

Principal, 8 students in trouble over drowned JSS 2 student

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The principal of Oluyole Extension High School, Ibadan, Oyo State, Mr John Babatunde Isayinka and eight of his students are currently in police custody, following the drowning of a Junior Secondary School (JSS2) student, David Samson, last Wednesday.

The students who were moved to the Criminal Investigations Department (CID), Iyaganku in the state capital, included Ojeziele Favour, Oyebola Favour, Ojo Emmanuel, Festus Sunday, Daniel Solomon, Adeniran Michael and Jubril Samson.

Sunday Tribune gathered that trouble started when the mother of the deceased raced to the school premises very early on Thursday to complain that her son did not return home the previous day.

The principal quickly convened a general assembly of the school to ascertain from the workers and other students the whereabouts of the deceased.

A number of students, including the eight were said to have claimed that they had along with the deceased left for home after school hours en route the river only to discover that the river was filled beyond its brims as a result of the heavy rainfall in the early hours of the day.

One of the students, who claimed he could brave the odd by swimming across the river slipped but was quickly rescued by two bricklayers nearby.

However, the deceased was said to have claimed to be good in swimming, thus removing his uniform before diving into the river, only to be swept away by the current.

Frantic attempts by the bricklayers proved abortive while his awed colleagues immediately left for their respective homes through other routes.

It was alleged that the school authority first reported the incident to a top official at the state Ministry of Education instead of the police until a concerned individual who saw a number of fierce-looking boys zoomed into the premises demanding for the head of the principal, came to the school.

Sensing danger, he prevailed on the principal to report the matter at the Oluyole Police Station, which quickly deployed a number of policemen to stave off imminent breakdown of law and order.

Later, eight of the students were apprehended along with the principal and moved to Criminal Investigation Department (CID), in Iyaganku on Friday for further action.

It was learnt that the investigation team held a meeting with the principal and the students before it led the suspects to the scene of the incident on Saturday at about 1pm.

Some parents of the students spoke with Sunday Tribune on a number of issues surrounding the tragedy and the condition of their children of the police custody.

According to Mrs Oyebola Favour, a hair stylist, the mother of 12-year-old JSS1 Favour, said "As of this moment, officials of the state Ministry of Education are presently at the Iyaganku Police Station. They are having a meeting with the police, the parents of the children arrested and the principal of the school. Our children have been in custody since yesterday [Friday]. We have given them food this morning.

“They were walking home when one of the children entered the river and was eventually drowned, even my son Favor was said to have been rescued. They have been passing through that route before, though I have warned my son several times to stop following the road linking to the river, the river is not far from their school.

Another parent, who identified herself as the mother of Emmanuel Ojo Sunday, said: “They said the child that was drowned said he wanted to go and take his bath, while the others were trying to pass across the river, eventually they heard that one student had got drowned.

“All those who were walking back home and even a boy who was having an extra coaching class who came around to see how things unfolded were also arrested including my child. My son told me that he did not bathe in the river and I asked those who were also around the scene, they told me he did not pull his clothes. They have been in custody since 11p.m on Friday, the police did not torture them and we were able to give them food to eat.”

Jubril, the father of Jubril Samson said: “The principal, as well as representatives of the state Ministry of Education have gone to the river where the boy got drowned. The school children were also taken along but we, the parents, were asked to wait behind.”

When contacted, the Police spokesman for Oyo police command, Adekunle Ajisebutu, a Superintendent of Police, said that the case was referred to the State CID for investigation because a foul play was suspected.

The State Commissioner of Education, Prof. Niyi Olowofela, however, declined to comment on the issue, saying the police were already handling the matter.

He said it was the school’s principal who reported the case to the police.

Sunday Tribune, however, gathered from a reliable source that foul play was suspected as a result of how the drowning incident was concealed on the day it occurred.

Though the principal was allegedly informed on Thursday, the matter was only reported to the police on Friday.