

# 19-month-old pupil flogged by teacher hospitalised, dies five days after

AFEEZ HANAFI

**T**HE son of a proprietress and teacher at a private school in Asaba, Delta State, has been arrested by the police in the state in connection with the death of a one-year-seven-month-old pre-Nursery pupil of the school, Obina Udeze.

The teacher, Emeka Nwogbo, had reportedly flogged Udeze on Monday, leaving marks of cane on his body.

The little boy was said to have fallen sick after the beating and was taken to the Federal Medical Centre, Asaba. It was learnt that his health condition deteriorated until he eventually died on Saturday morning.

One account said the teacher flogged Udeze for pushing another child while another claimed that the victim was punished for playing with a tap in the school.

A third narrative claimed that Udeze was hungry and approached the proprietress with his lunch box, crying. In the process, Nwogbo reportedly interfered and allegedly whipped the boy for being troublesome.

The victim's mother, Gift, who spoke to our correspondent on the phone on Saturday, said her son returned from the school – Arise and Shine Nursery and Primary School – on Monday with marks of strokes all over his body.

She recalled, "I took him back to the school immediately to enquire why he was beaten that much. The proprietress asked me if I knew the gravity of my son's offence; a boy of a year and seven months. I told her I would come back the next day to know the person who beat him.

"On my way home, some pupils of the same school told me how my son was tied up and given several strokes of cane because he said he was hungry. Throughout the night, he was running temperature. On Tuesday, I took him to the school to complain. The woman said I was disturbing the peace of the school."

Gift explained that she left the school and took Udeze to the hospital where he was admitted, adding that the proprietress didn't bother to visit the boy.

She stated, "On Thursday, he went into a coma. That was when I involved a non-governmental organisation and the police went to the school. The woman's son (Nwogbo) told the police that he flogged my son.

"He said he (Udeze) was playing with the tap but his mother even said my son's hand couldn't reach

where the tap is. At the GRA Police Station, he changed the narrative; he said my son pushed another child and he beat him. The proprietress herself claimed my son was stubborn and cried a lot."

The bereaved mother said she asked more pupils what transpired that day and was told that Udeze took his lunch box to "the Big Mummy (the proprietress)," crying.

"They said she collected the box from him and complained that he cried too much. They said the proprietress' son tied him up and started flogging him. He was my only child; my everything. He became so weak and died this morning (Saturday) at the emergency ward of the FMC," she stated before breaking down in tears.

Commenting on the incident, Coordinator, Advocates for Children and Vulnerable Persons Network, Mr Ebenezer Omejalile, said the organisation would follow up on the case to ensure justice was served.

He said, "Even if the child was beaten for playing with water,

was it not negligence on the part of the school? The boy's father is a military officer serving in the North East. The family doesn't even know whether he is dead or alive. He is under captivity of Boko Haram.

"We want to see what the government will do on this case. We want to see what the Ministry of Justice and the police will do. A similar thing happened in Lagos a few days ago when a two-year-old was flogged because he could not read the English alphabet."

The Police Public Relations Officer in the state, DSP Bright Edafe, said the police had commenced investigation into Udeze's death.

He said, "According to the information available to me, the child was beaten by a son of the proprietress. The son is a teacher in the school. He is in custody. The little boy died this morning.

"The reason (for the beating) is immaterial. What could make an adult flog a one-year-seven-month-old child?"

## NIN portal now restored, NIMC tells Nigerians

TOPE OMOGBOLAGUN

**T**HE National Identity Management Commission has said that the national identification number verification service portal has been fully restored.

This was made known by its head of corporate communications, Kayode Adegoke, in a statement made available to the press on Saturday.

The PUNCH had reported that thousands of telecommunication subscribers nationwide seeking to retrieve their lost Subscriber Identity Module cards or acquire new lines were left stranded following the technical glitch in the NIMC portal that has grounded SIM-related services.

The affected NIMC portal enables telecom firms, the Nigerian Immigration Service, banks, and other organisations to verify the National Identity Number of their customers before attending to them, in line with the Federal Government's directive.

Over the past couple of days, the portal breakdown has affected telecommunication companies, banks, and government agencies such as the Nigerian Immigration Service,

which rely on the service to verify the NIN of their customers before attending to them.

Adegoke said, "The National Identity Management Commission is pleased to announce that the National Identification Number Verification Service portal, which went down a few days ago due to maintenance by one of the Commission's network service providers of its infrastructure, has been fully restored.

"Consequently, customers and service providers can now take full advantage of the two verification platforms – Tokenization and NVS – which are both effective for verification and authentication of the National Identification Number."

The NIMC however expressed gratitude to Nigerians and promised to be innovative in its service to ensure quality delivery.

He added, "NIMC extends its profound gratitude to the general public and partners for their support during the NVS downtime and use of the tokenisation platform.

"The commission will continue to come up with innovative identity management solutions to enhance its capacity to deliver on its mandate."