

Few still cling to discredited stick

MORE than a dozen schools in England still use corporal punishment, but few are established names and the list of diehards is dwindling. Rodney School in Newark gave up beating after publicity over the caning of five 11-year-old girls was followed by a 50 per cent drop in the number of pupils in the early 1990s. Hulme Grammar School in Oldham has also stopped since the appointment of a new headmaster. **St James Boys' School** in Twickenham, West London, still uses the cane in rare cases but it has some pupils whose parents will not give their consent. Christian fundamentalist schools account for most of those that practise corporal punishment. The Christian Fellowship School in Toxteth, Liverpool, has used the sanction for 15 years, and the Bradford Christian School recently started using it.

By the time that state schools were barred from caning in 1987, most had already long given up the practice. The leading independent schools now also all proclaim their abstinence. Arthur Hearnden, general secretary of the Independent Schools Joint Council, said: "We have never ruled out corporal punishment, although it cannot be used on pupils supported by state funds, but there is a general consensus against it."

Nicholas Debenham, St James's headmaster, said that the Prime Minister was sensible to rule out a general return to corporal punishment because the conditions for its successful use were not present in many schools. "You may need a sanction which boys slightly fear, but unless there is love and trust and respect from the beginning it will not work." Mr Debenham said that he had used the cane six times in the past school year, for offences such as bullying or persistent disobedience and lying. Corporal punishment is not used in the school's junior department or in the girls' school.

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