

School building collapses, kills 7 pupils

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TRAGEDY struck in Afikpo, Ebonyi State on Friday when a section of St. Theresa Montessori Nursery, Primary and Secondary School building collapsed, killing seven pupils and injuring many others.

The incident threw the whole town into mourning, especially parents and guardians who had their children and wards in the school.

There was still confusion there when our correspondent visited the school, as parents were seen trying to evacuate their children to safety.

Those that could not locate their children were seen milling round.

Our correspondent gathered that a rescue team was digging the debris in search of survivors, and the prompt arrival of a Julius Berger excavator boosted their efforts, which made many trapped victims to be saved.

Confirming the incident, the Divisional Police Officer, Afikpo North, Superintendent of Police, Jonathan Nnadi, said the incident happened around noon when the school was on break.

He said that the collapsed section was part of the buildings still under construction.

According to Nnadi, the children might have been playing in the building when it collapsed.

Three other pupils

sustained minor injuries, he said, adding that he did not know the number of nursery, primary or secondary pupils that were involved since "we have not concluded interrogation of the principal who is currently in our custody."

He said that three of the survivors were receiving treatment in a nearby hospital, and that the doctor treating them said they were responding to treatment.

He said that the building was not properly constructed. "The materials are not in order. The rods are not enough for decking, while the principal doubled as the principal and the site engineer," he said.

The chairman of the Afikpo North Local Government Area, Mr.

Obinna Agha, said that he was shocked when he got the information on the incident and promised that the council would assist the families of the victims.

The Commissioner for Education, Mr. Sunday A. Okoro, described the incident as a big shock, adding that the school would be temporarily closed down in an effort to determine the nature of the other buildings in the premises.

He said that the ministry would instruct the Ministry of Land and Survey and Ministry of Housing to carry out a feasibility study of all schools in the state so that the authorities could have a clear picture of the nature of the buildings of schools in Ebonyi.