation and possible prosecution.

In a video that went viral on X on Friday, two male students of the school were seen beating and kicking another student who was lying on the ground.